

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

J. H. Ingraham

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"There's many a one who oft has heard
The name of Robert Kyd,
Who cannot tell, perhaps, a word
Of him, or what he did.
"So, though I never saw the man,
And lived not in his day,
I'll tell you how his guilt began
To what it led the way."

H. F. Gould.

TO
THE AUTHOR OF THE
"WINTER IN THE WEST,"
CHARLES FENNO HOFFMAN, ESQ.,
THESE VOLUMES ARE,
WITH SENTIMENTS OF ESTEEM,
Respectfully Enscribed.

PREFACE.

The following dramatic romance consists of two acts, with an interval of five years between them. The time and action of the first part, the scene of which is placed in the south of Ireland, are comprised in something less than three days; that of the second, the scenes of which are laid in New-York Bay and on its adjacent shores, embraces a somewhat longer space of time, the two comprising the most prominent crises of the hero's life one giving the colouring to the whole of his subsequent career, which in the other is brought to its close.

Natchez, Miss., – *Jan.*, 1839.

BOOK I. THE CAUSE.

"A lady should not scorn
"One soul that loves her, howe'er lowly it be."
Barry Cornwall.

"'Twere idle to remember now,
Had I the heart, my thwarted schemes.
I bear beneath this alter'd brow
The ashes of a thousand dreams
Some wrought of wild Ambition's fingers,
Some colour'd of Love's pencil well
Ambition has but foil'd my grasp,
And Love has perish'd in my clasp."
Melanie.

CHAPTER I.

"Oh, bold Robin Hood
Was a forester good
As ever drew bow in the merry green wood;
And what eye hath e'er seen
Such a sweet maiden queen
As Marian the pride of the forester's green."

On a rocky headland that stretches boldly out into the bosom of one of the lakelike bays that indent the southern shore of Ireland, stands a picturesque ruin, half hidden to the eye of the voyager amid a group of old trees. With its solitary square tower, and warlike battlements jagged and stern in their desolation, it still wears an air of imposing grandeur, that conveys some idea of its ancient baronial state. It is known by the name of "old Castle Cor;" and in its palmy days was the summer abode of the last Earl of Bellamont.

On a bright morning in the merry month of May, in the year sixteen hundred and ninety-four, its now silent halls rung with the joyous voices and noisy sports of a score of gallant youths and noble maidens, gathered there, from many a lordly roof both far and near, to celebrate a rural fête in honour of the sixteenth birthday of the only child of this ancient house, the beautiful Kate Bellamont, better known throughout the barony as "wild Kate of Castle Cor." In the pastimes of the day, archery, then much practised by ladies of gentle blood, was to hold a conspicuous place, and a silver arrow was to be awarded to the victor by the hands of Lady Bellamont herself. As the hour of noon approached, the earl's chief forester, Cormac Dermot, his gray locks covered with a red cloth bonnet, in which was fastened an eagle's plume, and his goodly person arrayed in a holyday suit of green and gold, made his appearance on the lawn by the west side of the castle, and wound his horn, loud and long, as the signal that the "gentle sporte of archerie" was now about to begin.

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The place chosen for the trial of skill was an ample lawn of the softest and greenest verdure, lying between the wall of the castle and the verge of the cliff. A few ancient oaks grew here and there upon it; and towards the south it was open to the land-locked bay and far-distant sea, which, wide as the vision extended, seemed to belt the horizon like a shining band of silver. At each extremity of the field, one hundred yards apart, was pitched upon the sward a gorgeous pavilion, one of blue, the other of orange-coloured silk: the hangings of the former were fringed with silver; and from the festooned curtains of the latter pended tassels of silk and gold. In these were laid tables spread with cloths of crimson damask, and covered with every luxury that could tempt the palate or gratify the eye. From the summit of one of the pavilions fluttered a crimson banneret, displaying the arms of Bellamont, its boar's-head crest pierced through with an arrow, emblematical of the occasion; and from the top of the other waved a white banner, in the centre of which, according to the rules of heraldry, a bow, quiver, target and other signs of archery were tastefully emblazoned.

Twenty-five yards in front of each pavilion, two targets were placed, fifty yards apart, so that, after sending all their arrows at one, the archers might walk up to it and gather them, and, taking their stand by it, shoot back to the other; thus alternately reversing the direction of their shots, and adding healthful exercise to their graceful pastime. The targets were both very beautiful, and gay with colours; being round wooden shields half an inch in thickness and three feet in diameter, with four circles painted on the faces: the outer white, with a green border; the next black; the next within it orange; and the inner circle red, encompassing a gold centre. They were elevated, at a slight angle, twenty inches from the ground, on a light frame resembling a painter's easel.

Midway between the targets, but safely placed several paces back from the erratic path of the arrows, was erected beneath an ancient linden-tree a sylvan throne, surmounted by a canopy of silk, elaborately worked with the needle to represent Diana, with her nymphs and hounds, pursuing a herd of deer with flights of arrows. This was the seat of the umpire of the sports Katrine, the lovely Countess of Bellamont. Altogether, it was an imposing and gorgeous scene; and, with its stern castle rising boldly from the verdant lawn topped with battlements and towers; with its boundary on the north side, of green, dark old woods, and the calm, deep bay beneath, with a yacht sleeping on its bosom; with its extended prospect of the illimitable sea for-ever breathing with a mysterious life, the field of archery at Castle Cor, for the natural beauty of the spot and the taste displayed in its adornment, has doubtless had no parallel in the annals of archery.

Scarcely had the echoes of old Cormac's horn died away in the forest, startling many a stately stag to flight, when the castle poured forth its gay throng of archers towards the lists. In their midst was the Countess of Bellamont, escorted by a bodyguard of young archeresses. She was then in the prime and beauty of ripe womanhood: at that delightful age when the wife and mother, all the charms of mind and person fully developed and refined by taste and elegant culture, fascinates by a thousand nameless graces, and captivates and enslaves even the youthful crowd that sigh at the feet of her lovely daughter of seventeen the age that leaves one in doubt whether beautiful women arrive at the zenith of their beauty and power under five-and-thirty.

This was the age of Katrine of Bellamont; and though at eighteen (when she became a bride) the loveliest of all Irish maidens either of gentle or lowly birth, yet now, as the Countess of Bellamont, far-famed for her rare and stately beauty. She was arrayed in a simple white robe; and a laced jacket of royal-purple velvet closely fitted her magnificent bust. When she entered the field she was conducted by her juvenile escort to the throne, on which she seated herself, and with a playfully assumed queenly dignity that became her highborn air. A coronet of pearls graced her brow; and her symmetrical hand, that rivalled pearls in its soft transparency, gracefully held, like a sceptre, the miniature arrow which was to be the prize for excelling in archery. Her deep blue eyes, as she looked around, reflected, in a thousand smiling beams, the joy that danced on each youthful face, and the sunny light of her own countenance communicated sunshine of the heart wherever it fell.

On each side of the throne stood a wellborn youth habited as a page, and behind her were stationed two beautiful young girls attired as sylphides. On her right hand, a few feet in the rear, leaning on a yew bow six feet in length, stood Cormac Dermot, his stag's horn, richly inlaid and curiously carved with woodland devices, slung beneath

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his left shoulder, with the mouthpiece brought round in front ready for use. A little farther beyond, and nearer the castle-wall, was assembled a group of lower degree, consisting of under-foresters, retainers of the household, and neighbouring peasants; while on the opposite side of the lawn might be seen, relieved against the sky, the forms of two or three fishermen, whom curiosity had led to climb the dizzy precipice from the beach far along the white line of which were visible their scattered huts, looking like black specks upon the sand.

All was now animation with the preparations for the lists. From bundles of bows thrown by Dermot on the ground before each pavilion, the youths began busily to select weapons for the fair archers, who were themselves earnestly engaged in choosing arrows from quivers that were hung on the front of the tent; fastening braces of thick fawn's leather on their left or bow arm just above the wrist to preserve it from injury by the rebound of the bow-string; and drawing on the right hand, from parcels handed them by pages, shooting-gloves, with three finger-stalls, fitted with a strap and button to fasten at the wrist, to protect their fingers in drawing the arrow. Besides these appendages of archery, each archeress wore a belt buckled about the waist, to which pended a tassel of the softest floss of Brussels, to wipe away the soil that adhered to the arrows when drawn from the ground; and also an ivory box with a metal lid, containing a perfumed paste for anointing the finger-stalls of the shooting-gloves and the brace on the arm, that the bow-string might the more easily quit the fingers and pass over the guarded wrist. A small pouch, either of tortoise-shell or of silver, in shape and dimensions like a sportsman's cup or a dicebox, was suspended on the right side to receive two or three arrows; the more cumbersome quiver, while in target-shooting, being left on the ground near at hand, filled with shafts to replace those broken or lost.

The party of archeresses consisted of seven fair girls, the eldest scarce seventeen. They were fancifully attired, some in green, and others in orange or blue hunting-jackets, after the tasteful fashion of the period; a costume admirably calculated to display their sylphan shapes. They all wore hats of the colour of their spencers, looped up in front, and ornamented with waves of snowy plumes. Long white trains descended from their waists to the ground, but, in shooting, were gathered beneath the belt on the left side, and, thence falling down again to the feet in numerous folds, added to the grace and picturesqueness of their appearance. Each archeress was attended by a favoured youth as an esquire, habited in a green or gray hunting-frock, bordered with a wreath of embroidered oak-leaves, with an arrow worked in silver thread on each lappel. They wore broad flapping hats, turned boldly back from the forehead, and shaded in front with a drooping black plume. Each carried a short hunting-spear, decked with ribands of the colour of his mistress' jacket, gifts from her own hand and tied thereon with her own fingers, in token that she acknowledged him as her "Esquire of the Bow." The duty of these youthful cavaliers was to select a bow suited to the strength of the archeress whose colours they wore; to fit it with an arrow of a weight proportioned to its power, having a nock exactly receiving the string; to assist, if the lady is unskilled, in stringing the bow; to draw the arrows from the butt, or collect the far-shot shafts and return them to the owner; and otherwise, as courtesy and gallantry prompted, to do their duty as "esquires of archerie."

Once more the sonorous horn of old Cormac was heard winding, now high, now low, in a long, wild strain, and then ending in three sharp blasts, like the stirring notes of a bugle sounding to the charge. Every archeress now had her brace buckled on her arm, and her shooting-glove buttoned about her wrist; every one had two good arrows in the pouch at her belt, and a third on the string; and each fair girl, attended by her esquire, hastened to the stand by the southernmost target at the sound of the forester's horn save, in each instance, Kate Bellamont! Her brace would not buckle all she could do; her shooting-glove would not go on, and three, that she had pulled off, were lying rent at her feet; and not an arrow was to be seen in her tortoise-shell pouch, though half a dozen fair ones lay about her on the ground! It was very plain that something was going wrong with the maiden. Such a dilemma could not have happened without a cause. The braces of the rest buckled with ease; their shooting-gloves fitted beautifully; and there had been time enough to fill twenty pouches. Why, then, was Kate Bellamont not ready? Her brace, both strap and buckle, was perfect; and the wrist it was destined to compass was not to be matched for its smallness of size! The gloves, plainly, were just what they should be! Her companions had been fitted, and her hand was the smallest as well as the fairest of the party; besides, there were a dozen pairs on the ground that evidently were made for no other hand. The cause could not lie in the arrows, for they were, to

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the eye, without fault, and of every variety of shape and fashion known to archery; nor in her handsome esquire, who, save when requested by some eager girl to assist her, had been diligently serving her with arrow after arrow, until he had emptied two quivers, the contents of which now lay strewn around. The cause is not to be found in either of these. The truth is, Kate Bellamont was playing with her little foot against the ground when she should have been trying on her glove. No sooner was one pulled half way on than she suffered it to remain so, drumming the while in a fit of absence on the sward, while her eyes followed the motions of her handsome esquire. The next moment, recovering herself, she would tear it off impatiently, and, with a laugh, fling it to the ground. She would then take up another, and go through the same process, or play with her brace instead of buckling it; and when the young gentleman gave her an arrow, without scarcely touching it to the bow—string she threw it down, saying it was too heavy or too light, too long or too short, had too much feather or had not feather enough; so that, when the rest of the party were ready, Kate Bellamont was just where she was at the outset. The result of all this, whether brought about designedly or not by a little female manoeuvring, being a question to be solved by such as are skilled in the ways and means by which women work out their ends, was, that when the last notes of Cormac's horn died away in the forest, Kate Bellamont found herself and her esquire, the noble and youthful heir of the broad lands of the earldom of Lester, left quite alone. The brace was on her arm unbuckled, and she held a glove in her hand.

"Lord Robert, do clasp this troublesome brace for me. Strange you could not see what difficulty I have had to get ready! But I suppose you were so engaged fitting an arrow to pretty Gracy Fitzgerald's bow, that you had no eyes for any one else!"

This was said half in pique, half laughingly; and holding, with a pouting lip, her snowy arm towards her esquire as she spoke, he gallantly received it, and with the merest effort in the world clasped the rebellious brace. But he did not release her soft hand without giving it a slight pressure, and looking into her face with an eloquent gaze, which she consciously met with eyes half downcast, yet beaming through their long dark lashes with a gentle fire that young love only could have kindled.

"Now, Sir Esquire, fasten this glove."

The youth bent till the black plume of his bonnet rested on her arm, and, with some difficulty apparently, for he was a very long time about it, succeeded in buttoning the silken strap across the blue-veined wrist; nor did he lift his head from the fair hand, which lay nestled like a bird in his beneath the thick covert of his drooping feather, ere he had touched it with his bold lip.

"Ha, Sir Forester, is this a part of your service as squire of archery?" she demanded, with the blood mounting to her cheek in maidenly surprise; though the pouting smile on her mouth, which she vainly tried to turn into a frown, and the dancing light in her telltale eyes, betokened anything besides resentment at the bold deed; "I see I must resign you to my sly little cousin Gracy, and take her well-behaved esquire; doubtless you better understand her humour than you seem to do mine."

By the time she had ended she had succeeded in calling up a small cloud on her brow, which struggled very hard to cast a shadow over the sunny light that played around her lovely mouth and was reflected back in a thousand rays from the deep wells of her black, Castilian eyes.

"Forgive me, sweet Lady Kate," said the esquire, dropping on one knee disguising his attitude to the eyes of others by gathering carelessly one or two arrows from the ground to her eyes alone a suppliant. The expression of his face amusingly wavered between playful mockery and seriousness, as if greatly fearing, yet doubting much, that his daring act had really given offence: a sort of neutral ground between mirth and grief, with the advantage of enabling him to fall readily into the one or the other, as he should find the needle of her humour pointed.

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"See, then, you offend not again, sir," she said, laughing at the troubled expression of his serio-comic countenance. "Haste! choose me an arrow that tapers from the pile to the feather."

"One that tapers each way from the middle will suit you better for shooting in this light wind," said the young esquire, the puzzled play of his handsome features changed to sunshine by her voice. As he spoke he brought a quiver full of arrows and poured them out at her feet, and, kneeling on the thick verdure, selected an arrow of the kind he had named.

"No, no," she said, putting it aside; "they always curve from the line of sight; and, besides, fly unsteady."

"Not in a wind, Kate. The fulness in the middle counteracts the weight of the ends, and drives it more evenly."

"Do as you are bidden, Sir Esquire," she said. "Don't think now you are going to have your own way." A second arrow was placed in her hand by the youth.

"Why, Lord Robert, what *is* the matter with your wits! This is an arrow of the same kind; and, besides, it is without a cock-feather. I shall have to call yonder handsome fisher's lad, who is watching me so admiringly, to my assistance."

The esquire, without looking up, mechanically handed to her a third arrow, with the head broken and the feathers ruffled. Without being able to speak in her surprise, she looked quietly down and beheld the young man so intently contemplating one of her exquisite little feet, that twice she spoke to him ere he looked up to encounter her gaze of arch astonishment. It was very plain what had become of her esquire's wits. The youth blushed, and hastily rose to his feet; but the maiden could not disguise a little female vanity, though she shook her finger at him, and said mischievously,

"Do you propose becoming a cordwainer, and making me a pair of slippers, Lord Robert, that you are so busy taking the dimensions of my foot?"

"I would willingly become apprentice to the meanest cobbler, to be suffered to take the measure of that tiny foot, and fit it with a shoe," said the youth, with gallantry.

The maiden laughed, and, unwilling to betray the feeling his words had created, said, "Do be quick, Lord Robert; my bow is not yet strung with our foolish idling here, and I shall be too late for the lists."

As she spoke she grasped her bow firmly in the middle, and extending her hand, containing the string terminating with a loop, to the upper limb, she pulled smartly upward, pressing the limb downward at the same time with her left wrist, and skilfully and accurately carried the eye of the bow-string into the nock. Her bow, like those of her companions, was five feet in length, neatly made of dark wood highly polished, and rounded on the inner side to increase its power in shooting.

"Well and featly done! That's a tough yew, and a man's strength could not have better done what your little fingers, with skill to guide them, I have just seen do. You were an apt pupil, young mistress, and do honour to old Dermot's lessons."

Kate Bellamont turned and saw the old forester close at her side. "If I have any skill, good Cormac," she said, "I do owe it all to your kind teaching; and if I win the arrow this day, you shall have it as a birthday gift from me, to wear in your bonnet instead of your pipe."

The forester lifted his bonnet with a gratified air, mingled with respect, at this expression of kindness from his lovely young mistress, and said,

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"I know you would give Cormac, sweet lady, even the fair white plume that graces your brow if you thought it would gratify the old man. God bless you, noble child; may you live to see many such bright birthdays as this!" The rough huntsman brushed a tear from his eyes as he spoke; for the experience of years had told him that clouds would obscure the bright sky of her young hopes, and that each returning birthday might be but a sad waymark to denote the slow passage of a life of sorrow and trial. "The countess has bid me come and see if you need my aid in fitting your shafts, that you delay."

"No, no, Cormac," said the maiden, blushing; but directly she cried, "Yes, you can help me. I am undecided whether to shoot an arrow that tapers from the head to the feathers, or from the feathers to the head, or from the middle both ways."

"What says Master Robert?" asked Dermot, smiling archly through one of his little gray eyes, the other, from the long habit of shutting it in shooting, having at last got to be so firmly closed up in a radiating network of fine wrinkles as to have been for the last ten years of his life invisible.

"Pshaw, Cormac!" she cried, stooping till her snowy plumes shaded her burning cheek; "I did not ask Lord Robert, but you."

"I have advised Lady Kate, forester, to shoot arrows that taper both to feather and pile," said the youth, haughtily.

"And she chooses "

"Those that taper from the pile to the feather," said the maiden, quickly

"If the distance were seventy yards instead of fifty," said the forester, measuring the ground with his eye, "it would be a good shaft for a steady hand; but, if you will let me decide, I would recommend you to take the taper from the feather, especially as the air is in motion."

"Your skill is at fault for once, old man," said the young noble, with a flushed brow; "the best bowmen in England ay, Robin Hood himself, were he here this day would teach you your craft better."

"You are in error, Master Robert," said the forester, with some warmth, in defence of his profession; "and he who taught you that a double taper is better in a wind than "

"Hist, old graybeard! you know nothing of woodcraft; yonder fisher's lad will even tell you a shaft swelling in the middle will waver in its passage through the wind like a weathercock."

"Nay, Master Robert "

"Speak again, old man, and I strike you!" said the young noble, imperiously, angry that his skill should be called in question; feeling positive that he alone was right, or else too proud to acknowledge his conviction.

"For shame, Lester," cried Kate Bellamont, with an indignant look; "I did not think you were of so overbearing and ungracious a temper! Besides," she added, proudly, "I sought Cormac's opinion! Strike an old man, and in a lady's presence! Out upon thy manhood, Robert. Ask Cormac's forgiveness, or never speak to me more."

"Pardon my hasty speech, Kate," he said, abashed by her look, and reproached by the cutting irony of her words, approaching her as he spoke with an air of deep mortification, "forgive "

"To Cormac, sir, not me."

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"For Cormac, in atonement, I will send from Castle More a fat buck, with this very arrow sticking in its heart; but," he added, with haughty fierceness, "I will ask no man's forgiveness. If I have offended, I am ready to stand by my words."

"Marry come up! we are like to have a letting of blood here," said the maiden, between jest and seriousness. "Will you be docile, Robert?"

"At your bidding, Kate, as a lamb."

"Very like a lamb. Forget it, Dermot. You have made his pride a little sore to tell him, before a lady, he knew not how to choose a shaft, and so unfit to be an esquire of archery."

"Young blood will up," said the forester. "I meant not to gainsay your skill, Master Robert, for it's known to every bowman that no young hand in the county can send a shaft farther or surer than young Lord Robert of Castle More."

"That will do, Cormac. Now, Robert, see that you henceforward take fire less readily; and you, good Dermot, refrain from wounding the esteem of these young lords. Verily, it behooves me to look to my own speech in such fiery company. Nay, Robert," she added, laughing, "I have done. Give me the shafts; and, as we are to have three shots apiece at the target, I will shoot one of each kind, and be the prize his whose arrow wins! Give me them, Robert! nay, don't press my fingers so hard; I don't want them in my hand, but in the pouch. Go, Cormac, I am ready. I see my lady mother is shaking her silver arrow at me already for loitering here when I should be at the post."

The next moment she had joined the archers, and the trial of skill forthwith commenced. The first arrow that was shot was from the bow of a fair-haired girl, in a blue hat and a silken bodice of the same colour; it flew wide of the mark, and quivered in the trunk of a tree sixty yards off.

"There was nerve in that, Lady Eustace," said old Cormac, who watched each shot with professional interest; "but you grasped the handle of your bow too tightly, and so made your aim unsteady. Hold your bow as lightly as you would a hunting-whip. 'Tis not strength, but skill, that sends the bolt into the eye of the butt."

The young archeress laughed at her failure, and resigned her place to another, who was distinguished by an orange-coloured spencer. This second shot was more successful; for, swiftly cleaving the air, the arrow stuck in the orange circle.

"Bravo! orange to orange!" was the cry that on all sides hailed this appropriate hit.

The third shaft was still better directed; and, hitting the red or inner circle, stuck there for a moment trembling like an aspen-leaf, and then fell to the ground.

"A brave bolt that! a brave bolt that," said the forester, "and drawn well to the head. But you should have brought the nock of your arrow down more towards your ear. The ear in shooting an arrow; the eye in firing a pistol or arquebuss. That shaft was a taper from the feather, Master Robert."

"Hush, Cormac," cried Kate Bellamont, quickly; "would you get your gray beard into a broil. Robert, bring me my quiver," she said, as she saw the young man's eye light up; "one of my arrows, the very one you gave me, has the cock-feather awry! Stay! you need not bring the quiver, but select a shaft for me yourself. I will keep it as my forlorn hope, and mark me if it do not carry off the prize." She sought his eyes and looked so bewitchingly after a manner maidens have of their own, that his brow coloured and his eyes beamed with a different emotion, while, with a fluttering heart, he went to do her bidding.

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Oh, gentle and angelic woman! ever ready to calm the ruffled brow with words of peace! to bring good out of evil! to step between fierce man and his reinsless passions! with an eye to sooth, a voice to disarm, a smile to win! Blessings on thee, woman! whether in thy happy and innocent girlhood, or fair and gentle maidenhood; whether maid or matron, young or old, lovely or homely! Blessings on thee, sweet leaven of humanity! yet partaking so much of the heavenly nature, that the sons of the gods, we are told, were lured from their celestial thrones to cast their crowns at thy feet!

A fourth arrow hit the black circle; and the fifth, sent from the bow of a tall, graceful girl, struck on the outer edge of the target and splintered it, while the bow itself snapped in two in her hand.

"What a mischievous shot, Fanny," cried Lady Bellamont, smiling; "if by-and-by you launch Cupid's shafts at your lovers' hearts in that way, you will make sad havoc."

"It was all, your ladyship, of placing the short limb of the bow uppermost. Hugh Conor must be getting old that he teacheth not his pupil better to handle the bow," said old Cormac, shaking his snowy locks as the next archeress, a sylph-like little being, about fifteen, with dangerous hazel eyes; rich chestnut-coloured hair, that flowed in curls all over her shoulders; a voice like some merry bird's, and a wild, joyous spirit lighting up like a sunbeam her whole countenance, took her place at the stand.

"Now, cousin Gracy, do be steady!" cried Kate Bellamont; "take heed! you will shoot my esquire through the heart if you handle your bow so carelessly."

"And then you would shoot me through the head in return, I dare say."

The laughing girl bounded to the stand as she spoke, carelessly drew her arrow to the head, and, ere she had well taken aim, away it flew, and passed through the centre of the emblazoned target waving on the summit of the pavilion, and continued its wild flight into the wood beyond.

"Bravo, cousin Gracy! you have won the silver arrow," cried Kate Bellamont. "Lord Robert, I wonder if that was the arrow you chose for Lady Grace. A taper both ways, or I'll forfeit my jennet!"

"Who makes the broil now, young mistress?" asked the old forester, with a glance of humour.

"You and I, worthy Cormac, are two very different people where a young gentleman is concerned," said the maiden, laughing.

The forester shook his head incredulously, and, turning to Grace Fitzgerald, said, "Faith, but it was a brave shot that, my young lady! You have done what old Dermot could not have done at a target, playing in the wind like that. But, with the leave of my lady the queen, you must have a second shot at the real target. Take this arrow, that tapers from the feather to the pile; fit it to your bow-string exactly at the spot where it is wound round with silk; and, if you will follow my directions, I will teach you to strike the centre of the true butt, or never draw arrow to head again." Leave being granted by acclamation, the archeress merrily resumed her attitude and prepared to follow his instructions.

"Hold the bow easily in your hand. Throw your head back a little. That will do. Now keep your bow-arm straightened, and bend the wrist of your gloved hand inward. Now raise your bow, steadily drawing the arrow at the same time not towards your eye, but towards your ear. Be steady! When it is three parts drawn, take your aim at the centre. Keep the head of the arrow a little to the right of the mark. Be cool, and, if you are sure of your aim, draw the arrow quickly and steadily to the head, and gently part your fingers and let it go!"

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The shaft, loosened from the string, cut the air and buried itself in the very centre of the golden eye of the target. A shout from every part of the field acknowledged the success of the quick pupil, and bore testimony to the skill of the experienced old archer.

"It is Cormac's shot, not mine," said the archeress; "I am satisfied with piercing the glittering centre of yonder escutcheon."

"The queen shall decide," cried several of the party, turning towards the throne where sat the lovely countess, amid her youthful attendants, participating with girlish interest in the scene, and prepared to decide all appeals to her royal umpirage.

"Gracy is right. Cormac's skill directed the shaft. She has no honest claim to the honour of the hit, save the credit of having stood quiet longer than she was ever known to before! The banner with its perforated target she is justly entitled to; and," added the countess, with a smile, "I here award it to her."

"And if I ever get a husband he shall carry it before him into battle," said the merry sylph. "Now, divine Kate, see that you don't wound my arrow. I would not have it injured for a silver one."

"It tapers from the middle in each direction, I have no doubt," said Kate, archly, glancing mischievously towards her esquire as she prepared to take her place at the stand.

"Your speech tapers in both directions, wild Kate," retorted the other, blushing. "I wonder what you and Lord Robert could have been doing, that you loitered so long about the pavilion! There, I declare, if you are not holding your bow with the short limb uppermost!"

Kate blushed in her turn, and reversed it.

"Why, cousin Kate Bellamont, you are going to shoot with the feather towards the target!" cried the tantalizing little maiden. "Really, I *do* begin to wonder what you and Lester *could* have been about, that the mention of it scatters your wits and makes you look so *very* foolish!"

Kate shook her head with a playful menace at her tormentor, placed her arrow with the right end to the bow-string, and took her stand by the target. The instant she fixed her eyes on it her self-possession returned, and, elevating her bow, she threw herself with careless grace into the attitude of an accomplished archeress.

A more beautiful object than this young creature, standing in the strikingly spirited attitude she had assumed, can hardly be imagined. Though but sixteen, her form was divinely perfect. Every limb foot, hand, and arm was a rare model for the sculptor's chisel. The undulating outline of her shoulders was faultless; and her figure, perhaps, was the more beautiful that her bust and waist, and the wavy symmetry of her whole person, was just receiving that harmony of touch and roundness of finish which marks the era when the wild romping girl is merging into the blushing, conscious, loving, and loveable maiden of seventeen. Descended from an ancient Milesian family, she betrayed her origin in her complexion, which was a rich brunette, reflecting in warm, sunny tints the mantling blood, which came and went at every emotion. Her eyes were dark and sparkling as night with its stars, and as, with a slightly bent brow, she fixed them on the target, they had a cool and steady expression remarkable in one of her years and sex. She wore a dark ruby velvet jacket, laced over a stomacher rich with brilliants, and a velvet hat of the same dark ruby, surmounted by a plume of white ostrich feathers, in that day a rare and costly ornament, which gracefully drooped about her head in striking contrast with her raven locks that floated around her superb neck in the wildest freedom. Her lips, like most of the lips of Erin's fair maidens, were of a rich coral red, and, just parted as she took sight, rendered visible a pearly line of beautifully-arranged teeth. Her mouth, when closed, was finely shaped, and sometimes wore an air of decision, that did not, however, in any way diminish its witchery. The glow of health, and the pride of birth and beauty, were upon her countenance, and every feminine grace and

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charm seemed to play around her.

As she stood with one foot a little advanced, her neck slightly curved to bring her eyes down to a level with the mark, her left side, but no part of the front of the body, accurately turned towards the target, the eyes of old Cormac Dermot glistened with pride. Slowly she elevated the bow, drawing the arrow simultaneously towards the ear with the first three gloved fingers of her right hand, till she had drawn it out three quarters of its length, when, pausing till she had filled her eye with the golden eye of the target, she drew it smartly to its head and let it loose from her fingers. For an instant she stood following its swift flight: the pupils of her dark eyes dilated and eager; her lips closely shut; her chest advanced; her right arm elevated and curved above her shoulders, the wrist bent, and the fingers of the hand turned gently downward; the left arm extended at full length, and grasping the relaxed bow; her neck curved; her spirited head thrown back, and her whole action animated and commanding; presenting altogether, perhaps, the most graceful attitude the female form is susceptible of assuming.

The arrow was sent with unerring aim, struck the golden eye within half an inch of Grace Fitzgerald's, and buried itself to its feather. The lawn rung with the plaudits of both archeresses and esquires; and even the retainers and fishermen, who were humble but curious spectators of the sports, gave vent to their admiration in shouts of clamorous applause. Old Cormac swung his long yew bow above his head with delight, and looked as if, in the pride of the moment, he would have hugged his accomplished pupil to his heart.

"Do not be so elated, good Dermot," she said, laughing; "it was the arrow I chose a taper from the pile."

"The more skill in the hand that drove it so truly," said the forester.

"I must do still better than this, else neither you nor Lord Robert, who, methinks, looks somewhat blank to find I have not missed to gratify him, will neither of you get the prize."

"It was not a fair trial, Kate," said the esquire, gayly; "the wind has lulled; and, as you drew your bow, there was not a breath of air."

"If, nevertheless, that had been a taper from the feather," said the forester, after surveying the target earnestly for a moment, as obstinately bent on adhering to his original opinion as even the spirited young noble himself, "it would have cleft the arrow of Lady Gracy through its length to the pile."

"We will see to that anon, worthy Cormac. I have two shots more. Here is the arrow you chose for me, which I will fit to my bow-string, and do my best to drive it through my cousin's."

"I dare say you will if you can, and would like, also, to destroy everything else Lord Robert gives me," said the roguish Grace, putting up her lip and tossing her head, with its cloud of rich hair, in admirably affected pique.

The young esquire of Kate Bellamont looked embarrassed; Kate laughed and drummed on the ground with her foot, while the whole party began forthwith to prepare for the next round. The customary mode of ascertaining the value of the hits in archery, by estimating it in proportion to their distance from the centre, was departed from in the present instance. By the method alluded to, a hit in the gold counts nine; in the red, three; in the orange, two; in the black, one; and their sum is the value of the hits: a process which makes three hits in the red circle of the same value, or nearly so, of one in the gold. In the present case, the shots were limited to three, and the prize awarded to the greatest number of hits in the gold.

In the second round, the first three arrows struck three different circles; and one well-directed shaft, shot by the archeress who had before broken her bow, hit the gold, though at its junction with the red. Grace Fitzgerald bent her bow without aim, but the courteous arrow went accurately to the mark, and struck within a finger's breadth of the centre, much to the delight of Cormac, the forester, who took himself all the credit of the fair shot. Kate, with

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the arrow given her by Cormac fitted to her bow—string, took somewhat less careful aim than with her first shot, and was about to loose the arrow, when a hawk, bearing a live fish in his talons, soared above the cliff, and with swift wing flew high across the lawn in the direction of the forest. Quicker than thought, the point of the arrow was elevated from the target into the air, drawn to its head with a stronger arm and more resolute eye, and launched from the bow—string. With irresistible force and unerring aim, it cleft the air and struck the proud bird of prey beneath the wing. He uttered a wild cry, flew heavily a few feet perpendicularly upward, and then, whirling round and round in concentric circles, each gyration bringing him nearer the earth, fell, transfixed with the arrow, among the fishermen: fluttering wildly on the ground in agony, he succeeded, before they could secure him, in flapping himself over the precipice. He was instantly followed by a daring young fisherman, who had been endeavouring to capture him the same youth whose admiration of her had before attracted the notice of Kate Bellamont.

For a moment the generous heart of the fair archer shrunk from the wreck she had made, and she turned away her head from the dying struggles of the dark bandit of the air. But maidens of that period were too familiar with the more revolting scenes of the chase to show emotion at witnessing the death of a hawk; and, therefore, sympathy for the fate of the victim of her skill gave place to the pride of the successful archer.

"There is a prize for you, Cormac, better than a golden arrow," she said, with a flashing eye; "and, when next I go a hawking," she archly added, "I will be sure to use arrows that taper from the feather."

The third and final round now followed. Each archeress had shot her last arrow save Kate Bellamont, yet but three arrows besides her own and the equivocal shot of Grace Fitzgerald were in the centre, and these from as many different bows. Grace had made a wilder shot even than her first; for her arrow, jeopardizing the lives of the poor fishermen, flew far over the cliff out of sight. Four of the companions of Kate had, equally with herself, each an arrow in the gold; but as she had yet to shoot her third arrow, she had yet a chance of making a second hit and winning the prize. Glancing with proud consciousness of her own skill towards her young esquire, she drew her remaining arrow through her fingers, carefully examining each one of its three feathers, and fitted it accurately to the bow—string; then elevating her bow, she steadily drew the arrow. All was breathless expectation. The old archer looked on as if he would not grieve if for once his pupil should miss; while her young esquire watched her with the anxiety of one who felt that his judgment and skill in the noble science of archery were at stake. As she was ready to loose the arrow, the wind, which had hitherto gently fanned her cheek, increased suddenly to a strong breeze, lifting the hair from her brow and tossing her tresses in wild confusion about her neck. The eyes of Cormac lighted up with triumph, while Lord Robert himself curled his lip scornfully and smiled with confidence. The archeress, who had dropped the point of the arrow with a misgiving, remembering what Cormac had said of it as ill adapted to a wind, on catching the confident eye of her esquire again raised the bow, and coolly and steadily drew the shaft to its head. Every eye followed it in its swift course, and saw it strike the arrow of Grace Fitzgerald on the end, shiver it to its pile, and drive itself through the target to the feather. A general exclamation of surprise and admiration bore testimony to the skill of the victor; the dark eyes of the young esquire sparkled with triumph, while the discomfited Dermot said, with a broad laugh of good—humour,

"Well, Master Robert, it's your time to boast now. By the boar's head o' Castle Cor! I shall never hear the end of your double taper. Faith, masters, no hand but my young Lady Kate's could have sent a double taper with such an aim and in this wind, which young Lord Robert there has got old Elpsy to set a blowing to triumph over the old man's skill. Well a—day! What the gray—headed forester said of it is true, nevertheless; but when such a hand and eye as Lady Kate's sends the bolt to the butt, there is no depending on old rules; especially," he added, laughing, "with a witch's wind to carry the arrow to its centre."

The young noble frowned darkly on the speaker, and joined not in the laugh of his companions. Lady Bellamont now commanded Cormac to sound his horn three times, and bid, in the name of the queen of archery, the band of archeresses, with their esquires, who were hastening towards the target to collect their arrows, to approach the throne, and witness the award of the prize to the victor.

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Amid the congratulations and applauses of the whole field, for, unenvious, each light-hearted girl seemed to share the triumph of the accomplished archeress, the victoress advanced to the rustic footstool of the throne, and gracefully knelt to receive, from the hand of the beautiful queen of the sports, the glittering prize a finely-wrought arrow of silver, five inches in length, with a chased gold head, on which was graven, in small Gothic characters, these words: "Field of Archery, Castle Cor, Map, MDCXCIV."

"Victorious archeress," said the queen, rising, her face beaming with maternal love and pride, and extending her arm containing the prize, "receive this fair token of your matchless skill, so well displayed this day. May you in every other female accomplishment, my sweet Kate, be as successful as in archery."

"She'll be a match for poor little Cupid, with his tiny bow and arrow, I dare say," said Grace Fitzgerald, with a roguish eye. "Poor youth!" she continued, glancing significantly towards the handsome Lord Robert, who stood at the right hand of the victress, "I pity him if he's like to have such a hole made in his heart as Kate has made in yonder target."

This sally of the sprightly maiden was merrily received by all the youthful circle save the conscious two who were its subjects. The lovely countess now left the throne, embraced and kissed her noble Kate, whom her companions, gathering around her, playfully forced into the vacant seat. She was about to bound from it again, when she checked the impulse, reseated herself, and bade her esquire advance and kneel before her. The gallant youth obeyed; when, bending gracefully forward, she fastened the silver arrow in the loop of his bonnet, and bade him wear it on every return of that day in memory of the field of archery at Castle Cor.

The noble youth accepted the gift, won by the arrow he had chosen, with the same playful, halfserious spirit in which it was bestowed, and then kissed the fair hand that presented it with at least full as much passion as gallantry. Amid the merry sallies, especially from Grace Fitzgerald, this scene created, the whole party of archers bounded away like a troop of wild deer towards the target, to ascertain more accurately the nature of the several hits, while the countess, at a more dignified pace, attended by the forester, returned to the castle to prepare for the further entertainments of the day. But the fleetest of foot among the youthful bevy of fair girls had not measured half the green space between the linden-tree and bristling target, when a thrilling outcry of terror from a fisherman on the cliff, who wildly waved his arms to some one below, and the next moment clasped his hands together in despair, checked them in mid career; and, with hearts palpitating with vague apprehensions of danger, they flew to the precipice to ascertain the cause of this sudden alarm.

CHAPTER II.

"From crag to crag descending swiftly sped
Stern Conrad down, nor once he turned his head;
He bounds, he flies, until his footsteps reach
The verge where ends the cliff, begins the beach."
The Corsair.

"Dark was the flow of Oscar's hair,
But Allan's locks were bright and fair."
Oscar of Alva.

"But who is he, whose darken'd brow
Glooms in the midst of general mirth?"
Ibid.

When the hawk, which had been so skilfully struck by the arrow of Kate Bellamont, flapped himself, in his violent death-throes, over the edge of the cliff, a gallant young fisher's lad, seeing him lodge in the topmost branches of a blasted tree twenty feet below, fearlessly flung himself off the precipice, and lighted, by the aid of a

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limb, on a projecting rock within twelve feet of him. The cliff at this place was one hundred and forty feet in height, and, except where its surface was opened by narrow crevices, in which a few shrubs and dwarf cedars found precarious roothold, or where a fragment, hurled from its seat by the lightning, or fallen through age into the sea, left a narrow shelf, it presented to the passing boatman on the bay below a naked and gigantic wall, of nearly perpendicular ascent and inaccessible to human foot: indeed, from a midway brow seventy feet from the base, it receded, leaving a sheer descent of that space from the water, which lay black, still, and of profound depth beneath. Near the top of the cliff grew a scathed cedar, clinging with its hardy roots into a cleft in its face, and leaning threateningly over the flood. Its top reached within twenty feet of the summit of the precipice; but, inclining at an angle away from it, stood full seven feet out from its side. It was the ragged arms of this tree which caught the hawk in his descent, and where, with fierce cries of rage and pain, he struggled to free himself from the fatal shaft, but which he drove deeper and deeper into his side with every beat of his strong wing.

The young man paused after lighting upon the first landing-place, and measured with a cool glance the dizzy descent; and then fixed his gaze on the bird, whose blood-red eyes flashed forth vindictive fire as they met his, with a resolute look that conveyed a determination to capture him at whatever risk. The pliant limb of a tree growing on the summit, by which he had let himself down to the place where he stood, had, on being released, sprung back to its natural position far beyond his reach: the surface of rock, eight feet in height above him, was as even as a wall of masonry; and an upward glance satisfied him that, without assistance from those above, to reascend again would be impossible. Quietly smiling at the difficulty in which he had involved himself, the fearless lad placed his eyes again on the hawk with the confident and resolute, and almost stern, expression they had before borne, and began to examine narrowly his position, and to look about for some safe way of descending to a perilous spur, the breadth of a man's two hands, which, on peering down, he discovered projecting from the side of the rock on a level with the top of the tree. Whether governed solely by that pride of spirit which is found in most youths of hightoned feelings, he internally resolved to accomplish what he had thoughtlessly undertaken; whether actuated by the spirit of adventure, or whether fascinated by the beauty of Kate Bellamont, he wished to preserve the proud bird as a trophy of her skill; whether one or all of these motives influenced the daring fisher's lad, remains to be unfolded.

The spot on which he stood was the projecting edge of the second stratum of rock, twenty inches wide, running irregularly along the face of the precipice, and appeared to have been formed by the falling away of large chips or flakes from the upper and softer stratum. From this rim there ran a zigzag crevice, an inch wide, obliquely downward along the rock to the shelf below, on which grew a handful of long grass and two or three slender shrubs. On a level with it was the top of the tree; underneath, thirty feet below, were visible its gnarled roots clinging to a mere lip of the rock, yet vigorously inserting themselves in the neighbouring crevices; farther down, on the edge of the brow where the cliff began to incline inward, was visible yet one more foothold, scarcely a palm in breadth; below that, the shrinking eye measured a dizzy vacancy till it fell upon the still, pool-like bay beneath.

The youth surveyed these features of the dangerous precipice with a steady eye; and having coolly calculated his chance of accomplishing safely the descent of the twelve feet below him, sat down with his legs hanging over, and deliberately drew off his stout fisher's boots and hung them on a twig beside him. Then turning round, he carefully slid off and suspended his body an instant by his right hand, till he had firmly inserted the tip of one foot and the fingers of the other hand in the zigzag crevice. Releasing his right hand from its grasp on the shelf, he then carried it below the left, and having got a firm hold of the edge of the fissure, let go with the left and passed it in its turn under the right: he changed the position of his feet in the same manner so long as he could obtain, which was not always the case, a resting-place for his toes; and in this way, with cool self-possession and undaunted nerve, which even the wild cries and beating wings of the bird could not move, he succeeded in safely reaching the small projecting leaf, and stood on a level with the top of the tree. The falcon was now within seven feet of him horizontally; but he seemed as far from the attainment of his object as before. It was impossible to spring into the tree, even if its roots should not be torn from their rocky bed by the force of the leap and his weight. But the young fisherman possessed a temper that never yielded to obstacles, and seemed to be governed

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by a spirit that scorned defeat. Stretching himself out upon the shelf, which was just broad enough to contain his body lying sideways to the face of the rock, he looked down, and saw within reach of his arm a stout root, the strength of which he tested; and below this, within reach of his feet if he should swing himself off, was a sharp projection scarce the size of his foot; and a few inches below that, a stout limb of the tree rested against the precipice. His eye embraced at once these advantages, and he did not hesitate to avail himself of them.

Lightly, but yet with care, he committed his weight to the root, and, hanging at the full length of his arm, reached, after three unsuccessful trials, the spur below with the tip end of one of his toes. This, to one like him, was a sufficient hold to authorize him to release his grasp above. Lying, like a fly upon a wall, close against the side of the rock, he now fearlessly yet cautiously let go his hold, and stood with one foot on the projection, with no other support but his muscular adhesion to the wide wall of the precipice. This was a situation attended with the most imminent peril; and by the firmly closed lips and the almost stern expression of his eyes, it was clear that he was fully conscious of his dangerous position. But there was no shrinking, no pallor, no sign of fear! He was equal to the danger he had braved; and, as this increased, the powers of his mind and body seemed to expand to compass it.

The branch of the tree was within a few inches of the point on which his foot rested. Slowly and cautiously he dropped his unsupported leg, while he pressed his cheek and shoulder close against the side of the cliff; for he knew that the slightest deviation from the equilibrium would be fatal. His foot at length touched the horizontal limb, which was the thickness of a man's arm where it met the rock. He repeatedly pressed upon it, each successive time harder and heavier, until he found that it would bear his whole weight. Then directing his hand carefully downward towards his feet, he placed it on the point of rock, removing his foot at the same instant to make room for it, and stood upright and with confidence on the limb.

Satisfied that the branch, which, turned back by the cliff, had forced the tree to lean over the water, would safely sustain him, he now glanced down to the foot of the tree, and began to inspect the hold of the trunk upon the shelf from which it grew. The examination afforded him no very great assurance; nevertheless, he determined to test its strength by advancing out on the limb, though aware that, if it should yield to his weight, he would be hurled with it into the sea. Even this reflection did not present any weighty objection to his making the trial; for with a fearless recklessness, for which there is no sufficient term in language, he half anticipated the possibility of such a catastrophe, and caught himself calculating the chances in favour of his taking in safety a flight into the deep pool beneath. Letting go his grasp on the point of rock, he now settled himself astride the branch, and made gradual approaches towards the trunk. It remained firm as the rock in which it was imbedded, and scarcely gave signs of feeling his weight till he touched the body, when the top slightly vibrated. He paused; but, finding it still remain fast, rose to his feet and clasped the scathed trunk, at first lightly, and then more firmly; and at last, gaining confidence, he shook it till the hawk fluttered anew in its perch. Assured of its security, his lips unclosed, and his eyes lost their severity, and with a smile of success he cast them triumphantly upward, where, but a few feet above him, entangled by the long shaft of the arrow and his broken wing, he saw the falcon secured in the crotch formed by a fork of three stumps of limbs (all that decay had left) that terminated its summit.

Without hesitation he began to climb the trunk, which, save the limb by which he had reached it, and the branches crowning it, was bare from its roots upward. This was the least difficult part of his hazardous enterprise, and he soon got within reach of the bird, and stretched one arm forth to seize him by the wing. But the fierce animal, who had for a few moments ceased his struggles to watch, with a quick and guarded glance, the movements of the young fisherman, no sooner saw this hostile demonstration on the part of his human foe, than, with an intelligence supernaturally called forth by existing suffering and anticipated danger, he struck at him fiercely with his sharp, glittering talons; while, stretching downward his head to the full extent of his neck, he uttered long, wild cries of mingled fear and menace. Nothing daunted by what, in itself, was sufficiently appalling, the young man coolly watched his opportunity, and, at the expense of several severe wounds in the wrist from his talons, caught the hawk by the throat. Clinging round a limb with the disengaged arm, he raised himself higher in the tree, and lifting his prize, which still struck at him with his armed feet, he skilfully extricated the wing and arrow from the

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crotch: the next instant, with the huge, fluttering bird in his hand, he had slidden down the trunk, and was standing on the transverse limb with a flushed brow, and a triumphant look illuminating his handsome and fearless countenance.

With one arm bent around the tree, and the other holding the hawk at full length, he now began to cast his eyes upward. They travelled over the bare surface, scarcely without lighting upon a resting-place for a squirrel; and he began, for the first time, to question the possibility of reascending; it having been comparatively easy for him to let his body down by the crevice, as he had descended, while it would be impracticable for him to lift its whole weight up again by the mere effort of the fingers. A glance demonstrated this to him at once. But time was not given him to reflect on a plan for surmounting a difficulty which, in reality, was insurmountable, his faculties being at once called into action to save himself from being thrown from this dizzy perch by the struggles of the hawk. This ferocious creature had been wounded by the arrow in the side just beneath the wing, which was broken by the fall to the earth, and, thence passing upward, the barb had come out through his back, without touching any vital part. His strength was, therefore, through pain, rather augmented than diminished; and notwithstanding the manual pressure upon his windpipe, he now began to battle fiercely with his captor, fighting both with his claws and remaining wing. Though holding him out at arm's length, the young man was unable wholly to defend himself from the strong blows of the wing, which was three feet in length, with which he violently assailed him about the head, while with his talons he succeeded in striking his person and inflicting a deep wound in his breast. He for a time coolly bore the heavy sweeps of the wing, hoping he would soon tire; but he forgot that his terrible antagonist was "the bird of tireless wing;" and, at length, finding his own strength beginning to fail, though his spirit was unsubdued, he loosened his hold from the trunk of the tree which his arm had hitherto encircled, and, leaning his back against it, watched his opportunity, and suddenly, with a firm grasp, seized the wing as it was beating against his temples, and, by a sudden and skilful turn of his wrist, dislocated it. This bold act nearly destroyed his equilibrium; and, after its successful accomplishment, he just had time to recover his hold on the tree to save himself from falling into the dark wave below. For a moment afterward his heart throbbed tumultuously; and reflecting on the imminent peril he had incurred by this necessary exposure, he trembled with emotion and several times breathed heavily, as if to relieve his breast of a weight of suffocating sensations the tribute which nature demanded of humanity.

Goaded to increased rage by the additional pain, and maddened at his vain efforts to lift his useless wing, the eyes of the hawk glittered in his head like a snake's, and, opening his red jaws, he thrust forth his long, narrow tongue, and hissed at his captor like an angry serpent. It was a moment that called for all the moral energy and physical nerve man is capable of exercising in the hour of danger. The extraordinary young fisherman evinced the possession of these qualities in a degree adequate to the crisis which called them into action. With his eyes fixed unflinchingly on the burning eyeballs of the hawk, and calmly indifferent the while to the terrible hisses which came hot from his throat and fell warm upon his face, he continued to keep him at bay so that his talons should not reach his person, and put forth all his strength to strangle him. There was a moral grandeur in the spectacle this young fisher's lad presented, fearlessly perched on his fearful eminence, as regardless of the depth below as if standing in his own cottage door, battling at such odds with the fiercest warrior of the air!

It was at this crisis that one of the fishermen, a very old man, whose attention, with that of his companions, had been hitherto too much occupied by the trial at archery to give a thought to the youth, after having remained to see the prize awarded to the victress, turned to leave the ground, when missing the young man, he recollected that he had seen him follow the hawk to the verge of the cliff. Calling him by name and not receiving any reply, he approached the precipice; but finding that he was on the most perpendicular part of it, he cast only a hasty glance down, and was about to turn away, supposing he had, unseen, descended to the beach by the usual route a little farther to the north, when a movement far below arrested his eyes. Looking steadily, he beheld the youth with one arm clasped round the tree, and the other stretched out, holding the bird by the neck, while all his moral and physical energies were called into action to enable him to defend himself against the talons of the savage creature.

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A glance conveyed to the fisherman the whole extent of the danger; and, after looking down upon him for a moment in speechless horror, his limbs trembled with fear, and, giving utterance to a wild cry, he would have fallen from the precipice had he not caught by a tree that hung over its verge. Kate Bellamont was the first to reach the cliff on hearing the alarm given by the old man; and, glancing down, she intuitively comprehended the peril in which the youth had placed himself. With wonderful presence of mind, waving her hand back to those advancing, she said with energy,

"Hold! all of ye! Breathe not a word! He is in mortal danger! A shriek, or a sign of fear among us may unnerve his bold spirit and be fatal to him!"

Several of the young archeresses stopped suddenly, and turned pale at this intimation of danger; while one or two, with more sensibility of nerves, unable to control their fears, turned and fled towards the castle, as if in the retirement of their closets they would shut out all sense of the threatened evil. Young Lord Robert was the first by Kate Bellamont's side.

"By Heaven! a bold peasant!" he said, his eyes sparkling with admiration; "but "

"Lester, this is no time for words," spoke the maiden, quickly. "Something must be done for him. How could he have got there in safety! Poor, rash youth!"

"Alas! my child, my lost, lost child!" cried the old fisherman, who was seated on the ground shaking his head mournfully, turning his eyes away from the trying scene. "God protect thee, lad, for no human aid will avail thee!"

"Do not despair, good Dennis, he may yet be saved," said Kate, encouragingly.

"Let go the bird!" shouted Lester.

The fisher's lad, whose attention had been called to the top of the cliff by the shout of the old man, and who had watched the movements of those above, smiled proudly at this request, and firmly shook his head in the negative.

"He deserves to perish if he will peril his life for that bird," said the young noble.

"Hush, Lester, he must be aided. Mark, drop the bird, or he will throw you off. How could you be so foolish as to adventure your life for that fierce hawk!"

"There is humble gallantry at the bottom of it, I dare swear," said Lester, with a tone in which there was a slight shade of scorn.

"Perhaps there may be!" was the quiet reply of the maiden. "Mark, let the bird go, I command you. If your life is sacrificed, I shall feel that I am the cause of it."

"By the bow of Dan Cupid! I would change places with the serf to have my situation create such an interest in your breast, fair lady." This was spoken, partly with sincere feeling, partly with derision, by the haughty Lester.

The full, dark gaze of Kate Bellamont encountered his; and with a manner that eloquently conveyed the feeling of contempt that sprang up in her heart, she said,

"Robert Lester must have fallen low in his own self-esteem to be jealous of a fisher's lad!"

The young noble, with all his native haughtiness and pride of spirit, possessed a generous nature, and was ever ready to atone for the wounds which his wayward temper might have caused him unawares to inflict. Especially

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was this the case where Kate Bellamont was the party interested. With an instantaneous change peculiar to hasty spirits, he sought pardon of the offended maiden with his eyes, and at once appeared so different, that she saw that she could fully rely on him; plainly reading in his face, with unerring feminine tact, that he nobly had resolved to banish every feeling but the humane one the occasion demanded.

"Lester, he will not release the bird for which he has perilled so much," she said, with frank confidence in her tones, "and we must devise some means to save both him and his prize. Haste to the castle, and get a rope to save your comrade!" she cried to the remaining fisherman.

"I will save him with my life!" said the young noble. "How many bows have we here?"

"A dozen," said Kate, at once comprehending the object of his inquiry. "But are they strong enough, Robert?"

"To bear the weight of three men. Aid me, Kate, in making a chain of them."

In a few seconds they had prepared a rope or chain nearly threescore feet in length, of bows strung together, each link being five feet long. Firmly securing one end to the top of the precipice by carrying it over an upright limb, they successfully tested the strength of the whole by extending it along the lawn, half a dozen drawing on it at once without breaking it.

"This will do," he said with confidence, approaching the cliff to let it down; but, to his surprise, he saw that the youth no longer retained the bird, which, notwithstanding the command of the maiden, he had hitherto seemed resolved, as Lester had hinted, to preserve, at the peril of his life.

While these preparations had been making on the cliff, the hawk, not being any longer able to reach the young fisher's body with his talons, began to strike and lacerate his wrists. Finding at length that his strength was unequal to the effort of strangulation (his intention having been, if he could have killed him, to have lashed him to his back, and so ascended with him), and satisfied that, while holding him in his hand alive, he could not reascend, he reluctantly had been compelled by a severe wound in the hand to let him go. In his fall the bird struck heavily against the root of the tree, and, bounding off, descended twenty feet lower, when the point of the arrow, which passed through him like a spit, caught in a cleft and firmly held him on the little shelf before described, which projected from the brow that beetled over the sea at the height of seventy feet from it. The youth watched him a few moments steadily, and saw that he moved neither wing nor talon. He was dead!

When the intrepid lad saw him arrested in this manner, and that life was now extinct, the cloud of regret that began to darken his face was all at once chased away by a sunbeam of pleasure; for he discovered, as he followed the bird's course with his eye, that the cleft in which he was caught commenced at the very foot of the tree, and offered him the same perilous facilities of descent that the zigzag one above had afforded. When Lester looked over the cliff preparatory to letting down the chain of bows, he beheld him, therefore, to his astonishment, in the act of swinging himself from the horizontal limb, and the next moment clinging about the trunk below it. Before either Kate or he could speak to warn him, so sudden was their surprise, the daring youth had effected a cautious and rapid descent of the tree, and was standing safely at its roots: on casting their eyes farther below, they discerned, hanging over the very verge of the brow, midway the precipice, the lifeless ger-falcon, which instantly accounted to them for this new and unexpected movement.

"His blood be upon his own head!" cried the maiden, shrinking from the sight. "Lester, look! Is he not attempting to reach the bird? Or perhaps he finds that he cannot climb the precipice again, and is trying to descend to the water!"

"It is a long step of seventy feet from where that bird hangs to the bottom," said the old fisherman, for an instant rousing himself. "He will die, lady, and I shall have to convey his mangled corpse in my skiff to my lonely hut,

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and dig for the poor boy a grave in the sand. I loved him as if he had been my own flesh and blood!"

Kate was about to ask him, with surprise, if he were not his own son, when a cry of alarm caused her to turn round just in time to see Lord Robert commit himself fearlessly to the chain of bows and swing himself over the dizzy verge. As he descended from her sight, with a smile on his lip and a devotion of the eyes as he met hers, that told her, plainer than words could convey it, that he ventured his life for her sake prompted by his sympathy with the interest she took in the daring fisher's boy, he said resolutely,

"I will save him in spite of himself, or share his fate!"

She was about to speak, but her voice failed her; and covering her eyes to hide him, as he hung suspended above the sea, from her swimming sight, for a few seconds she appeared as if her presence of mind had deserted her. This weakness, if an emotion so natural can be termed such, was but momentary. Recovering herself by a strong mental effort, she once more looked over the cliff, and calmly watched the descent of the daring Lester, whom she knew to be a skilful cragsman, with a prayer on her lip for his safety. The novel chain by which he descended reached to within ten feet of the spot where the young fisherman stood, and the intention of Lord Robert was to take the tree, and reach the roots of it as the other had done before him. He had accomplished, however, but a few feet of his passage down the rock, not without great peril, though at each junction of the bows he found a resting-place for his feet and a hold for his hands, when the young fisher's lad lowered himself from his shelf, and, getting his fingers in the cleft, began to descend, alternately supporting his weight by his arms, with a celerity and apparent recklessness that, to the spectators above, was fearful to witness: he, however, took a firm grasp of the rock each time, and with a cool head and steady eye, gained the spur where the hawk was fixed. In the mean while Lord Robert had reached the tree; and leaving the chain swinging in the air, he clasped the trunk, and quickly descended it: but the object for which he had so generously ventured his life was now twenty feet below him. With all his nerve, the fearless young noble shuddered when he looked down and beheld the means by which the fisher's lad had made his last descent. Both had reached the points at which they aimed at the same instant; and when Lord Robert bent over to look down, holding firmly by the roots of the tree, the other was standing with perfect self-possession on his dizzy foothold, holding the hawk in one hand, and waving with the other to those above.

"Do you value your life so lightly, peasant, without saying anything of the painful sympathy your folly produces in those who are spectators of your foolhardiness, that you peril it after this fashion?" said the young noble, passionately, yet unable to refuse the admiration due to his fearless character.

"I am not your serf, Lord Robert of Castle More, that my life should be of value in your eyes," said the youth, with a look and bearing as haughty as the young noble's.

"Ha!" exclaimed Lord Robert, with astonishment and anger; "these are brave words to come from beneath a homespun jerkin. By the cross of St. Peter! fisherman, thou dost presume too much upon that equality to which mutual danger has for the moment brought us. I have periled my life to assist thee not by mine own will, by Heaven! for thou deservest to be rewarded for thy temerity by a bath in the sea; but at the bidding of a lady, who, perforce, thinks, if thou shouldst, by any lucky chance, break thy neck for the hawk her arrow has sent over the cliff, thy blood will be on her head. So I have explained to thee the height and depth of my charity, lest thou shouldst swell still bigger to think that, peasant as thou art, thou hast made a noble thy servant."

"A very proper speech, I have no doubt, Lord Robert More," answered the fisherman, with a quiet smile of superiority (as the noble construed it). "I need none of your lordship's aid. Without it I came down, and without it I can go up again."

"The devil have thee, then, for thy obstinacy," cried Lester, his eyes flashing with anger; "by the rood, if I had thee there, I would be of a mind to help thee down rather than up."

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"The path by which I came is equally open to your lordship," was the cool answer. "Robert More, thrice have I saved your life; and though you have thanked me like a noble for the deed at the time, have after cancelled it by treating me like a slave, because the accident of birth has made you noble and me base. Leave me again. I will not owe my life to your lordship!" This was said in a steady and determined, but very quiet tone.

"My good Meredith, I will forgive thy rudeness of speech, for thou hast had offence," said the young man, struck with his proud and independent character, so nearly akin to his own. "The haughtiness with which I have treated thee is one of the consequences of this accident of birth. Believe me, I have never forgotten what I owe to thy courage: once saved from drowning by thee! once snatched from a peril almost equal to that thou art now in! once preserved from death beneath the antlers of an enraged stag! I have not forgotten these debts, thou seest. If I have seemed to thee ungrateful, set it down, brave Mark, to pride of birth rather than want of feeling. Shall I aid thee, lad, in gaining the top?"

"Lord Robert, your words have atoned for the past," said the young fisherman, not unmoved by this generous and manly defence of the proud young noble; "nevertheless, I will not owe my life to you!"

The noble fastened his penetrating gaze on the upturned face of the young fisherman, and thought he discovered a meaning there that was a key to his refusal.

"Ha! I have it!" he said, internally, after a few moments' reflection. "*He dares to place his thoughts on her!*"

Instantly, with that lightning-like rapidity with which his impulsive feelings changed, he shouted in a loud, haughty tone of voice,

"Ho, Sir Peasant! prithee tell me what strange fondness for dead hawks set thee to jeoparding thy life after this sort?"

"Lester," cried Kate Bellamont from the summit of the cliff, hearing their voices without understanding the words, "why this delay? Can there be no means of reaching the noble youth?"

"Noble youth!" repeated the young man, scornfully, to himself; "it will be a *princely* next. By the cross! If he does not smile and wave his daring hand to her! And she answers it back! Fellow!" he added, fiercely, "I will come down and hurl thee into the sea!"

"You are welcome, Lord Robert," replied the other, unmoved; "yet, as there is barely room for me, it is certain that, if you do descend, *one* of us only can remain upon it."

The impetuous Lester was already preparing to descend by the crevice; but the coolness of the other at once disarmed his anger.

"Thou art a brave fellow, Mark, and I would not injure thee. But," he added, sternly, "see that thou cross not my path!"

"How mean you, Lord Robert?" he inquired, concealing his penetration of the lover's motives under a look of simplicity that embarrassed the haughty and sensitive noble.

Before he could reply, the voice of the Countess of Bellamont, encouraging them both, was heard from the summit. She only had this instant arrived, drawn hither by the rumour of the danger of the fisher's lad, accompanied by Dermot, and one or two men-servants, with ropes and other means of assisting those below.

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Her first proceeding, on discovering the position of the parties, was to attach the rope to the chain of bows, and have the end of it firmly tied to the tree. She then bade the men to lower it steadily till it could be reached by Lord Robert, and in a few seconds he held it in his grasp.

"Now, Sir Peasant," said Lester, relaxing into his former haughty mood, "here is the means of reascending the cliff."

"You may profit by it, my lord, I will not," said the youth, firmly. "I will receive no favour at your hands."

"Then, by Heaven, thou shalt ascend, whether thou wilt or no," said the noble, with energy. "I have pledged my word to save thee, and I will redeem my pledge. Ho! there above! Drop a piece of cord a few yards in length, so that it will fall at my feet."

The coil was placed by Kate Bellamont on the rope, and the next moment, sliding down like a ring along the chain of bows, it was caught in his hand.

"Let out twenty feet more of the rope," he again shouted, "and see that it is well fast above."

As it passed through his hands, he conducted it over the shelf on which he stood till it touched the feet of the young fisherman. He had quietly watched these preparations, and, as they were completed, he coolly glanced into the depth beneath, and then upward to the young noble, with an air so resolute that the other paused ere he descended by the chain, on a link of which one foot already rested.

"Surely thou wilt not be so mad!" exclaimed Lester, reading a fatal determination in his lofty and intrepid look.

"Robert More, I will owe you no favour. Rather than be beholden to you for my life, I will fling it away, as freely as I have now hazarded it to win a smile from the fair maiden of Castle Cor."

"Thou! By Heaven, I thought it!" he shouted, with scorn and indignation. "If I had thee on a piece of ground two feet square that would hold us both, I would waive my birth, and do battle with thee on that score, hind as thou art! and see if I could not beat out of thy bones this leaven of insolence! I will now assuredly aid thy return to the summit, that I may have the pleasure afterward of doing for thee this good service."

As Lester spoke, he committed himself with cool intrepidity to the chain, holding in one hand the coil of line, by which it was evidently his intention to lash the young fisherman to the rope, and began rapidly to descend.

"Robert More, I do not fear to meet you on any ground. If I did, I should hardly take *this leap* to avoid the lesson you have in contemplation for me! But I will owe you no favour, not even that of life. Nor shall you lay a finger upon me to force me to do your pleasure in this thing. Hold! place your foot on the nock of this second bow above me, and I will take a free spring out into the air."

This was said in a tone and manner a steady uplighting of his clear dark eyes, and a firm, muscular compression of the lip that made the other hesitate; but it was only for an instant: the next moment he let the bow to which he held slip through his hands, and he descended with velocity till his foot struck upon the last link, which was on a level with the young fisherman's head. At the same moment the latter elevated his arms high above his head, holding the hawk between his hands, and placing his feet close together, made a spring into the air!

Lester, with a full knowledge of his cool and resolute character, had not anticipated this result; and, in his surprise, had nearly let go his hold. He at the same time uttered a cry of horror, which was answered from the summit by a loud wail of anguish from many voices; for this act had been witnessed by all, without the cause which influenced it being apparent. Preserving the erect attitude with which he had left the rock, the young

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fisherman descended like lightning, cut the still bosom of the black wave beneath, and disappeared below the agitated surface; the heavy, splashing sound of his fall striking on the ears of those on the summit of the cliff like his death-knell. Wild and full of mortal anguish was the shriek that echoed it!

A flush of hope lighted up the countenance of Lester when he saw the accuracy with which he had struck the surface, and thought upon the manner of his descent. At the same time Kate Bellamont, who had been an interested but puzzled spectator (for their voices, at the height she stood, had not distinctly reached her) of the previous conduct of the parties, and had beheld with horror the seemingly fatal act of the adventurous youth, also marked the natatory art with which he had taken the spring; and, scarcely hoping, watched, equally with Lester, the circling waves, as they widened from the centre, with an intensity amounting to agony.

After an interval of full thirty seconds, which seemed an age to those who watched, the water, which had once more become nearly smooth, was seen to part many yards from the point of descent, and the head of the daring youth appeared above the surface. A shout, loud and long, greeted him from the cliff; and no voice was louder or more glad in the joyful welcome than Lord Robert's. With the hawk elevated in one hand, and buffeting the waves with the other, he swam bravely towards a belt of sand a few yards farther northward; and in a few moments afterward he safely landed, full in sight of those standing anxiously on the cliff. Pointing to his prize, and waving his hand to Kate Bellamont with native gallantry, he disappeared around an angle of the shore, to reascend, by a beaten and easy path, to the summit of the promontory.

In the mean time Lord Robert became an object of renewed interest to the party. He was sixty feet from the top of the cliff, with no other means of reaching it than the precarious chain of bows and a few additional feet of rope: even the permanent safety of this was doubtful. It depended solely for its strength on the goodness of the yews and the entire soundness of the slender bow-strings; and one of these he discovered, on running his eyes upward, was chafed by some sharp point of the rock with which it had come in contact. There remained, however, no alternative. It was plain that he must either trust himself to it, or follow the example of the young fisherman, and take the leap into the sea. For a moment he gazed down into the water, and seemed to measure with deliberate purpose the empty void between; but, shaking his head with doubt, he once more turned his attention to the equally dangerous, but more probable, means of escape. The catgut which had stranded belonged to the third bow above him. Drawing hard upon it with his whole weight, he saw that it was slowly untwisting, and that it would be madness to trust himself to it. His self-possession, however, did not desert him.

"Can you obtain no stout rope that will reach me here, `wild Kate?'" he said, in a careless tone; "I fear the ragged points of the rock will cut your bow-strings, and spoil them for further shooting."

"No, Lester, there is none!" answered the maiden, in a deep voice, that betrayed the depth and intensity of her feelings at this crisis; "men have been sent to the cove for ropes, but it is far, and it will be long before they return, even if they succeed in getting them. God protect you! Preserve your coolness, for my sake, Robert!" she added, with that force and truth that spurned, at such a moment, all disguise.

Her words seemed to have awakened anew the spirit within him. Placing his hand on his heart, he carried it to his lips, and gallantly waved it towards her. She answered it encouragingly in return; but instantly turning away overcome by her feelings, cast herself on the bosom of her mother, and burst into tears.

Necessarily ignorant of this touching testimony of her attachment to him, which his imminent danger now forbade her to disguise longer under a mask of badinage, Lester concentrated all his energies to the task before him. He felt that before the lapse of one or two hours, which it would require to get ropes from the cove which was more than a league distant, the inconvenience of his position would have left him with little strength to climb the cliff, even with the assistance that might then be rendered. He was now in the full possession of his physical and mental energies, and resolved, without longer delay, to avail himself of them. Taking the cord, which he had demanded for a very different intention, he fastened one end around his wrist; then leaning backward from the rock,

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sustaining himself by the grasp of one hand on the chain, he threw it upward with such accurate aim that it passed through the bow next above the one with the stranded string, and fell down within his reach. He then loosened it from his wrist, firmly secured the ends to the lower bow on which he was sustained, and so made the cord supply the place of the weak bow-string, and bear the whole strain. This done, he prepared to ascend the smooth face of the rock twenty feet to the foot of the tree. Grasping the cord with both hands, he braced himself in a horizontal position, one of most imminent hazard which demanded all the coolness, self-possession and physical strength he was possessed of, and began literally to walk up the perpendicular side of the precipice. The stranding of a string; a sudden strain upon the tensely bent bows; the least deviation from the horizontal, would have been instantly fatal! Coolly, slowly, steadily, lifting himself, step by step, hand after hand, he at last got to a level with the tree, firmly grasped one of its roots, and by its aid sprung lightly upon the shelf on which it grew.

His preparations had been watched, and it was told Kate Bellamont that he was preparing to ascend. But the maiden had yielded her full heart to her woman's nature; and while he was making the perilous ascent, with her head lifted from her mother's bosom, and with tearful eyes and clasped hands, she was looking heavenward, breathing a silent prayer for his safety. A shout of joy announced to her his success! Once more she dropped her face and wept with joy. Lady Bellamont, who felt that all had been done that circumstances admitted of, refrained from watching his perilous feat; and, while she solaced her daughter, calmly directed Cormac the forester to steady the rope, and keep it from rubbing against the rocks.

Quitting the chain, Lester now ascended the tree to the transverse branch, which he had scarcely reached when a loud crack at the root warned him that the scathed solitary of the cliff, unused to such repeated trials, was giving way under his weight. Hardly had he time to throw himself upon the chain, and hang by a bowstring with one hand, when a series of loud reports rapidly followed each other as one after another the roots snapped; the top of the tree waved wildly to and fro, and then the huge trunk plunged, crashing and roaring, into the flood beneath. For an instant afterward the appalled Lester continued to cling to the fragile chain with nervous solicitude; but at length assured that he was not to be carried along with it into the frightful gulf, he prepared to continue, by the same process of horizontal walking he had hitherto adopted, his upward progress to the next shelf, six feet above him, and with which the top of the tree had been on a level.

The effect of the fall of the tree on those so deeply interested above can scarcely be imagined. Lady Bellamont answered the heavy crash by a wild shriek, echoed by all around save Kate. With her the dreadful suspense and anxiety were now lost in the certainty of his fate. She calmly raised her head, approached the cliff with a firm step, and looked steadily down, not with hope, but with a settled gaze of despair, as if she would take a last look at his grave, and for ever impress upon her heart's tablet his sea-covered tomb. It was at this moment of her soul's anguish she confessed within her own heart that, notwithstanding the lightness with which she might have attempted to disguise it, she loved him with all the fervour and devotedness of a first passion. Approaching the verge with such feelings, her surprise was only equalled by her joy when she saw him in the act of climbing on the shelf above described. A joyful cry escaped her; and the bold youth, looking up, acknowledged her presence with a proud smile and wave of his hand. From this moment Kate Bellamont was herself again. He was safe! The change from grief to joy in her countenance was electrical! and she prepared to watch and aid his ascent with all the coolness and energy she was possessed of.

He had accomplished thus far his arduous task in comparative safety; and as he had now but twenty feet more to ascend, she looked with confidence to its successful accomplishment. This space, however, save a shelf within eight feet of the top on which the young fisherman had alighted, and the zigzag crevice by which he had descended the remaining twelve feet, was steep as a wall, and as difficult of ascent. The young man, after having hitherto passed through such trying scenes, was not now to be daunted by any obstacles, of whatever magnitude, that opposed his farther progress. Nerving himself to the effort, he grasped the rope, which here had taken the place of the chain of bows, and extended himself, as before, into a horizontal position, meeting and returning with a smile, as he did so, her look of solicitude. As he slowly and laboriously ascended, she inspired the men to their task of keeping the rope from the cliff, often assisting them with her own fingers, till at length she was rewarded

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by seeing him safely reach the shelf, and stand within eight feet of the summit. By her direction the men now bent the projecting branch of the tree until it was within his reach; when, aided by one hand placed on the rope, he lightly climbed the limb, and with a spring stood in safety on the top of the cliff.

Kate, who had scarcely breathed as she watched this final effort, guided by the impulse of the moment, flung herself at once, grateful, happy, weeping, into his arms! so certain it is that true love will out, give it occasion to speak for itself! And what fitter one than this? At such a time, love is both deaf and blind. It sees, hears, knows no voice but its own; is indifferent to the opinions of a world of witnesses, and, setting aside all canons of propriety and discretion, abandons itself to the impulses of its ardent nature. Such was the love of Kate Bellamont.

But love, like all other emotions, is but shortlived in its excess. The temporary excitement passes away; reflection follows; notions of propriety return; and the conscious victim, blushing, mortified, angry with shame, feels that there *is* a world of witnesses to whose canons she is amenable, and shrinks at the judgment that will be passed on her outrage of its received notions of maidenly propriety. Such, the next moment after abandoning herself to the first wild gush of joy at his escape, were the thoughts that rushed thick on the mind of the proud and sensitive maiden. She sprang away from him; hid her face in her hands; and, for the moment, scarcely knew whether her wounded feelings would have vent in tears or laughter. True to her character as "Wild Kate of Castle Cor," the latter prevailed; and, exposing her face, she broke into a fit of merry laughter, which was caught up and continued, with many a lively witticism, by those around, who, the moment before, were sad and gloomy under the pressure of fatal forebodings: for so wonderfully, yet wisely, is the human heart constituted, that smiles never come so readily, and are never so bright, as when heralded by tears.

The gratified Lester was too happy to receive such an ingenuous, impulsive token of her love, and of its deep, womanly sincerity, to feel hurt at this change in her manner, which his good sense enabled him to refer to its true cause. With deep and silent pleasure, he felt that that moment had fully repaid him for all he had risked.

Grace Fitzgerald, who had been by no means an indifferent spectator of his hazardous adventure, now advanced, grasped his hand with great warmth, and congratulated him on his safety.

"You need not look so very fond, Sir Cragman," she said, gayly; "I am not about to follow the example cousin Kate has so generously set for us. Oh no! What with your exploit and Kate's folly, you will be completely spoiled for me! I dare say you would go down that horrid place again for another such hug as my cousin Kate gave you. Really, I am shocked!"

"I will go down and take the leap off into the sea for a similar reception from Grace Fitzgerald," said Lester, with an air of gallantry.

"And do you think I would come near such a dripping monster as you would make of yourself? No, no, I am no Nereid to fancy a man coming out of the sea."

"By which I infer, fair lady," he said, archly, "that, if I will go down and come up dry, you will give me such a welcome as "

"Kate gave you? Really, you are quite spoiled. Kate, come and take care of your beau cavalier, for he is no longer fit for any company but yours. But here comes one I will welcome, dripping or dry!"

She bounded forward as she spoke, and met, at the head of the path, the gallant fisher's lad, who just then appeared, on his way up from the water, bearing in his hand the ger-falcon which had been the cause of putting in peril two human lives. He was accompanied by the old fisherman, who, having remained on the summit of the cliff, paralyzed and inert through alarm and anxiety until assured of his safety, had gone down to the beach to meet him on his return. She approached the young adventurer with one hand extended to welcome him, the

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forefinger of the other at the same time lifted with censure.

"I will shake hands with you, Mark; but you deserve, handsome as you are, to have your ears boxed. See what a to-do you have been the cause of; and all for that great black bird, which Kate, forsooth, must shoot instead of sending her arrow at the target. Well, you are a noble and gallant young man, and I like you. Do you hear that, Kate? I too have made a declaration! Well, but I won't embrace you, I think, for you are too wet."

While the lively girl was speaking, the rest of the party, including Lord Robert and Kate, approached and joined in welcoming him.

"My brave Meredith," said Lester, frankly extending his hand, "you deserve a better career than that before you. Henceforth let us be friends."

The hand of the young noble was received without embarrassment and with a native dignity of manner by the humble youth, that, to all present, atoned for his want of high birth; while he said, with a firm yet respectful tone,

"We may not be enemies, but we can never be friends, Lord Robert: friendship between the high and low is but another name for dependance to the latter."

"I fear you speak too truly, Mark," said Kate, who had congratulated him on his escape with an honest warmth and sincerity of manner that sent the blood like lightning to his brows.

"Not in my case, brave Mark," said the noble, earnestly; "I will become your patron and "

"And is there patronage without dependance, my lord?" he asked, in a quiet tone.

"Well, well," said Lester, colouring, "have it your own way. You have pride enough for Lucifer!"

"But not enough for a noble," said the other, with a very slight curl of the lip.

"Mark Meredith," said Kate, reprovingly, "you forget your station. A proper degree of pride is the secret of independence. Perhaps you have too much. Lord Robert is sincere, and means well by you."

"Believe her, Mark," said Grace Fitzgerald, with playful raillery; "nobody ought to know so well what Lord Robert means as my cousin Kate."

"Stop your saucy tongue, Grace," said the maiden, placing a finger on her bright lips. "What will you now do, Mark, with this bird, that has cost us, through your thoughtlessness, so much anxiety and suffering?"

"And betrayed a secret that was not quite a secret before," said the mischievous Grace.

"Grace, prithee hist!" cried Kate, with a spice of asperity.

"Give me the bird, peasant!" said Lester, in a tone of authority. "I will nail it on the door of the lodge at Castle More, in honour of the fair archer who shot it."

"Here is the gentle owner," replied the youth, turning towards Kate Bellamont; and gracefully kneeling as he spoke, he gallantly laid the bird at her feet, saying,

"Gentle archeress, deign to accept it is the only boon I crave for my peril this trophy of thy skill. I have obtained it for thee at the risk of life and limb, valuing neither, so that I might do thee a service, and save what I know thou

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wilt be proud to preserve in remembrance of this day."

"By the cross! a forward youth! an Alfred in disguise, I would swear!" said Lester, haughtily, his quick spirit kindling at the scene. "He will be offering next, fair Kate," he added, scornfully, "to share with thee his palace of bark and poles, and his wide realm of sand and seashells. S'death! a proper peasant!" The young noble's eyes sparkled, and he paced the sward with angry impatience, as he concluded.

Kate Bellamont was not indifferent to the tone, manner, and language with which the hawk was presented by the humble youth. She was flattered by his well-directed compliments, and pleased, without knowing why, with the deep, silent admiration with which he regarded her. Was it the language of love? His manner reminded her of Lester in his most impassioned moments of devotion; but there was in the fine face of the young fisherman a calmer, sweeter, more chastened expression; a reverence without humility; devotion without awe. Was it love? She trembled, as she thought so, and dared not a second time meet his dark-beaming eyes. The peculiar character of the expression of his face was read aright by none but herself and Lester: for only love and jealousy can translate the language of love. The light blue eyes of the young noble flashed fierce fire as he witnessed what he deemed palpable proof of his suspicions. His glance turned rapidly from the face of one to the face of the other. The expression of his maddened him; that of hers troubled and puzzled him; and he turned away, grinding his teeth with bitterness: for what is there on earth so bitter as jealousy?

The contrast between the appearance of these two haughty young men was as great as that existing between their ranks in life. The young noble was in his eighteenth year, tall, and firmly made, with uncommon breadth and expansion of chest, which gave a striking appearance of compactness and muscular finish to his frame, that promised, in manhood, nobleness of carriage as well as great personal strength. His complexion was fair as the Saxon's; his features regular as the Greek's; but, unlike his, stamped with that union of manly grace and strength, and bold, fiery energy, supposed to be characteristic of the ancient Briton. Over his clear, high forehead fell locks of light flaxen hair of rare beauty, and shining tresses of the same pale, golden hue floated about his shoulders. His eyes were his most remarkable feature. They were large and blue, clear as light, and of a beautiful shape, glowing with intellect and sparkling with animation, and, when undisturbed, beaming with a soft and gentle expression betokening gayety of temper and lightness of spirit; but, when roused by anger, they flashed fierce fire, and seemed literally to blaze, so bright was the light they emitted. They further possessed a striking peculiarity, which so marked his angered glance that he who once encountered it never forgot it till his dying day. This was a habit, or, rather, nature had given it to him, when under the influence of angry passions, of lowering his brows down over his eyes in such a way as to destroy their fine, oval form, and give them a strange, triangular shape; and the pupil of his eyes darkening at the same time till they grew black as night, communicated to them a singularly wild and terrible expression.

His lips were very beautiful both in form and colour; but the upper wore a haughty curl that marred the beauty of a mouth which nature had chiselled with the nicest hand. He carried himself at all times with a gallant but proud air; and his demeanour was like that of the highborn youths of his time, taught to regard all of low degree as created for their use and pleasure. His faults were those of education rather than of the heart; and, where these deeply-grafted prejudices were not attacked, he was frank, noble, and generous, and not unworthy the love of a noble maiden like Kate Bellamont. At the moment seized upon to describe his appearance, he was standing within a few feet of the young fisherman, his eyes sparkling with anger and assuming that remarkable shape which has been described, with his head and one foot advanced, and his whole attitude hostile and threatening.

The fisher's lad, who continued kneeling for an instant at the feet of the fair archeress awaiting her acceptance of the trophy he had presented, met his dark look unmoved, and, as he thought, with a smile of proud defiance. The appearance of this bold youth, whose bearing caused the haughty Lester to question if nature had not a nobility of her own creation, was, save in his proud carriage, strikingly opposite to that of the young noble. He was about the same age, and nearly as tall, but had not such fulness in the chest, and was wanting something of his breadth of shoulders; but his figure, if lighter, was more elegant, and united great muscular activity with native dignity and

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ease of motion. He wore fishermen's loose trousers, with a coarse jacket of brown stuff, and was both barefooted and bareheaded. His face was exceedingly fine. It was oval in shape, with an olive complexion, still more darkened by exposure to wind and sun: now, with the glow of exercise and the magic presence of her before whom he bent, it had become of the richest brown colour. His dark hair was glossy with sea-water, and, parted naturally on his brow, fell in long raven waves adown his well-shaped neck. His eyes were dark as hers on whom he gazed, exceedingly large-orbed, and eloquent with thought and feeling.

"What handsome eyes!" thought Grace Fitzgerald, as she gazed on them.

"What dangerous eyes!" thought Kate.

His eyebrows were as even and accurately arched as if pencilled; but they were redeemed from anything like effeminacy, on account of the delicacy of their outline, by the intellectual fulness of the brow. His nose was straight, and of just proportions; his mouth beautiful as a girl's, yet full of character, decision, and strength, and oftener it was the seat of dejected thought than of smiles. Its expression was generally quiet; yet the finely chiselled lips were full of spirit; and, when silent, seemed most to speak, so eloquent were the thoughts that coloured them with their ruby life. The merest movement of the upper conveyed the intensest feelings with the vivid rapidity of the lightning's flash, whether they were begotten of scorn or irony, love or hatred. His bearing, as well as his appearance, was above his station; and he manifested a haughty independence of spirit that scorned the distinctions of rank, and a pride of character that, in one of his humble grade, was not far from being closely allied to audacity. But perhaps this only proceeded from a certain impatience at being compelled, nevertheless, to admit in his own person a conventional inferiority to those with whom he felt he was on that broad basis of equality, the elements of which are equal physical and intellectual qualifications.

Though a poor fisher's lad, he possessed all the feelings and sensations common to humanity, and experienced emotions both of pleasure and pain; could feel disgusted at what was revolting, and be pleased at what was agreeable. He shared, therefore, with all men, of whatever rank, from the prince to himself for there could scarcely be a lower scale that mysterious principle of the heart by which it attracts, and is attracted to, woman he beheld Kate Bellamont, and this moral loadstone, acting as nature intended it should do, irresistibly drew him towards her. Without reflection, without cherishing either a hope or a fear, but simply happy in the contiguity, he gave himself up to the new and delightful sensations produced by the flow of love's magnetic fluid through his heart. In plain words, the poor fisher's lad fell deeply in love with the highborn heiress of Castle Cor.

No one of the wonderful phenomena of the human mind so fully demonstrates that it is a mesh of anomalies, as the existence of the fact that, when a man loves a woman, he has only to learn that another regards her with the same flattering sentiments, to hate him most cordially, seek him out, quarrel with him, and even take his life. It would seem to be taken for granted that the knowledge of this fact would have a directly contrary effect; for the presumption irresistibly follows, that whoever feels an interest in the object to which we ourselves are so closely bound by ties of love, must, without regarding the delicacy of the compliment to our individual tastes, be proportionably loved by us. But experience has too often demonstrated this by no means to be the case; but, on the contrary, the knowledge of the existence of a parallel attachment produces in the breast of the legitimate admirer wrath, malice, and hatred, filling his soul towards the subject of it with all manner of evil.

True to this feeling of the human heart, the young noble and fisher's lad forthwith felt rising in their breasts towards each other emotions of a hostile character; for love is a famous leveller, and the prince can deign even to hate his slave if love raises him to a rival. In one of the youths it manifested itself in the cool expression of defiance: in the other, by haughty scorn and indignant surprise.

When the fisher's lad had finished his manly and gallant address, he modestly continued to await, with his hand upon the bird, the acknowledgments of the fair maiden. Gratified, yet embarrassed, Kate remained silent, knowing not how to reply to the chivalrous lad, who, under the magic tuition of love, had suddenly assumed a character

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that alarmed her; who, all at once, had been converted, as if by a spell, from the quiet, yet handsome fisher's boy, who was accustomed to attend her in her excursions along the beach, into a bold and daring lover! She could not be insensible to the compliment. She loved Lester with all her heart; therefore she could not have requited the youth's boyish love, had his blood been noble as her own. Yet there remained a place in her heart for kindly gratitude, and with a smile that sent the quick colour to the forehead of the boy, she said, in a voice that thrilled to his soul,

"I thank you, Mark, for the gift. I will keep it in remembrance of your courage, as well as a trophy of my skill in archery; notwithstanding, I fear good Cormac will lay claim to it, as it was hit with his own arrow. It would make a brave ornament, with its wings spread at length above the door of his cot," she added, turning to the old forester, who stood respectfully on the outskirts of the party that was gathered about Mark and his ger-falcon.

As she spoke her thanks she extended to Mark her hand, which he took with blushing embarrassment, and, after a moment's hesitation, gracefully carried to his lips. The eyes of the young noble sparkled with anger as he saw the offer of the hand, but they shot forth a menacing glare as he witnessed the act on the part of the youth: turning on his heel with an execration, he would have left the ground but for the eye of Kate Bellamont, which he caught fixed upon him.

"Come, Mark," said Grace, "you must join us all in the pavilion; for you need refreshment after your fatigue. I wish, Robert, you would present him with one of your green hunting-suits. I declare, I should like to see if he would not outbrave you all. Do! good Lord Robert."

"You are perfectly crazy, Grace," said Kate, aside.

"Am I?" was the quiet reply, accompanied by a quizzical look, which conveyed far more than the words to Kate's comprehension, and made her, in spite of her efforts to maintain indifference, look exceedingly foolish.

"You are all beside yourselves, I verily believe," said Lester, in a tone that his accent alone made biting; "I have no doubt whatever that it would oblige you excessively, Lady Grace, if I would exchange attire with your fishy favourite."

"Really, Lord Robert, I wish you would. I have a curiosity to know what sort of a fisherman you would make. I dare say a very nice one, save a spice or so of pride, that would hardly suit your station."

"Pride in a peasant is impertinence. But 'tis an attribute most congenial to the station, I discover," he added, with cool irony, "and doth recommend its possessor, I see, most particularly to the favour of noble ladies."

"I advise you, then, Lester, when you chance to fall in their good graces," said Kate, assuming the same tone, yet qualifying its bitterness with good-humour, "that you renew your suit under a fisher's garb; believe me, it will assuredly restore you to favour."

"I have no hesitation in believing it," said Lester, in a grave tone, and with a marked emphasis of manner that excited both maidens to laughter; but he was far from participating in their merriment, and turned from them with an angry brow.

"I have delayed the banquet too long with this folly," said Kate; "hie to the pavilion, fair archers and gallant esquires all," she added, gayly, "and I will soon follow you. As for you, Mark, I will send to you some of the choicest viands on the board, and cousin Grace shall be the bearer of them. Cormac, take up the hawk."

"This honour will please Lord Robert better," replied Grace, glancing at him with an archly malicious look.

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"Lord Robert will have nothing to do with this piece of folly," cried he, in a tone that made her start. "By the cross of Christ! peasant, if you betake not yourself speedily to thy hovel, I will hurl thee with mine own hand from the cliff upon its roof."

As he spoke he advanced upon him. Mark looked apologetically at Kate, and then sprang to his feet, and confronted him with that calm courage which had hitherto characterized him. His coolness maddened the impulsive Lester, and with a bound he leaped upon him, and caught him by the throat; but, ere he could get his fingers firmly clinched upon his windpipe, he reeled violently backward by the force of a blow upon his chest, dealt with a skill and accuracy of aim that compensated for any inequality of physical strength. With eyes darkening with rage, he recovered himself, and seeing lying not far from him on the ground his short hunting-spear, he snatched it up, and launched it at his breast with a force and direction that would have transfixed him on the spot but for his presence of mind; anticipating its flight, he quietly moved from its path, when it passed within a few inches of his head with a loud whirring noise, and, striking against a distant rock, shivered into a thousand fragments.

"Robert Lester," exclaimed Kate Bellamont, with a flashing eye and a voice of indignant horror, "by that act you have forfeited all that belongs to you as a noble gentleman, and also," she added, with deep feeling and a proud spirit, "all that connects you with any person (I speak for all) that is here present."

"Pardon me, lady," he said, throwing himself at her feet, and attempting to take her hand.

"Never, Robert Lester. Touch me not! Leave me leave me! Leave us all! The farther festivities of the day will be marred by your presence!"

"Lady "

"Silence, assassin!" and the dark eyes of the roused heiress of Bellamont flashed with such a light as might burn in an indignant seraph's.

"Ha!" he cried, starting to his feet, "this to me!"

"This to you, Robert Lester, who now have made yourself lower than the meanest peasant. I degrade you from your esquireship; and, faith! if the more noble Mark Meredith shall not take your place. Mark, approach and be my esquire of archery!"

The youth proudly smiled, but hesitated.

"I command you. As true as my father's blood runs in my veins, thou art the more noble!"

"God of Heaven! this is too much to bear calmly," cried Lester, his eyes assuming that remarkable shape that characterized them when his anger had grown to its height.

"Mercy!" cried Grace Fitzgerald, with real alarm; "what a fearful look! I wonder," she added, with a slight touch of her usual manner, "that I ever could have had the courage to coquet with such a terrible creature."

The fierce noble made no reply, but, glancing from her to Kate, looked pleadingly, as if about to speak; but she shook her head with a motion scarcely perceptible, but in a firm manner, that left no hope to his repentant spirit. Striking his forehead violently, with mingled shame and rage he rushed from the spot towards the castle, and walked rapidly until he disappeared behind an angle of one of the towers. Kate Bellamont followed him with her eyes, her brow unbent, her proud manner and high-toned look unchanged; but, when he could no longer be seen, there was perceptible a struggle on her eloquent countenance to restrain the emotion with which her heart was

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full. With an even voice and forced gayety, she said,

"We will now to the pavilion, maidens fair and cavaliers; and I trust this rudeness of yonder haughty boy will not mar our festivities. Mark, you will attend me. What! has he gone too? God grant two such fiery youths meet not again this day."

"Didst observe, my lady," said Cormac, who had been a silent spectator of the exciting scene, "didst take note of that look out of the eyes of Lord Robert? Well, if it did not remind me of Hurler o' the Red Hand, as if he had stood before me."

And the old forester ominously shook his head, as if it contained something very mysterious, yet untold, and followed the party to the pavilion, whither they had already directed their steps, to partake, with what spirits they might after the scenes that had transpired, of the luxurious banquet therein spread for their entertainment.

Here Kate Bellamont, who preserved a calm dignity the while, and, save to the eye of Grace, whose generous spirit sympathized warmly and sincerely in her feelings, betrayed no outward signs of emotion, with a tranquilly-spoken excuse for her absence left them and fled to the castle: she ran through its long hall like a hunted hart; flew up the broad staircase to her boudoir, and entering it, closed the door. Then uttering a gasping cry of suffering, she threw herself, with a wild abandonment of passion, upon a seat; the fountains of her bursting heart, so long choked up, were opened; and she gave way to an irresistible flood of tears.

It is ever thus with woman! Although, in the moment of just resentment, pride and anger may for a while check the flow of affection, and harden the wounded heart as if bound about with bands of steel, yet love will return again, dissolve these bands, and convert resentment into tenderness. It is its nature to obliterate all dark spots that wrong may have cast upon the heart; to palliate offences, and to forgive even where forgiveness is a weakness: it makes itself half sharer of the fault; is ever ready to bear the whole weight of the blame, and with open arms to receive back again, without either atonement or acknowledgment, the guilty but still loved offender.

In a few moments the current of her feelings had changed. She thought of the thousand noble qualities of Lester's head and heart, shaded only by the faults of pride of birth and a hasty temper.

"For these," she asked of her heart, "shall I break his high spirit? For these shall I inflict a pang on his noble nature? For these, which among men are regarded praiseworthy attributes of highborn gentlemen for *these* shall I make him unhappy, and myself for it will kill me miserable? Oh, Lester, dear Lester, I was too, too cruel! You had cause for anger; but oh, that fatal spear! Would that it had been far from your hasty arm!"

At this moment she heard the sound of horses' feet moving rapidly across the court towards the forest. With a foreboding of the cause she flew to the lattice, and beheld Lester, mounted on his coalblack steed, galloping at the top of the animal's speed away from the castle, each moment burying his armed heels into his sides, and riding as if he would outstrip the winds. For a moment she watched him with an earnest gaze, then threw open the lattice, shouted his name, and waved her hand! But his back was towards her, and he was too far off to hear even *her* voice calling him to return; and in a few seconds afterward he entered the wood. With tearful eyes she saw the last wave of his dark plume as he disappeared in the winding of the road; and, leaning her hand upon the window, she sobbed as if her young heart would break. Oh love, love, what a mystery thou art!

CHAPTER III.

"Alas! the love of women! it is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing;
For all of theirs upon that die is thrown,
And if 'tis lost, life hath no more to bring

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To them but mockeries of the past alone,
 And their revenge is as the tiger's spring,
Deadly, and quick, and crushing; yet, as real
 Fortune is theirs what they inflict they feel."
Don Juan.

Kate Bellamont gazed after the departing Lester until his receding form became indistinct, and his dancing plume mingled with the waving foliage of the forest into which he rode; she then bent her ear and listened till his horse's feet ceased longer to give back a sound, when, overcome by the depth and strength of her feelings, she leaned her head upon the lattice and wept like a very child; at length she recollected the duties that devolved upon her as entertainer of the party of archers; and, forcing a calmness that she did not feel, she descended to the lawn, and once more mingled in the festivities of her birthday.

Notwithstanding all her self-possession, her eyes often filled with tears when they should have lighted up with smiles; and even her smiles were tinged with sadness! And how could it be otherwise, when her heart and her thoughts were at no moment with the scenes before her? She longed for the day to close for the night to approach that she might fly to her solitary chamber, and there, hidden from every eye, indulge her feelings. At length the long, long day came to an end, and with it departed the youthful company on horse-back to their several homes. A gay and gallant appearance the cavalcade presented as it rode away from the castle a youthful cavalier prancing by the bridle of each maiden, and a band of armed retainers of the several families bringing up the rear. Kate bade them adieu, and stood in the hall-door following them with her eyes till the last horseman was lost in the windings of the forest; she then flew to her chamber, and turning the bolt of her door, cast herself upon her bed and once more gave free vent to the gushing tears which she could no longer restrain.

Twilight was lost in night: the round moon rose apace, and, shining through the Gothic lattice, fell in a myriad of diamond-shaped flakes on the floor; yet had she not lifted her face from her pillow since first she had buried it there, though the violence of her grief had long since subsided; and so still was she that she seemed to sleep. But the soft influence of this gentle blessing was a stranger to her aching eyelids. Her soul was sad and dark! her sensitive spirit had been wounded! the wing of her heart was broken. Her thoughts rushed wild and tumultuous through her brain, and her young bosom, torn by strong emotions, heaved like the billow when lashed by the storm. She mourned in the silence of her heart's depths, without solace, and without hope; condemning her own hasty act, and, like a very woman, excusing his conduct by every invention that her true love could find in palliation.

All at once she was disturbed by a light tap at her door. She started suddenly, aroused from that world of troubled thought in which she had so long been lost to the exclusion of everything external, and lifted her face. Her surprise was great on seeing the moon looking in upon her, and filling her little room with an atmosphere like floating dust of silver. A glow of pleasure warmed her heart, and an exclamation of delight unconsciously escaped from her lips it was so calmly bright, so richly beautiful! Like a blessing sent from heaven, the sweet moonlight fell upon her soul, and all the softer and holier sympathies of her nature were touched by its celestial beauty. She approached the lattice and threw it open, forgetting the cause that had aroused her from her mood of grief, in admiration of the loveliness to which she had awakened.

A second tap was heard at her door. She started with instant consciousness; and throwing back from her face the cloud of raven ringlets that had fallen about it, tried to assume a cheerful look, and bade the applicant enter.

"I can't, cousin Kate," said the sweet voice of Grace Fitzgerald, in a low tone; "you have locked yourself in."

Kate blushed, stammered something, she scarcely knew what, in excuse, and turning the key, admitted her mischievous cousin.

"In the dark, Kate!" exclaimed Grace, as she entered.

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"'Twere sacrilege, cousin, to bring a lamp in presence of this lovely moon! Come stand by the lattice with me," she said, throwing her arms about her and drawing her towards her.

The fair cousins leaned together from the window and looked out upon the silvery scene. There was something in the quiet loveliness of the lawn beneath, spangled with myriads of dewdrops like minute fragments of diamonds; in the deep repose of the dark woods; in the majesty of the ocean, which sent its heavy, sighing sound to their ears with every passing breeze; in the glory of the glittering firmament, with the moon like a bride walking in its midst, and in their own lonely situation, which the silence of the castle and the lateness of the hour contributed to increase, to make both silent and thoughtful.

At length a deep sigh escaped the bosom of Kate, and Grace turned to contemplate her unconscious face, as with thoughtful eyes, her head resting in her hand, she gazed on vacancy, evidently thinking on subjects wholly separated from the natural scenery before her.

"Dear Kate," said Grace, after watching for some time in silence the sad, pale brow of her cousin, and speaking in a tone of tender and affectionate sympathy; "dear Kate, I pity you!" She gently threw her arms about her neck as she spoke, and, drawing her towards her, kissed her cheek.

The touching sincerity of her manner, unusual to the merry maiden, came directly home to her heart. She felt that she was understood; that her sorrow was appreciated! She struggled with virgin coyness for a few seconds, and then, yielding to her increasing emotions, threw herself into her arms and wept there. How grateful to her full heart to find another into which it could freely empty itself! How happy, very happy was she, that that heart was, of all others, her beloved cousin's! How unexpected her sympathy! How soothing, how welcome to her sad and isolated bosom! At length she lifted her face, and, smiling through her tears, said, after dwelling an instant on the lovely features of her cousin,

"You are a sweet, noble creature, Grace! You don't know how happy your kind sympathy has made me! and all so unlooked for! Yet I know you will think me very silly; and I fear your natural spirit will break out again, and that you will, ere long, ridicule what you now regard with such sweet charity!"

"Believe me, Kate, I feel for you with all my heart. I could have cried for you a dozen times to-day, when I saw how very unhappy you looked!" she added, with tenderness beaming through her deep shaded eyes.

"And yet, dear Grace, I think I never saw you so gay, nor those little lips so rich with merry speeches," pursued Kate, playfully tapping her rosy lips with her finger.

"It was for your sake, dear cousin Kate. I saw that your feelings were wrought up to just that point when you must either laugh or cry, and one as easy for you to do as the other; so, trembling lest, in spite of yourself, you should lean towards the tragic vein, I did my little best to make you laugh."

"You were a kind, generous creature, Grace," said the maiden, with a glow of grateful energy in her manner. "I have not half known your worth, though you have been full six months at Castle Cor."

"And now, just as you are beginning to know what a nice, good cousin I turn out to be, I am, hey for merry England again!"

"I cannot part with you, Grace; my father must sail to-morrow without you. You will stay with me, won't you?" she added, with sportive earnestness.

"I have twice delayed my departure, and poor father will need my nursing in this recent return of his old complaint. I fear we may not meet again for many years. I shall then," she said, with her usual thoughtlessness,

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"perhaps, find you Lady Lester! Forgive me, cousin Kate," she instantly added, as she saw the expression of her face change; "I am a careless creature, to wound at one moment where I have healed at another. But," she added, with playful assurance, "this may yet be even as I have said! Nay, don't shake your head so determinedly! Lester is not so angry that a word from you will not bring him to your feet."

"Cousin Grace, do you know what and of whom you are speaking?" said Kate, startled that her feelings should have been so well divined; shrinking with maidenly shame that the strength of her love and the weakness of her resolution should be discovered to her observing cousin, and involuntarily resenting, with the impulse of a woman at such a time, the imputation.

"Indeed I do, dear coz! so do no injustice to your own feelings by denying them. You will forgive Lester if I will bring him to your feet?" she inquired, archly.

"Yes no that is "

"That *you will*. Very well. Before to-morrow's sun be an hour old, he shall kneel there."

"Not for the world, Grace!" she cried, trembling between fear and hope; her love struggling with the respect due to her maidenly dignity, which she could not but feel, still, that Lester had out-raged.

"I don't care for your words, Kate; I know they mean just the opposite of what you say. Robert Lester shall kneel at your feet to-morrow morning, and sue for pardon for his offence," she added, with gentle stubbornness.

"Without compromising my " she half unconsciously began.

"I shall not compromise you in the least. There shall be no syllable of concession on your part mentioned; let me manage it my own way, and see if you do not love each other the better for it yet?"

"Coz!" she cried, placing her fore finger on her mouth reprovingly, yet pleased and smiling with the first dawns of bright returning hope.

"I am glad to see you smile once more, and I am resolved you shall yet be happy," added Grace, who had shown that, beneath the light current of gayety that usually characterized her, there was a flow of deep and generous feeling; and that, with all her thoughtless levity, she was susceptible both of the sincerest attachment and of the warmest friendship. Her words conveyed the germe of hope to the breast of her cousin. Her confident manner inspired confidence; and the happy Kate, giving herself up to the direction of the sanguine feelings her language and presence had caused to spring up in her sinking heart, became all at once a different being.

"If I am happy in the way you mean, I shall owe it all to you," she said, kissing her. "Now for your plan, my sweet diplomatist."

"Now for my plan, then. That Lord Robert has gone home very angry indeed, there can be no question. Now, when a lover is angry, justly, with his mistress, he will be ever ready to meet her, not only half, but the whole, of the way, to bring about a reconciliation. When he has no right to be angry with her, and is so foolish as to be so, how much the more readily then will he be brought to her feet! There is a spice of argument for you. Now, as Lord Robert has no cause in the world to be offended with you, it follows that he has every cause in the world to induce him to acknowledge his offence, and ask pardon therefor on the very first opportunity. Now all that he wants cheerfully to do this, it appears to me, is the assurance that, after such a philippic as that with which you were pleased to send him off, he will be received graciously."

"But how, if I should be inclined to be gracious, sage cousin of mine, is Lester to know it?"

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"That will very easily be brought about, I think. Let me see!" and she seemed to muse very profoundly for a few seconds. "Ha! I have it. I will borrow that curious locket he gave you "

"Locket, Grace Lord Robert gave me!" repeated Kate, colouring, and looking out of the lattice as if some interesting object had at that moment drawn her attention.

"Yes," replied Grace, dryly, and with a look of the most provoking positiveness.

"It is no use, I see, to conceal anything from you, mischief! How *did* you know he gave it to me?"

"Young ladies are not wont to take from their bosoms a boughten trinket, and slyly kiss it a hundred times a day, and "

"Grace, Grace!" cried Kate, attempting to stop her saucy speech.

"And sleep with it under their pillow."

"Cousin Grace!"

"I have done," she said, quietly.

"You well may be. Oh, if I do not wish you had a lover, that I could repay you in kind!"

"Perhaps I have!" was the imperturbable rejoinder of the maiden.

"I dare say fifty whom you call so. Among the gay Oxford gallants, the heiress of a coronet could not be without admirers; but oh, if I knew only of one *lover* who could set that little heart of yours a trembling!"

"You forget your locket, cousin," said the other, gravely.

"What shall be done with it, Grace?"

"Send it to Lester, with this message: *'He who returns this gift of love to her who sends it, shall with love be met.'* Now is not that very pretty, and as it should be?"

"What a wild creature! Would you have me send such a message to Lester, child? He would think me jesting with him."

"No, never. Is it not just what you want to say what you feel what you wish, above all things, he should know you feel?"

"Yes, indeed, Grace," she replied, with the most ingenuous naïveté.

"Then it shall go. Give me the token. Nay, part not with it so reluctantly; 'twill soon be back, with a prize worth a thousand of it. Give it me, coz. Nay, then, kiss it! and so will I."

"No, you shall not!" cried Kate, with laughing earnestness.

"Oh, I *do* hope I never shall be in love!" said Grace, getting possession of the locket. "Here is pencil and paper. Can you write by this moon-light? Lovers, methinks, should write by no other light." She spread the paper on the window as she spoke.

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"Write! what do you mean, Grace?" exclaimed Kate, with surprise.

"I mean for you to put down, in your nicest hand, my gem of a message to Robert."

"Never, Grace. What will he think of me?"

"He will think you love him very much."

"Just what I don't wish him to think," she said, with singular decision.

"Was there ever!" cried Grace, holding up both hands. "Well, this love is an odd thing! What instinctive coquetry! Like John Milton's Eve, 'All conscious of your worth, You would be woo'd, and, not unsought, be won.' I don't understand this disguising love under a show of coldness seeming to hate where the heart pants and glows with devotion. Oh, if this be love, I'll none of it. Here is the pencil, and there is a fair sheet, and the moon is patiently holding her silver lamp for you; will you write?"

"I will, to gratify you, cousin Grace," she said, taking the pencil and placing her fingers lightly on the paper which lay in the window.

"To please *me!* very well, be it so. Who could have believed, a quarter of an hour ago, that I should have had to coax you to send a line to Robert Lester! You may well hide your telltale face."

Kate bent her head over the gilded sheet and began to write, or, at least, to make characters with her pencil, when Grace, impatient at her slow progress, looked over her shoulder and exclaimed,

"Why, what are you writing? *Lester Robert, Robert Lester, Robert Lester, Lester Rob .*"

Kate glanced at what she had written, hastily run her pencil through it, and said, with a mortified laugh.

"I had forgotten what to write."

"And so put down what was deepest in your memory," said Grace, with a vexatious air. "Now take this fair page, and write as I repeat:

"*'He who shall bring again this gift of love to her who sends it, shall with love be met.'*"

"Is it written?"

"Letter for letter."

"And you will find that each letter will act as a charm. Never so few monosyllables as I have strung together here held so much magic."

"Who will be its bearer?" Kate now inquired in a lively tone.

"I will find a Mercury both sure and swift," she said, folding the locket in the billet.

This *gage d'amour* was oval in shape, of plain gold, with a chased rim, a little raised, enclosing an azure field, on which, in exquisite enamel, were inlaid the crests of Lester and Bellamont, joined together by two clasped hands: beneath was the sanguine motto, DURANTE VITÂ.

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"Now, coz, for one of your raven ringlets to bind around it!"

"No, I will not, Grace!"

"Then I will tie it with a lock of my own hair," she said, in a sportive manner, running her fingers through her auburn tresses; and, selecting one that was like a silken braid for its soft and shining texture, she prepared to sever it from her temples.

"You provoking child, you will have your own way," said Kate, shaking forward the dark cloud of her abundant hair, and intertwining her finger in a jetty tress that rivalled the sable hue of the night swallow's dark and glossy wing.

"Half an hour since you verily would have parted with every lock to be assured the sacrifice would bring him to you; and now, forsooth, scarcely will you part with a strand to bind a note. There!" she added, clipping a beautiful ringlet that Kate had selected from the rest; "now all that is wanted is wax no, not that! I will fasten it with a true-lover's-knot, which will be far better; will it not, coz?"

As she said this she looked up with a bright light dancing in her dark hazel eyes; and, without waiting for a reply, in a few seconds tied, with great gravity, the mysterious knot she had mentioned, and gave the billet to her cousin for the superscription. "Write, `These: to the hands of Robert, Lord Lester, of Castle More, greeting,'" she said, with gravity.

"Nay, I will direct it simply `Lester, Castle More,'" she said, decidedly.

"By which," said Grace, laughing, "you avoid the distant respect conveyed in my own on the one hand, and the tenderness that is ready to gush from your heart on the other. Love certainly does make his votaries skilful tacticians! Truly, now, is not this a proper love-billet written in a lattice by the light of the moon, and tied with a braid of the lady's hair in a true-love-knot? Well, when I am in love I shall know how to manage rightly all these little affairs."

"Who is to be our Mercury on this occasion?" inquired Kate, with a little doubt in the tones of her voice. "I fear we shall have to trust it to a moonbeam also."

"Something more substantial, I assure you," said the good-humoured maiden, in a very positive manner.

"Not one of the menials, for the world!"

"No, no!" she answered, with quickness; and then approaching her cousin's ear, she pronounced, very mysteriously, the very homely monosyllable,

"Mark!"

"That proud boy! *He* become the bearer of a message to Lester!" she exclaimed, looking at her with surprise.

"For *me* he will!" replied Grace, confidently.

"Two such spirits to come in contact! No, no! Have you forgotten how they parted to-day?"

"No."

"Then why do you propose so wild a scheme?"

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"Mark will do as I bid him," she said, with a naïve and pertinaciousness that was wholly irresistible.

Kate burst into such a merry, musical peal of laughter, that at first the maiden looked very grave, but at length found it in vain to withhold her sympathy, and laughed with her; while the rich blood mounted to her cheeks, and invested her with surpassing beauty.

"Oh, oh!" cried Kate, triumphantly, "so you are a *very* little in love! I half guessed it! Doubtless there is blood enough in thy noble veins for both of you."

"Very well, cousin, you may think what you choose," she replied; adding, in a tone and manner that left her cousin in doubt if she were not half in earnest, "but if I were in love with him, is he not noble in person? handsome, gallant, and brave? Why may he not be worthy a noble maiden's love? I would not give him as he is, for Lester, with all his nobility, coupled as it is with his terrible passions."

"Out upon you, jade," said Kate, good-humouredly; "will you revile in this vein my noble Lester compare him to a fisher's lad? Where is your pride of birth and rank, Grace Fitzgerald! Really, I should not wonder if, with your levelling notions, you should some day throw yourself away upon some one unworthy to wear so fair and rich a flower in his bosom."

"I have both wealth and rank, and shall be my own mistress soon! that I will give my hand where my heart goes, you may rest assured, cousin Kate," said the maiden, with spirited, yet sportive decision.

"Marry come up! I shall not wonder if I come to be cousin to a cordwainer's 'prentice yet! I shall assuredly allow you to go to the good old earl, your father, to-morrow, and shall not fail to bid him, in a letter, to lock you up."

"Love laughs at locksmiths, you have heard it said, cousin. But a truce to this. I am not yet in love, so be not alarmed. I will sally forth and find Mark, and at once despatch him with this message to Castle More."

As she spoke she threw a cloak over her shoulders and prepared to envelop her head and face in its hood. At this crisis Kate's troubled countenance indicated a wavering purpose; and as Grace was fastening the hood beneath her chin, she laid her hand on her arm:

"No, Grace, you must not. Lester will scorn me; let him go for ever first!" she added, in a sad, irresolute tone of voice.

"No, no! In ten minutes afterward you would be playing Niobe. Have your feelings towards Lester changed an iota?"

"No; but "

"Yet you know not, if you delay, how his may change, nor what rash act he may commit!"

"I will send the token," she said, after a moment's struggle.

"I will soon return with news of my success," she said, placing her hand on the latch of the door.

"Go, then, quickly! But you will not venture to the beach alone?"

"'Tis light as noonday! A step across the lawn, and a short trip down the path, and old Meredith's hut is within a stone's throw. I will not be three minutes gone."

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"I must certainly go with you, Grace."

"Not for the world!"

"Lest I interrupt the tender moonlight interview you have in prospect with the handsome fisherman, I dare say. Ah, you arch girl! I verily believe you have an eye to your own interests, which accounts for your devotion to me in this matter," said Kate, laughing, and shaking her head at her.

"A fisher's lad!" she repeated, in the slightly scornful tone her cousin had hitherto used.

"Nay, I was not in earnest, Grace," said Kate, apologetically, kissing her as she was leaving the chamber.

"Nor was I," replied the lively maiden. "Watch me from the opposite window as I cross the lawn. Courage, dear cousin! You will soon have Lester at your feet, and be folded in his "

"Go!" cried the blushing Kate, closing the door upon her ere she could finish her sentence.

She listened to her light footstep echoing through the hall till it was lost on the lawn; then turning to her window, she shortly afterward discovered her gliding across the archery-field towards the cliff, and, with a wave of her hand towards the lattice, rapidly descend the path that led to the beach. With her heart fluttering with mingled hopes, fears, and desires, she sat watching in the window for her return. Her thoughts the while were busy. She followed, in imagination, the message to Castle More; pictured Lester's reception of the token; fancied his surprise, his rapture, perhaps his scornful indifference! No! she would not believe he could feel *this*, for she judged his truth by her own! Then, in her imagination, she heard his loud and hasty demand for his horse! she could see him on his swift course towards Castle Cor. He approaches! she can almost hear his horse's hoofs in the court! the next moment he is kneeling at her feet for forgiveness! Wonderful power of the imagination! How delightful to yield the soul to its influences when the images it paints on the mind are all pleasing; all as vivid as the reality of which they are only the shadows! While the meditative maiden is leaning from her lonely lattice, indulging her happy visions, the mind naturally turns to the adventurous Grace and the young fisher's lad, who was to become the bearer of the message which should be the magical instrument of converting all these delightful dreams into reality.

After the attack upon his life by the impetuous noble, taking advantage of the exciting scene that followed between him and Kate Bellamont, Mark quietly withdrew from the party, gained, unobserved, the path, and was out of sight, far down the cliff, before his absence was discovered. He had remained long enough, however, to witness the disgrace of Lester, and to hear the indignant and bitter words of the offended maiden. With a fleet foot he reached the beach, hastened along the shore to his cot, and, crossing its lonely threshold, cast himself upon a block by the hearth, and buried his face between his hands. His heart heaved strongly, and he seemed to labour under deep and great emotion. It was clearly apparent that he was undergoing a severe mental struggle, and that the tide of his life would turn on the issue. At length he lifted his fine face and looked around upon the interior of his humble home; poverty and its signs met his eye wherever it fell! His glance then rested on his own coarse habiliments, and he started to his feet, and with a lofty expression of resolution and an air of stern decision, said, half aloud,

"This day shall end my servitude to poverty. Because the accident of *birth* has cast my lot within these wretched walls, and made me fellow-prisoner with penury, therefore shall I not throw off my chains when I will? Have I not a soul a mind? Do I not think, feel, act, speak, like those whom men call noble? May I not, in spite of nature, yet become the builder of my own name the carver of my own fortunes? By the light of the bright sun, I will no longer be the slave of others! the 'lowborn serf' the 'humble fisher's lad' the peasant, hind, and what not, that means baseness of birth and degradation of soul! No; henceforth I will take my place among the highest of them all, or leave my bones to bleach on the sand!"

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He paced the bare ground—floor of the wretched shed for a few moments with an energy of tread and a determined air that well harmonized with his words. At length he stopped short in his excited walk; his face assumed a gentler aspect; and in a voice low and melancholy, he continued,

"And this beauteous being, whose bright form fills my dreams like a celestial visitant; who is in all my thoughts; whom to gaze upon at an *humble* distance is bliss; whose voice strangely thrills my soul: her, for whom I would lay down my life! whom to make happy I would forego all earthly, ay, future hopes of happiness, I am forbidden to love! I cannot gaze on her without reproof! I am denied the bliss of speaking to her and listening to the music of her voice in reply; of attending her in her walks; of sharing in her pursuits and pleasures, because I am *lowborn*. Yes, I am 'the poor fisher's lad!' and scarce deemed worthy to be her footman. My approach into her presence is rudeness! my adoring gaze vulgar impertinence! *I am the fisher's lad!* 'Tis not for such to love such a glorious creature! Though his heart may be of the noblest mould; his taste refined; his spirit proud; his nature lofty and aspiring, yet he may not love where love points him. 'Tis not for him to place his affections on the gentle and lovely: on those worthy of his heart's deep devotion, and to whom he can distribute the rich treasure of his love. He must degrade his pure and sacred passion by linking his fate with one of his own class, who may never appreciate him; or let his wealth of love exhaust itself on his own life, and consume it with its fire! Nevertheless," he added, with a sparkling eye, "the fisher's boy dares to love, and love *high!* Love knows no rank. I have placed my affections on a noble object, my gaze on a lofty eyry and never will I clip the wing that once has taken so high and bold a flight. I love her! highborn as she is, I have dared to send my thoughts up to her! Yet, alas!" he continued, moodily folding his arms on his breast, and speaking slowly and bitterly, "alas! what shall this avail? Will she requite the daring love of a peasant? Will she not scorn will she not laugh at me? Will she listen to the deep outpourings of my passion? No, no, no! She must mate with *her* mates, and she would bid me mate with *mine!* Yet, may I not rise above my condition," he exclaimed, with a glowing brow and flashing eye; "may I not win rank and name that shall make me worthy of her? Shall I stand here idle, and see this haughty Lester bear away a prize of which he is no more worthy than I? No, I will perish first. From this day I am a man! Henceforth I belong to no degree, no rank. I am to choose what I will be. This hour I burst the degrading fetters that chain me to the class in which birth has cast me. From this moment I am the architect of my own fortune, and I will erect a temple that men shall admire, or bury myself beneath its ruins! The sea, on which I have been cradled, is open before me like a mother's bosom, welcoming me to its embrace; and on it, with the aid of God any my own spirit, I will win a name that shall hide the humble one I wear, and under it yet lay at the feet of her, who would scorn me under my present one, laurels that shall have made me worthy of her love!"

As he concluded his cheek was flushed; his eye sparkling; his step rapid and firm; his countenance elevated and glowing; and he strode the little cabin as if he was for the moment all that he had resolved to be. He was so lost in his feelings, so wrapped in the noble vision of the future his ambitious and ardent mind had pictured, that the old fisherman, who had slowly followed him from the cliff, entered without attracting his notice. The aged man gazed on the animated and excited youth with astonishment, and for a few moments was silent from surprise. At length he called him by name. He started, and was for the first time sensible that he was not alone:

"Well!" was the short, stern response.

"Do you know who speaks to you, my boy?" asked the old man, with mild reproof.

"Yes I do, my good father," he said, instantly resuming his wonted kindness of manner, and taking his hand; "forgive me; I had forgotten myself?"

"Do not be angry, child, at this freak of my young lord," said the old fisherman, in a tone habitual to his class in speaking of those above them; "it was but a little outbreak of spirit; and you know it is not for the like of us to be angry at the nobility for such things. They are our lords, and we must do as they will."

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"And let them take my life ay, if they will, make me their slave, which is far worse! Never! 'Tis the language of a bondman you utter, and unworthy the lips of manhood!"

"You talk as if you was one of the quality, boy! You will find it different when you get to be as old as I am. I have put up with many wrongs in my day from gentle blood."

"And have not resented it?" demanded the youth, with spirit.

"What could a poor fisherman do? Is it not their right to act what they will to? We poor fishermen have only to pray to God to give them gentle wills towards us!"

"And is this the creed you would teach me? Debasing, grovelling, mean obedience to the tyranny of an order! Before I do it, may my hand wither at the shoulder, my tongue palsy in my mouth! I should indeed deserve to be a slave! You would forbid me to resent this wrong from this hotheaded young noble?"

"It will do thee no good; if thou shouldst take his life, thou wouldst hang for't."

"And if he should take mine?"

"There would be none to avenge thee, boy. The judges, who are always on the side of the great, would say thy life was forfeited because thou hadst lifted thy hand against one of the privileged."

"God! I cannot believe that all men do spring from Adam and Eve," exclaimed the youth, impetuously. "Father," he said, after a moment's silence, speaking in a tone of mingled shame and sorrow, "thou hast, fortunately, a spirit fitted to thy station I pity thee! For myself, I will be no man's serf, no lord's menial! If accident has made me almost on a level with the brute, nature has endowed me with the feelings of a man. Father, I leave you with to-morrow's sun."

"My child! my child! what evil hath taken possession of thee?" cried the old man, holding him by both hands.

"No evil, but good! To-morrow I go from you!" he replied, resolutely.

"And leave me destitute in my old age, my boy?"

The youth was touched more by the accent in which this was said than by the words. He buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud; then, with a sudden burst of filial affection, he cried, throwing himself upon his aged breast,

"No, no! I will bend my neck to every insult, rather than thou, my more than father, shouldst be left helpless."

"Thou wilt not go away?" reiterated the old man, pleadingly, as if doubting the sincerity of his words.

"Not while thou art spared to me, beloved grandsire. Thou hast protected my infancy and youth! been to me both father and mother. If I be not a faithful son to thee, and protect not thy old age, may I fail to attain the rank and honour among men to which I aspire, and which, if purchased at the expense of filial gratitude, I should be unworthy to wear!"

"Bless thee, bless thee, Mark!" said he, fondly embracing him. "Providence has made our lot a humble one; let us submit to it with obedience. Come, my boy, think no more of it, but launch the skiff, and bring home our evening meal from the vast storehouse that has ever fed us, and which never holds its life even from the undeserving. Go, my son: on the rocking wave, and in the silence of the lone deep, your heart will become calm, and peace will

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return to your soul. At such times it is that the good and devout Christian is the most happy! I sometimes think the holy apostles did owe much of the holy piety which they possessed to their lowly occupation of fishers."

"*They were Christians.* You are a Christian, father! I am not one save in name. Would to God I were! perhaps I then might bear my humble lot more calmly. Now farewell a while; I will be in again ere the moon rises."

He rushed from the cabin with his heart almost bursting in his breast, launched his little bark, hoisted the frail latteen sail, and committed himself to the deep.

Seated in the narrow stern of his fragile skiff, the thwarts and bottom of which were covered with fishing-lines, a dip-net, and other signs of his lowly pursuit, holding the rude tiller in one hand and the sheet of his narrow white sail in the other, he shot swiftly out from the shore, wafted by a light and fitful wind. From habit he steered his course, and shifted the sail from side to side to woo the baffling airs, without giving his thoughts to his occupation. His lips were compressed with thought, his brow was set, and every feature of his silent face was eloquent with the feelings that occupied his bosom. His mind was struggling between filial affection and ambition between love for the highborn maiden and duty to his grandsire. The sufferings of the latter, who looked to his labours for his daily bread, were, if he should desert him, present and positive. The hopes connected with the former were altogether future and uncertain. Should he inflict a present evil for a future good? Would his filial attachment compare with his love? Which should he sacrifice? He felt that he could not make his grandsire the victim, either of his love or of his ambition, without the forfeiture of that filial virtue, wanting which he would be unworthy the prize he should incur this penalty to obtain. His thoughts became insupportable; and, for a time, he was nearly wrought up to phrensy by the intensity of the mental conflict. At this crisis, while his eyes were fixed vacantly on the crisp waves as they went singing and rippling past him, his bosom far more disturbed than they, he was startled by a loud, quick hail.

"Boat ahoy! Helm—a—starboard, or you will be into us!"

He mechanically obeyed; and, as he looked up, saw the dark hull of the yacht, that had lain all day at anchor in the bay, within reach of his hand, while his boat was gliding safely along its side, directly against which he had been unconsciously steering.

"You must keep a look-out, lad, how you run aboard a king's yacht, or you will stand a chance of getting a shot in your locker!" said a gruff, yet good-humoured voice. "But you have a quick ear and ready hand to clear our counter as you did. What say you to serving his majesty, my lad? It's better than catching herring; and, then, many's the younker of your inches that's come in over the cat-head, and afterward walked the quarter-deck with a brace of gold bobs on his shoulders."

The young fisherman's ears greedily received every word; they struck a chord within his bosom that strongly vibrated again. Involuntarily he put his helm down, and brought his boat up into the wind. He looked longingly upon the vessel's deck; measured the beautiful and light proportions of her hull, and surveyed with delight the graceful spars, following them with his eye to their tapering tops, from which gay flags streamed in the breeze: he admired, apparently with all a seaman's gratification, the tracery and interlacing of the neatly-set rigging, and the snowy sails, some of which were hanging in festoons from the yards, while one or two lazily spread their broad white fields from yard to yard: he observed the neat appearance of the men; their happy faces; their frank, good-humoured manners: he thought over the blunt but kindly offer he had received, and his hopes whispered,

"Fortune has opened this way for me! my destiny must be linked with this vessel!"

He then thought of his father, and his head dropped despondingly on his bosom; he thought of Kate Bellamont, and his eyes sparkled, and he felt like bursting all filial ties and leaping at once on board.

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"What say you, my lad, will you ship?" said the man, observing his hesitation; "I'll give you ten rix-dollars as bounty."

"Now?" he eagerly asked, starting up in his boat, and extending his hands with intense earnestness.

"The instant you enter your name on the yacht's books."

"I will go with you."

"Done! come alongside."

Mark hesitated ere he obeyed. Ten rix-dollars had, at first, seemed to him an inexhaustible sum: a moment's reflection convinced him that it would not support his grandfather six months without labour, for which he was nearly unfitted on account of his age. If, he thought, at the end of six months, therefore, he should not be able to return to him, or if his own life should be lost in the interim, would not the misery and want such an event would entail upon him fall heavy to his charge?

All this passed through his mind as he drew aft the tack and pressed the tiller up to windward to run under the vessel's bows. Instantly he shifted his helm, let the sheet fly free to the wind, and shot suddenly away in the opposite direction.

"He's off with a flowing sheet!" said one of the seamen, laughing.

"He's gone to bid the old man good-by," cried another; "he'll be alongside before morning, kit and kid."

"He's gone to take leave of his lass," added a third. "A wise lad to anchor his last night ashore."

"I wouldn't lose him for six months' pay," said the captain of the forecastle, who had first hailed him; "but I am afraid we shall see no more of him than what he now shows us," he added, shaking his head, and turning to pace the deck.

Scarce hearing, and heedless of these characteristic remarks, the young fisherman kept on his course seaward till he had got a league from the land, when he hove to and lowered his sail; then baiting and casting his lines, he plied his humble task, his eyes the while often fixed on the distant towers of Castle Cor, and his thoughts now with its fair inmate, now brooding over his own lowly destiny. When at length the sun dipped the edge of his burnished shield into the sea, he for the last time drew in his lines, each heavy with a fish, hoisted his sail, flung it broad to the evening wind that blew gently landward, and, taking the helm, steered towards home. But the wind grew lighter, and soon came only at intervals in "cat's-paws;" his progress was therefore slow, and he was yet a mile from the land when it left his sail altogether. Night came on, and the moon rose above the battlements of the castle, and flung its scarf of silver far out upon the scarcely dimpled bay. From time to time he held his open palm to windward, in vain trying to catch a passing current. He threw back the dark curls that clustered about his forehead, and laid it bare to receive the faintest breath that might promise the return of the wind. But the air was motionless! His boat rose and fell on the glassy undulations, but moved not towards the shore, save by the slow landward heave of the sea. Springing upon the thwarts, he brailed up his sail and bound it to the mast, and then, bending to the slender oars, sent his light skiff over the water with a speed that mocked the idle winds. He soon got within the dark shadow flung by the cliff along the water far beyond the land, and run his boat on the beach beside his cot. The old fisherman welcomed him with a kindness that not only touched his heart, but rewarded him for the sacrifice he had made on his account. He also assisted him in conveying the fish into the hut, and set about himself to prepare their rude repast. Mark placed his oars in the becketts over the door, and walked out to indulge his thoughts; to brood over his deferred, if not blasted hopes; and to struggle again and again against the unfilial temptations that assailed him. He insensibly wandered along the beach, that sparkled in the moonlight like

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snow beneath his feet, until he came to the narrow strip of sand that stretched beneath the over-hanging cliff from which he had leaped, and connected his hut with the path up the rocks. He looked up to its dark and terrific roof, and then down into the black pool at his feet, and a half-formed wish that he had never risen again from its silent depths, escaped him.

"That I had perished, ere life had been preserved to be dragged out in this miserable servitude," he said aloud. "What is life to me? Its refined joys; its courtly pleasures; its fair forms; its wealth; its honours! This is *my* world these slimy rocks this lonely bay; yonder hut my palace, and to fish for daily sustenance my pastime. This is *my* life this my universe! What have I to do with aught beyond it? The world was made for others, not for me not for the peasant boy! No, no! Madness! Must I endure this?" he cried, with fierce impatience. "Filial love, filial gratitude, how bitter, bitter are ye!"

He struck his forehead violently, and turned on the belt of sand with a fevered step. Suddenly he felt a touch on his shoulder, as light as if a fairy's foot had lit upon it. He started, and, turning quickly round, beheld a female, enveloped in a hood and cloak, standing immediately behind him. The grace of her attitude, and the easy decision of her whole manner, assured him that she was not low-born. His heart would have whispered the name that was enshrined in it, but the figure was not tall enough for *hers*. With an instinctive consciousness that he was in the presence of rank and beauty, to which, in this union, his independent spirit never refused to do homage, he doffed his cap, and addressed her with that native grace and dignity which characterized him:

"Lady, seek you aught in which I can aid you, that you have come to the seaside at this lonely hour?"

The moon shone full on his youthful features, which were shaded with locks of dark-flowing hair, parted across his high, pale forehead, and descending to his shoulder. She gazed for an instant, ere she replied, on his youthful face, on each lineament of which his bold character was written, while his ardent spirit spoke eloquently in every look. As he bent forward to catch her answer, with his bonnet in his hand, the cloud had vanished from his brow before the supposed presence of youth and beauty, and his deferential manner, so opposite to his former bearing, seemed to inspire her with confidence.

"My business is with you alone, Mark!" spoke, from beneath the shaded hood, the sweet, hesitating voice of Grace Fitzgerald, intuitively shrinking within the shadow of the cliff as she addressed him, just out of which, in the full light of the moon, the young fisherman himself stood.

"Lady Grace!" he exclaimed, with surprise, as her voice fell on his ear.

"Grace Fitzgerald, in body and spirit," said she, with her usual gayety.

"Can the highborn heiress of Earl Fitzgerald be served by one so humble?" he asked, in a tone slightly tinged with his former gloomy humour.

She seemed to be at a loss, for a moment, how to reply, scarcely knowing in what way to interpret his words. At length she said, advancing frankly towards him.

"I have not come to command your services, Mark, but to beg of you a favour; to ask you to execute a mission of delicacy, that can be intrusted to no one so well as yourself."

The frank and kind manner in which she spoke, the graceful propriety with which she overstepped the barrier of *caste* that separated them, sensibly affected him. It was the first time he had been so addressed by those above him in birth and station; the first time his services had not been demanded as a right by those who needed them.

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Her suavity and condescension of manner were perhaps prompted by the remembrance of the out-rage he had received at Lester's hands, and by a knowledge of his intrepidity, and of his pride of spirit, which she knew to be chafed and goaded by the insults inseparable from his station. She therefore generously wished to sooth and bind up his injured feelings. She had, too, her own notions of what constitutes true nobility; and it is plain, from her conversation with Kate, that she was less governed by the social canons which regulate such things, and was infinitely more of a democrat than her haughty and beautiful cousin. That her heart had anything to do in the matter, though Mark was so handsome, so gentle, and so brave withal, cannot be supposed; inasmuch as the little god seldom ensconces himself behind a peajacket to take aim at a heart mailed beneath a silken spencer. But, then, Cupid is very blind, and, besides, is so given to odd whims, that but little calculation can be made as to the direction from which his shafts will fly.

"Command me, lady," he replied, with grateful emotion, as she concluded.

"Are you angry with Lord Robert?" she asked, falteringly.

"Can I forgive him?"

"But you will forgive him for for the sake of my cousin Kate!"

"If *she* were to bid me kiss his hand, I would not refuse her," he exclaimed, with a sudden glow of animation.

Grace sighed, and was for a moment silent; for she plainly saw that her influence had but little weight in this quarter in comparison with her cousin's. She then took the locket from the folds of her cloak, and said, in a very slightly mortified tone,

"It is *her* wish that you bear this token of her forgiveness to Lord Robert. You will see that it is tied with a braid of *her own hair!*"

(Was there not a spice of feminine pique in this last clause, lady?)

"Bear this from *her* to *him*?" he inquired, in a voice trembling with emotion.

"Yes."

"Never!" replied he, with vehemence.

"Mark!" she said, in a tone of gentle reproof, placing her hand lightly upon his arm.

"Pardon me," he said, hastily, "but but " His voice choked for utterance. "Oh God! Lady Grace," he suddenly cried, with an outbreak of terrible and ungovernable emotion, "you know not what it is to be to be " Here his feelings were too strong to be controlled, and, turning his face from her, he gave way to a paroxysm of the wildest grief.

She stood by in silence! She appreciated fully his feelings, for she had overheard the soliloquy he gave utterance to before he had become aware of her presence. She knew what he was and what he aspired to be, and how deeply his degradation preyed upon him. She sympathized with him with her whole heart; and with her sympathy there entered into her breast another emotion, which in woman's heart is so nearly allied to love, namely, gentle pity! When she saw that the first strong tide of his feelings had in some degree subsided, in a voice so full of what she felt that it touched all the finer sensibilities of his nature, and seemed to breathe peace throughout his soul, stilling every billow of passion, she said to him,

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"Mark, I do pity you from my heart! I know you are not fitted by nature for the state to which you were born. But to the bold spirit and determined will there is a wide road open to distinction; and in it men, humble as yourself, have won honourable renown, in the splendour of which the mere accident of their birth has been lost. The same road to honour lies open before you!"

The vivid eloquence, the animation of voice, the spirited manner, and the lofty energy of look with which this was spoken, united with the depth and sincerity of her interest in him, which she disdained to disguise, language can inadequately express. Its effect on him was electrical. He sprang forward, knelt at her feet, seized her hand, and, in the fulness of his heart, pressed it gratefully to his lips. She withdrew it in confusion, and he instantly buried his face in his hands, overcome with the painful feeling of having offended. She was the first to speak.

"Mark, bear this packet to Lord Robert; deliver it into his own hand, and immediately leave him, so that you give him no opportunity of renewing his feud. In the morning, on the earl's return from Kinsale, come to the castle, and I will represent your case to him."

"Dear lady, I will leave this message for you at Castle More; but pardon me if I decline your offer to serve me!"

"Then cousin Kate shall make it," she said, good-humouredly.

"Forgive me, but it will be still more firmly declined."

Grace was puzzled; and half sportively, half sincerely, it entered her thoughts that she had played her hand well if already, as his words seemed to imply, she had found more favour in the young fisherman's eyes than her cousin. But, all at once, the thought flashed upon her mind that it was alone the pride of love that led him to refuse any favour at her cousin's hands.

"You mean," she said in revenge, smiling as she spoke, "that you dislike my cousin Kate so much that you will not receive any kindness at her hands."

"If such could be inferred from my words, I recall every letter of them," he said, with an earnestness that amused her.

"I will then speak for you to my uncle."

"Lady, you will think me very ungrateful," he replied, "but "

"But you will take no favour from the father of Kate Bellamont. Really, my cousin is complimented."

He was embarrassed by the light in which she seemed to take his words, and, in attempting to explain, involved himself still deeper.

"Do not be distressed; I perfectly understand you, Mark," she said, with a laugh that relieved him. "Will you be obliged to *me*?"

"Pardon me if I say no!" he answered, gratefully but firmly. "No, lady," he added, in a grateful tone of voice, yet sadly, "I must work out brighter fortunes for myself by my own energies."

"I admire your independence. But, if you should need my I would say, the assistance of any one will you remember Grace Fitzgerald?"

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He did not reply; his heart was swelling, but he laid his hand upon his bosom with an eloquent gesture that conveyed more than words.

"Enough!" she said, touched with his impressive manner. "I shall ever be ready to do for you all that can advance you to name and rank; and for your own sake, for the sake of " here she paused with embarrassment, and then added, "those who take an interest in you, it becomes you to rise from this humble station, and win for yourself a name and station among men. Do not forget that the proudest names in England sprang from the lowest rank. My own maternal ancestor was a favourite groom of William the Conqueror, who, for his prowess in a certain battle, knighted and parcelled out to him an equal division of land with his own knightly companions in arms. Shall I not yet hear of *you* with pride?" she added, extending her hand to him with characteristic frankness.

"Lady," he said, with animation, "if ever a low-born youth, who would rise above his adverse fortunes, had cause to go forward, have I. The memory of your words will shine like a star of hope to guide me through the future. God help me! Lady Grace, you shall never blush with shame for him in whose fate you this night have shown an interest," he continued, with emotion. "For your sake I will achieve whatever man can accomplish."

"And will you do nothing for my poor cousin's sake?" she asked, significantly, and in a tone of raillery, not able, even at such a time, to subdue altogether her natural temperament.

"There is little hope that one so humble is ever in her thoughts," he replied, doubting, yet half believing.

"Little hope, I fear, while Lester lives," she said, smiling. "But think not of her think not of love now," continued she, with animation; "let honour be your idol, and woo fame alone as your bride. There are some there is *one*, Mark, who would rather see you honoured and ennobled by your own hand than than but no matter, I have already said too much. Kate will have good reason to suspect I had cause to come alone," she said, mentally, "if I linger here longer;" she then added aloud,

"Fly, Mark, with this message. If you would serve me, bear it safely; if you would do my cousin Kate a favour, bear it quickly; and, lastly, for your own sake, get into no quarrel."

They had insensibly walked along while speaking, and were now at the foot of the path by which she had descended to the beach.

Mark took the packet from her hand, and, as he did so, pressed it with an air of native gallantry blended with gratitude, greatly to her not unpleasurable surprise and confusion, and then hastened at a rapid pace along the beach in the direction of Castle More. She followed him for a few moments with her eyes, and then, sighing unconsciously (for it is in vain longer to disguise the interest she felt in the interesting fisher's lad), ascended the steep path and safely gained the castle, where, still at her lattice waiting her return, she found her cousin, to whom forthwith she communicated her success.

With a swift tread Mark traversed the curving shore till he had left a full league between him and the spot where he had separated from Grace Fitzgerald. Then striking into a path that led inland, he followed it with undiminished speed, and with a light and confident step, that showed his familiarity with every intricate winding of his moonlit way.

How often he pressed to his adoring lips the locket of hair that secured the billet; how often he paused to read over and over again, by the light of the moon, the delicate characters traced by the pencil her fingers had guided, let each one that has loved enumerate for himself. As he went along, he could not help revolving in his mind the manner of Grace Fitzgerald, and asking himself a hundred times if she could mean anything; and when it could not be concealed from his penetrating mind that she did mean something, or affected to do so the wish rose to his lips that Kate Bellamont had been in her place. Yet the very next moment, so contradictory is love, he

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congratulated himself that she was not, feeling that he should never have had the courage to meet her face to face alone, as he had met her cousin. Love surely endows his votaries with a singular union of boldness and timidity! Your lover is either an arrant coward or a lion, and sometimes he is both in one, as he happens to be in or out of his mistress's presence.

At length he came in sight of an ancient and extensive ruin in the midst of the forest, and was picking his way among the fallen fragments, along which his road wound, when he was startled by the sound of horses' feet coming from the direction of Castle More; the moment afterward, he saw, by the light of the moon, two horsemen emerge from the wood, and rapidly approach the ruin. He instinctively drew to one side of the path to escape observation, when he heard one of them utter an exclamation of surprise; both then suddenly reined up, and, from the sound of a third voice, they appeared to be holding conversation with some one they had unexpectedly encountered.

CHAPTER IV.

"Away, away my steed and I
Upon the pinions of the wind!"
Mazeppa.

"Thou false fiend, thou liest!
I do defy deny spurn back and scorn ye!"
"That thus a son should stand and hear
The tale of his disgrace."

Byron.

The indignant Lester, to whom the story now reverts, had no sooner left the presence of Kate Bellamont and the field of archery, than he hastened to the stables, saddled his horse with his own hand, and threw himself across his back. Then, turning his head northward towards Castle More, he gave him the rein, and, without forming any definite aim or object, but goaded onward simply by the fiery impetus of his feelings, with a feverish desire to leave far behind the scene of his disgrace, rode away at full speed.

His thoughts were dark and confused; his heart full; his spirit sore! He looked neither to the right nor left, and gave backward glance to turret nor lattice for he was all unskilled in that book of riddles, woman's heart! and what hope then had he, that he should turn his head for beck or signal of return? If he had been a little more experienced, or somewhat better read in this book of mysteries, where every line of the text is contradicted by a page of annotations, he might have known that a signal would have been flying for him at the very last moment! But, alas for poor Kate Bellamont! alas for both! her voice, and the wave of her snowy arm were alike in vain! He rode onward, seeing, feeling, being conscious of nothing save his own deep disgrace and misery; and at each fierce pang that reflection inflicted, he buried his spurs deep, and dashed forward as if he would fly from his thoughts, or find relief from them in swift motion.

The forest into which he rode, and in the depths of which he disappeared from the earnest gaze of Kate Bellamont, was very ancient and of great extent, and intersected by many roads winding in all directions through its dark bosom: it was inhabited chiefly by woodsmen and foresters, but contained, besides, two solitary hunting-lodges, a league asunder, appertaining to the contiguous estates of Bellamont and Castle More. At the northern termination of this wood, two leagues distant from Castle Cor, on the crest of a rock that overhung a small woodland lake or mere, was situated Castle More; a single square tower, with a low turret rising at each angle, and defended on the inland side by a high wall with bastions and a deep moat. It was, at the date of this narrative, the abode of Lady Lester, the widow of General Lord Lester, who had fallen a few years before while gallantly fighting in Spain. Since his death she had withdrawn herself from the sphere of the court, and excluded

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herself almost altogether from society; devoting her time to the performance of the severe religious duties usually imposed by the Catholic church only on religieuses, and to the observance of rigorous and frequent fasts; and it was rumoured that she even inflicted upon herself painful penance with rods, and slept through Lent in a crown of thorns. In these austerities her friends, and, also, sensible and discreet people, saw only the diseased melancholy of a widowed wife who had been fondly devoted to her departed lord, finding relief, as woman's sorrow often will, in a life of religious seclusion. But the suspicious and evil disposed, the humble labourer and marvel-loving hind, saw in her stern religious life only painful penance for crimes committed in early life, and were wont to shake their heads and lower their voices whenever the "Dark Lady of the Rock" was named.

But, notwithstanding her austere life, Lady Lester was not indifferent to the claims of young Lord Robert. Her heart had been wrapped up in the high-spirited boy from his childhood; and as he grew in stature and grace, next to her graven images, she worshipped him. Unrestrained by paternal fear, and indulged by Lady Lester in every idle wish, he grew up to the age of seventeen with a spirit that never had been curbed; with a temper that never had known a check. Though by nature of a generous and noble disposition, as the unavoidable result of such a course, he was the slave of passion and the victim of self-impulse; with the will to act justly, but without the power to guide that will: like a noble bark that has lost its rudder and is driven furiously along by its out-spread sails, which, managed by skill and discipline, might yet become the instruments of its safety, to irremediable shipwreck and ruin. If educated at all, he was taught to regard all the retainers of his vast estates as vassals; beings of meaner mould; a race of mortals who had somehow smuggled themselves into existence long after Adam founded his ancient family poachers on the world's manor now doomed, for their punishment, to crawl as slaves on the earth they had dared to come upon unbidden. He was taught to regard all un noble as ignoble; and to consider them as an inferior and secondary race, and only created to be subservient to the will of those of his caste and rank. With such notions he became haughty and arrogant, and cherished a spirit of pride of birth, combined with a jealousy of his privileges, that at all times was sufficiently prompt to show itself.

With two such opposite characters; a generous and just one the gift of nature; an imperious and haughty one the result of education, he was as uncertain as the wind, variable as the evening cloud. There was but one mind that could control his; one spirit to whose power his own would bend; but one voice that could act upon his passions with a gentle influence, and, with a word, chase the darkest cloud from his brow, even as the harp of the youthful minstrel banished the gloomy spirit of evil from the soul of Saul! This potent person was Kate Bellamont: the wand she used, Cupid's magical bow. By its aid she brought his haughty will in subjection to her own mild sway, and converted the lion into the lamb. She had been his playfellow from childhood; they had strolled, fished, hunted, boated together. Others might be in company, but somehow Kate and Robert seemed to be attracted to each other by a mysterious affinity: if they fished, he baited her hook and took off the fish when she caught them; if there was a ramble, they were certain to stray off together and lose themselves in the forest, and always were the last back to the castle; if there was a party to sail on the mere, Robert and Kate were sure to be seated near each other!

By-and-by they began to advance into their teens: when Kate got to be fifteen, she began to grow very shy of her playfellow; would not let him kiss her as he was wont; nor ramble with her his arm encircling her little round waist. She ceased running races with him, and began to call him "Lord Robert;" and would blush if he happened to turn and catch her eye fixed musingly upon his face. Robert himself also began to show signs of change. He grew diffident and silent in her company; looked at her for a long time together without saying a word; then would turn away and sigh, and look again, and sigh again. He became less violent, less frequently angry; his voice became gentle and subdued: and he began to show signs of fear in her presence, and trembled if she laid her hand on his arm, which, of late, she was very careful not to do. Indeed, there is no describing half the signs by which their progress from the playmate state of chrysalis to the lovemate state of ripe youth was marked. Robert Lester very soon found that he was very unhappy away from Kate, and very happy in her presence. The maiden, on her part, was not long in discovering that the days were very long when Robert did not visit Castle Cor, and that she thought of him, somehow, a great deal more than she used to do. It evidently was very clear that she loved to look from the battlement of the tower at the four distant turrets on the top of Castle More, when he was away, much

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oftener than she had done the year before. Things went on in this manner, though from worse to worse, till about a week before Kate's sixteenth birthday, when it chanced that she and her quondam playfellow were riding slowly homeward, after an unsuccessful pursuit of a stag, which, after having led them within a mile of Castle More, doubled and turned upon its track towards the south, and plunged into a morass not far from Castle Cor; so, as night was approaching, they had given up the pursuit, and turned their horses' heads towards the castle.

They had been slowly riding side by side for some time, breathing their horses, neither speaking a word, but occasionally exchanging timid side-glances in the way young people sometimes do without lifting their eyelids. If by chance their eyes met, both instantly averted their heads, switched their horses, or plucked a leaf; but, in a few seconds, their heads would gradually come round, the pupil of the eyes steal into the corners and again meet, causing a second time very great embarrassment, and very guilty colouring of cheek and brow, as if each had been detected by the other in some crime. So they rode together in this pleasant manner for full half a mile; and one would believe, from their silence and the wide space they guardedly preserved between each other, that they had quarrelled. But their countenances, though grave, looked too happy and sentimental for that; besides, a slight smile, or, rather, just the soft reflection of one, played about their mouths. This for several weeks past had been precisely their bearing towards one another whenever they happened to be alone together; but, when in the presence of others, they both gave way to the highest tone of gayety and spirits. It was all very strange, very!

The lover at length looked ahead, and saw, through an opening in the forest, the towers of Castle Cor not a quarter of a mile distant. He involuntarily reined in his horse, and looked full in Kate's face; his lips parted; he essayed to speak, but his voice adhered to his jaws. So he gasped, sighed, and laid his hand eloquently on his heart. Kate also saw the towers, and reined up at the same moment he did; looked demurely on the ground, and then, as if she had nothing better to do, let fall her riding whip, notwithstanding she had to untie it from her wrist to do so. Instantly Lord Robert threw himself from his saddle, giving the bridle a slight shake as his foot left the stirrup, a hint which the sagacious animal obeyed by bounding off towards the stables, and took it from the ground; then blushing, and with a conscious look, as if contemplating a daring deed, he presented it to her. As, with averted eyes, she extended her hand for it, he placed in it tremblingly, instead of the whip, his own hand. She neither started nor turned her head, but her young bosom rose and fell quick, and he thought the hand fluttered with a new pulsation as it lay in his. She did not withdraw it. He grew confident, and slightly, very slightly, pressed a finger. Thereupon the little hand only throbbed the quicker. He pressed two, then three fingers, and then, with a boldness that grew with the occasion, he folded the soft, gloved hand all in his own. The next moment he coloured with conscious guilt, and looked up into her face as if about to throw himself upon her mercy. But she was so intently watching the rich dies of a sunset cloud that she evidently did not know what he was about; so, instead of asking pardon and looking very sad, he put on a very happy countenance, and, ever and anon casting his glance upward to her face, began, little by little, to draw off her glove. But, as she made no demonstrations of being aware of what he was doing, he pulled the glove quite off. For an instant he held it suspended, while he stole a very doubtful glance into her half-averted face; the next moment the warm, snowy hand was pressed between his own, and then, growing bolder apace, he began to cover it with kisses. Hereupon the maiden slowly turned her head and looked down at the bold youth with a look that she doubtless meant to be a reproving one; he cast his eyes to the ground, still holding the quiet hand nestled between both his own, and said, in a soft whisper,

"Kate!"

"Robert!" was the equally gentle suspiration in reply.

"Are you angry?"

"I ought to be."

"Then you are not?" was the half-joyful, half-doubting interrogation.

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"No," was breathed in accents so very gentle that it was conveyed to him by the movements of the lips alone.

"Shall we walk to the castle?"

"Yes."

And the young lady, studiously avoiding his eyes, was gently and passively assisted to the ground; as she touched it, his arm glided about her taper waist, and somehow their lips met, and again met, and met again, and met so often, that the horse was far out of sight before the fact forced itself on the mind of the maiden.

"Robert, desist! There! my horse has galloped off!"

"Shall I bring him to you?" asked the delighted youth, in a tone that showed he did not very much apprehend she would despatch him on such a mission.

"No, we can walk. But it is so foolish!"

"What?"

"Nothing."

And they walked on together for a few moments in silence.

"Kate!"

"Robert."

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"May I seal the confession?"

"A fine time to ask leave now!" she said, laughing.

Another kiss, and then another, and then a great many others, firmly sealed this little love affair, and placed them on a perfect understanding with each other. They were from this moment lovers! They quarrelled only twenty times in the subsequent interval of a week that preceded her birthday; than which no greater proof need be advanced to show the new relation in which they stood to each other. But, then, they always made up again; the youth, whose hasty spirit caused him five times out of seven to be the offender, being ever ready to atone by every loverlike device.

But such a sad breach as had been made between them this day was without a parallel. To his own mind it seemed too wide to be repaired; too gross to be atoned for by words. He, on his part, felt that the lofty character and proud spirit of Kate, though love plead never so loudly, would not brook the insult her feelings had received by the wild outbreak of his passions in her presence. He felt that he had forfeited all title to a place in her affections; and that her indignation was justly roused by the outrageous deed he had madly attempted: with bitterness of heart he acknowledged that he deserved to be banished for ever from her presence, and to be remembered by her only with contempt. But he knew not of what enduring material a maiden's heart is composed; he knew not that, when love takes possession of it, like a magnet thrown among some delicate machinery of steel communicating to every part a portion of its own mysterious nature, it penetrates and pervades every attribute, converts every passion to its

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own hue, and renders each feeling subservient to itself. To its arbitrament all things are referred. Reason, judgment, prudence, and even piety become secondary to the will of this autocrat of the heart; and a deaf ear is turned even to the counsels of the wise and good when they do not conform to its dictates. Such is the power of love wondrous, vast, incomprehensible! A religion without a god or a future; unbounded in its power; universal in its extent; all-pervading in its influences!

He galloped along through the winding avenues of the silent forest, scarce roused from his sad meditations by the startled deer that fled at his approach, yet stooping mechanically as some old oak flung its gigantic arm low across the path. Unconsciously he urged on his noble horse to its utmost speed; his bonnet pressed down over his gloomy brow; his eyes dark and settled in their expression; and his hand nervously grasping the rein. At one moment he would drop his head upon his breast, and be overcome by the bitterness of grief. At the next he would throw back his head, and with eyes flashing fire, gnash his glittering teeth, shake his clinched hands above his head, and curse in the face of Heaven; while the horse, catching his fierce spirit, would erect his bristling mane, and bound madly forward like the wind. These terrible paroxysms of mingled grief and rage would pass away, and then he would ride slowly, with his arms folded, and with an expression of settled despondency. Three several times did he check his horse, and, half-turning him round towards Castle Cor, pause, and seem to deliberate between the suggestions of mingled hope and doubt. But, after a few seconds' hought, he would shake his head despairingly and again spur forward.

In one of his moods of sullen gloom, with his arms folded across his breast, his head drooped, the reins lying loosely upon the horse's neck, he came upon an old ruin half a league from Castle More, and within the boundaries of its wide domain. Here and there, amid a confusion of moss-grown fragments that everywhere strewed the ground, rose to his eye a mouldering buttress; the half of a Gothic window; a ruined tower, lifting itself in melancholy loneliness, in the last stages of decay; or, a doorway choked to its lintel with rubbish. Over all crept the ivy, that lovely emblem of charity, binding up, with its slender fingers, the wounded towers; covering with its thick robe of leaves the nakedness that time had exposed; and, where it could neither heal nor strengthen, wreathing about the dilapidated walls garlands of enduring verdure.

It was the ruins of a chapel, where, centuries before, the barons of Castle More had worshipped. Now all was desolation. Its bell was hushed; its choir for ever silent. The priests the worshippers, where were they? sleeping beneath the ruins of the crumbling chancel; their high or holy names, which no man remembers, carved deep in the superincumbent marble. Apparently coeval with the fallen temple, near its eastern end grew an aged tree, spreading over half the ruin its huge broad arms as if it would fain protect, in its desolation, the relics of that structure whose days of honour it had witnessed. A soft evening sunlight, struggling through the tops of the surrounding forest, shed a crimson glow over the whole scene, and imparted a quiet and sacred character to the spot that took from it its aspect of desolation. It stood there lonely and majestic in its ruin, forcibly suggesting to the mind the idea (for there does exist a mysterious sympathy of association between man and inanimate objects) of calm, Christian old age, ripe in years and holiness, gathering about itself, with dignity and grace, its mantle of decay.

Wrapped in his gloomy thoughts, the horseman was absently following the path that wound among the ruins, when, as he turned a sudden angle of the pile, his horse started and nearly threw him from his saddle. Roused to a sense of his situation, he recovered his seat, seized the bridle, and looked up. Directly in his path stood a woman, in a short scarlet cloak, then, as now, the favourite colour of the Irish peasantry, leaning on a long white staff, curiously carved with mysterious figures. She was beneath the middle height, and hideously hunch-backed. Her hair was bright red, of extraordinary length, and hung down in masses nearly to the ground. Around her forehead was bound a cincture of beads, woven into singular devices, which confined a sort of turban of green silk. Her complexion was bronzed by exposure, but evidently once had been fair. Her features were stern and almost masculine, yet bearing traces of feminine beauty: the straight forehead, contracted by a rigid frown; the aquiline nose; the arched brow, and thin, well-shaped lips, with a roundly turned chin, were all, evidently, wrecks of what had once been beautiful. Her eye was large, full, and clear, and would still have been handsome but for a lurking

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devil in it. But the unsightly deformity of her person, if natural, must always have served to render nugatory any charm of countenance; and, whatever might have been her attractions in youth, her present appearance was calculated to excite only feelings of mingled fear and disgust. The young man gazed at her a moment as she stood in his path, and then, in a tone that was in unison with his present humour, said fiercely,

"Curses light on thee, hag! Stand from my path, or I will ride over thee, and trample thy hideous carcass with my horse's hoofs."

"Robert Lester, as men call thee," she said, without changing her position, in a cold, hard voice, and with a malicious laugh, "thou hast been crossed in thy will, and art out of temper. Dost wish revenge?"

"Woman, avaunt! I want none of thy counsel. From my path, or I will ride thee down!"

As he spoke, the impatient horseman struck his spurs deep into his horse's flanks, and urged the animal forward; the beast reared and plunged fearfully to either side, but refused to advance.

"Ha, ha, Robert More! If men will obey thee thy brute will not. He has the eye to see dangers that are hidden from mortal vision."

"Witch fiend!" cried the young man, fiercely, "I will dismount and hurl thee from the path if thou bar my way farther. Stand aside and let me pass!"

And a second time the infuriated rider urged the terrified beast forward, but was nearly unhorsed by his efforts to turn from the road. In an instant he leaped to the ground and advanced upon her. She smiled scornfully as he approached, caught the arm he extended to seize her, and held him in her grasp with the force of a vice.

"Ha, ha, Robert More! thou art defeated."

Quick as lightning, with his other hand he drew from his breast a hunting-knife, and, elevating it above her head, said, in a cool, decided tone,

"Elsy, release me, or I sheath this blade in thy heart!"

She fixed her dark wild eyes upon his face an instant, and reading aright its resolute expression, let go her grasp.

"'Tis well for thee, Elsy," he said, returning the blade to his bosom; "thou hast saved thy wretched life, and thy blood is not on my soul. Now leave the path!" he added, sternly. "By the cross! ere I will be bearded thus on my own lands, I will command my retainers to hurl thee into the sea."

"*Thy lands! thy retainers!* Ha, ha, ha, Robert *More!* I have in store a punishment for thee and for thy pride, that will repay me for all thy arrogance! Oh, how thy haughty soul will writhe! how thy proud spirit will groan! *Have I not a cup for thee to drink?* Oh, have I! Ha, ha, ha!"

The foreboding words and wild laugh of the hag sunk deep into the soul of the young man. He was impressed by her manner as much as by her language, and, with a changing cheek, said quickly,

"What mean these dark words, Elsy?"

"Dark! yes, they are dark to thee now, but I can make them clear as the sun at noon; ay, proud Robert of Lester! they shall scorch thee! wither thy soul! cause thy heart to shrink! thy neck to bow! thy head to lie in the very dust! Oh, will not the lowest slave among the vassals that wait thy word pity thee, when thine ears receive what I would

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reveal!"

The wild prophetic air, the energy and taunting scorn with which she spoke, alarmed while it enraged him.

"Madness! Woman fiend! monster of deformity! speak, I command thee."

"*Thou command me*, Robert Lester! Well, there will be a time! Wouldst thou know what I have to reveal?" she asked, fixing on him her scorching eyes.

"Beware if thou art mocking my fears! I will pluck thy tongue from thy throat, and fling it to my hounds if thou hast trifled with me!"

"What I will tell thee will be so true, thou wilt indeed wish the tongue that spoke it had been plucked from its roots ere it had given it utterance. Nevertheless, the time has come for thee to hear; and I may no longer delay the recital of what, for thy sake," she added, with a softer manner, "I would bear close locked in my breast to the grave. But," she concluded, in a lofty tone, "what is to be revealed must be made known, though the heaven's were to fall and the earth to quake. Who shall stay the hand of fate when once it is lifted to destroy?"

"Elpsy," said Lester, in a deep and earnest voice, unable to throw off the presentiment of coming evil her words had awakened, "I would believe thou hadst something to make known to me either of good or evil, though of the latter alone I know thou art the minister. Yet, if thou hast aught to say, I am ready to listen, good mother!" he added, in a mild and persuasive tone.

"Robert More," she said, in a voice of superhuman softness, while the frigid and austere character of her face passed away, and her features assumed a more womanly and gentler expression; "those last few words were kindly spoken, and became thee: they have touched my heart for even Elpsy has a heart," she said, with sarcastic bitterness; "for those kind expressions I would withhold from thee the knowledge of the doom that awaits thee. But it is not for me," she added, in an enthusiastic voice, and with returning wildness of the eye; "it is not for one like me to refuse to obey the decree that has gone forth against thee. As a mortal, I pity thee! as a woman, I could weep for thee! and as No," she interrupted herself, and muttered, "no, he shall not know all now; he shall not learn all till my soul is on the wing; then, *then* will it be time enough!" She then added aloud, "as the minister of the invisible world, I must do as I am commanded. Robert More, if you can bear to hear what I am doomed to tell, follow me!"

"Nay, Elpsy, speak to me here."

"Obey me!" she commanded, in an authoritative voice, that had a singular power over his will, and which he had not the ability to resist.

Without waiting for a reply, or looking round to see if she were followed, she turned from the bridlepath, and, bounding with great activity and with a sort of mad exhilaration of spirits over the fragments of stone that lay in her way, directed her course towards a low door at the foot of the crumbling tower. He hesitated a moment, and then, leaving his horse cropping the long rich grass that grew among the ruins, followed her. She entered the ruin, and, guided by a dim twilight that penetrated through the top of the ruinous arch, led the way along a covered passage which ran in the direction of the chancel. Its extremity was wrapped in total darkness.

"Elpsy, I will follow thee no farther," he called, after advancing till he could no longer take a step safely in the impenetrable gloom that surrounded him, while she walked before him with a free, rapid, and confident pace.

"Take the end of my staff," she said, returning a few steps and placing it within his reach.

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"Thy cabalistic wand, woman!" he repeated, in a tone of horror, recoiling from her several paces and crossing himself. "Avoid thee!"

Like many among the highborn and educated of that day, Lester was not above the superstitious notions of the times, and assented to, perhaps without firmly believing, the existence and power of sorceresses. Among the great number of these singular beings that about this time rose up and filled the minds of all men, both in Great Britain and the New-England colonies, with pious alarm and godly horror, was Elpsy More, or "Elpsy of the Tower," for by both of these names she was known, who had the reputation, above all others who practised the black art, of being on the most intimate footing with his Satanic highness. Dark and wild were the tales that had gone forth, and were repeated in hall and cot, of the supernatural deeds of this communer with the world of spirits. By the imaginations of the credulous and timid she was invested with powers that could belong only to the Creator of the universe; and it was believed by all good Catholics, that every Whitsuntide the devil came to dine with her in the chancel of the old church, making a table of the marble tomb of Black Morris O'More; who, as the tradition went, sold his soul for the love of a beautiful lady, who turned out to be a fiend, and on the bridal night flew away with him into the regions of wo.

When Lester crossed the threshold of the gloomy gallery, these tales of diablerie had come crowding thick upon his memory, painted in their most vivid hues by his imagination; and with all his daring his blood ran cold in his veins: nevertheless, he had continued to grope on until he could go no farther, when he called to her. As the staff she offered came in contact with his hand, he had shuddered and shrunk back, remembering how that it was said her crutch was given her by her master, who had charmed it by hardening it in the fires of the ever-burning lake; and that whomsoever she touched with it, or even pointed it to, that wore neither cross, bead, nor blessed relic about his neck, his soul would surely be lost. Lester trembled as these legends passed through his mind, crossed himself, and with great devotion muttered a *paternoster*.

"Here, then, is my hand!" she said, seeing his hesitation.

"Fearful being, I will not go with thee."

"Robert More, obey me! There is my hand. It shall not harm thee," she added, in that peculiar tone which held such a singular power over his volition.

Without replying, he took the extended hand and followed her through the dark passage a few yards farther, when she stopped and said,

"Heed thy footsteps! Here are steps thou must go down with me."

As she spoke she began to descend a flight of stone stairs into a vault beneath. He would have held back, but she gently and irresistibly led him down, when they stood upright in a damp chamber, in which a faint light struggled through an opening in the floor of the chapel above. The dank, noisome atmosphere of the place, and its subterraneous position beneath the chancel, filled him with awe and fear.

"Woman, whither have you led me?" he asked, in a voice deep with the mingled emotions of suspicion, alarm, and resentment.

"Into the tomb where rest the bones of Black Morris O'More," she answered, in a voice that sounded hollow and sepulchral.

"Mother of Heaven!" he gasped, "then is my soul lost!"

"Thou wilt little heed thy soul, proud youth, when thou hast heard my tale."

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"Be speedy with thy story, then; for, good or ill befall, I will not long remain here."

"Fear not; thou art in no danger! Step cautiously, and I will guide thee across this chamber to my own house. This is only the anteroom to it. Ha, ha!" she laughed frightfully. "See! I have grim Morris O'More to stand guard over my door."

As she said this she struck something, which, in the darkness, rattled like bones suspended from the ceiling of the vault.

"Sorceress!" cried he, shuddering at the sound, "I will go no farther."

"Come with me, Robert More!" she said, firmly; "and see thou fall not over the tomb of Black Morris in the way."

She drew him by the arm as she spoke with a strength far beyond his own. He felt for his hunting-knife, determined to free himself by striking her with it.

"Hold!" she cried, divining his intentions; "I will not harm thee. Here is my abode!"

While speaking, she struck against the opposite wall with her staff, and a door flew open, exposing the interior of a small circular chamber receiving a dim light from the sky, which was seen calm and blue through the roofless tower above.

"Welcome to the abode of Elpsy of the Tower!" she said, with irony. "'Tis not the princely one thou art accustomed to, but it will serve thy present purpose. Didst know that on thy domains thou hadst such a brave woodland palace? Look about thee!"

The young man entered the room with a feeling of relief that he no longer was in the very sepulchre, though still within reach, of the tomb of Black Morris the accursed. The apartment in which he now found himself originally had been constructed by the priests for the preservation of the sacred vessels of the church in times of hostile invasion of their domains. It was a subterranean room, situated beneath a circular tower or turret that rose at the southeast angle of the chapel. The tower once had contained three floors, one above the other; the mortises for the sleepers being yet visible, ranged regularly and at equal distances around the inner side. The top or roof of the tower, with its battlement and Gothic ornaments, had long since fallen in; and the floors, down even to the ground that formed the floor of the witch's apartment and the very foundation of the tower, had successively decayed and disappeared. The only entrance to this tunnel-like turret was the door from the sepulchre by which he had been admitted. From this vault to the chambers formerly above, access had been obtained by a circular stair-way within the tower and conducting from floor to floor, the beds of the beams and fixtures which supported them still remaining in the masonry. The object of these once-existing upper chambers of the round tower is involved in mystery, though tradition hath given to the "three tower chambers" each their own wild tale of dark superstition and priestly crime.

As he stood in the vault in the bottom of the tower, and looked far out at the sky, it was like gazing upward from the bottom of a well. The light came in strongly at the top, but grew fainter and fainter as it penetrated deeper, till only a dim twilight reached the chamber below. He recognised the tower as the loftiest of the ruin which often he had made a landmark when hunting, and ascertained thereby his position: this discovery rendering him more at his ease, he turned to survey the subterranean abode which Elpsy had chosen.

In the midst of the floor was a heap of cinders, on which stood a small iron kettle, apparently the only utensil she used for preparing her food. A stone escutcheon, broken from one of the tombs, served her for a seat, and a pile of fern and leaves for a bed. These constituted all the necessaries that her singular and solitary way of life called for. But there were other objects that attracted his attention, and thrilled his blood as he gazed on them. Beside the

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door, its bones tied together with strips of deer's hide, hung a skeleton of great size, its ghastly jaws carefully bound up and grinning horribly, and its hollow, bony sockets filled with stag's eyes wildly staring at him. Sculls, cross-bones, and other hideous mementoes of the charnel-house were arranged along the sides of the walls; while charms, amulets, and all the numerous instruments of sorcery lay about. Through the open door he beheld the stone effigy of Black Morris, which had slid from its recumbent posture above his tomb by the sinking of the earth, standing nearly upright, staring with his stony gaze into the round chamber, before which swung the skeleton of which his tomb had been despoiled. The tomb itself was open, and its black sepulchral mouth yawned as if it would gladly receive a new occupant.

Terrible to Lester's nerves was the trial produced by this scene. Bold and fearless as he was by nature, he could not suppress emotions of fear (the cowardice of superstition) at the situation and circumstances in which he had suffered himself to be drawn by the taunting language of a wild weird woman, who not only was the professed enemy of all mankind, but had manifested hostile feelings towards himself. He nevertheless resolved that, having adventured, he would go through with it, trusting, with religious faith, that all good saints would help him against spiritual foes; while for protection against mortal ones, ay, even Elpsy herself, he trusted to his own coolness, and, if it should come to that, the broad sharp blade of his hunting-knife. Having fortified his mind with this resolve, he felt more confidence; and being now in some degree familiarized with his situation and the ghastly objects around him, he turned to address the sorceress, who, on entering, had seated herself on a scull, and, with her chin buried between her hands, continued to fix her dark eyes upon his face with a mingled expression of pity and malignant triumph. Before he could speak she rose, and, laying her hand on his arm, said, in a tone between sadness and derision,

"How like you my abode, my lord?"

" 'Tis a gloomy place."

"Ay, and many a gloomy day have I spent in it. Sit ye down on that stone, *Lord Lester!*" she added, laying a peculiar emphasis upon the last two words; " 'tis a knight's shield, and should be a fit seat for *thee!*"

"Is it thus, Elpsy, you use the sculptured armour and the sepultured bones of my ancestors?" he said, in an indignant tone.

"*Thy* ancestors?" she repeated, scornfully. "Sit thou there, *Lord Lester*. Dost hear, Lord Lester? Open thine ears, and drink in the title and style well for 'twill be the last time they will fall upon them."

"Cease your mockery, woman! Say what thou hast to say, and quickly."

"Listen!" she said, seating herself on a scull opposite to him, while a struggle between sympathy and malicious exultation was visible on her features. "Young, and fair, and brave to look upon withal!" she said, muttering to herself, and gazing on him steadfastly and thoughtfully; "a coronet would grace that brow even as if 'twere born to it. Robert Lester, or Robert More, for men call thee both," she said aloud, bending her face towards him, and speaking in an impressive manner, "now listen to the tale I have in store for thee. Fix thine eye upon me that I may see it blench as I go on. Oh! it's a tale for a Christmas eve, I trow!"

She was silent a few seconds, as if sending her thoughts back through the past; then, in a low voice, which rose or fell, was wild or sad, slow or rapid, as her subject moved her, she began:

"Eighteen long years ago there dwelt by the seaside a poor fisherman, honest, hard labouring in his vocation, but contented with his lot, never having known better. He was a widower, but had an only daughter, his sole companion, and the only link that bound him to his kind. This child grew up to be a tall and comely maiden. Her eyes were of the rich brown hue of the ripe chestnut. Her hair, soft as the floss of Florence, was a fair brown; but

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when the winds that came off the sea would toss it in the sunlight, there played over it a blaze of gold. It never had known confinement, but floated like a sunset cloud about her head."

"What has this to do with thy tale?" demanded Lester, impatiently.

"Listen!" she said, calmly but firmly; her features, as her thoughts seemed to dwell pleasantly on the beauty of the maiden, becoming more humanized, while her voice modulated and harmonized with the words she uttered. "This fair maid grew up, unknowing and unknown; budding and blooming like a lone flower by the seaside. Her laugh was merry as the carol of the glad lark as it soars and sings; her spirits were light as the sparkling foam of the summer's sea; her heart as pure as the moonbeam that slept on the wave. Her happiness was in her father's smile and in his paternal love; and, besides her little cot, and the wide sea which she loved, and the tall cliff that towered above her home, she knew not, until she had entered her eighteenth year, that there was any other world. Alas, for that maiden, that she had not remained in ignorance! Alas, for her, that her heart was not as cold as the moonbeam it resembled in its purity! One black and stormy night, a voice, shouting for aid, reached the ears of the old fisherman and his child, heard above the howlings of wind and roaring of the angry deep.

"`Rise, my child!' he cried, `there is life in peril.'

"In a few moments they were by the seaside, and by flashes of lightning beheld a small bark driving towards the shore before the tempest. On its prow stood a group of men, who waved their arms wildly as the lightning showed to them the forms of the old man and his daughter standing on the beach, and shouted for help. Swift and irresistible, like an affrighted courser, the fatal vessel drove onward, now lifted high on a surge, now plunging into a yawning chasm, till at length, borne to a great height on a wave, she trembled an instant on its top, and then, descending like an arrow, struck against the bottom and was dashed to pieces. Wild, fearful, unearthly was the shriek that pierced the ears of the fisherman and his child! They looked where, a moment before, it went careering over the foaming billows, and the lightning gleamed only upon fragments of the wreck, human heads, and wildly waving arms. One solitary cry rent the air after she struck, and then naught but the shriek of the winds, like a human wail, and the tumult of the sea as it lashed the shore in its fury, was to be heard."

"What has this to do with the tale I came hither to learn?" asked the youth, impatiently; nevertheless, had he listened to her with interest, deeply impressed by the energy of her voice and manner, as she warmed in her narrative.

"Much," she said, quietly. "Listen! The fisherman, with his hair streaming in the wind, and his garments wet with the spray, long traversed the beach to see if human life had been cast on shore. He was accompanied by his daughter, who, with her golden locks glancing in the lightning, her lofty forehead calm and firm with womanly energy, and her fair young face lighted up with the noble spirit that inspired her to the task, looked like some bright spirit of peace that had come to stay the tempest. They watched by that lonely shore till the dawn broke, when, by its first faint glimmer, the maiden discovered an object like a human form lying on the edge of the sea beside a rock, whither it had been tossed by the stormy waves. With a cry between hope and mistrust she sprang fearlessly towards the object for, in the stern duties of humanity to its suffering kind, fear nor false delicacy have no place, and, if they had, that maiden was too good, too ignorant of life to know either. As she came close to it, she saw that it was the body of a man. She placed her hand upon his temples. They were warm. He was alive! Alas, far better would it have been for her had he been cold as the stone beside which he lay! His pulse was very faint; she could just feel it throb like a fine chord vibrating against her finger. He was lying upon his side naturally, like one in sleep. It was not yet light enough to see whether he was young or old, but she knew from the soft smooth skin of his brow, that many winters of manhood had not passed over his head. With her aid her father bore him to their hut, and, after bathing his forehead and hands in spirits, and applying for his restoration the few but effective means known to those whose lives are passed on the sea, he opened his eyes, and, after a little while, was able to sit up. After having waited a few moments to recall his faculties, he seemed to have become conscious of his situation, and the fatal cause which led to it: with a smile of gratitude he looked up, and, glancing first at the

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father and then at the daughter, acknowledged, in a voice and with a look that thrilled to the heart of the poor maiden, how much he owed them for their exertions in saving his life."

"This is a long story, Elpsy, and, methinks, little to the purpose!" interrupted Lester.

"Listen! His language was courteous, and his speech addressed alone to her: his manner was also gentle, and such as would please a maiden. He got up and walked to the window to look out upon the beach, which was strewn with fragments of the wreck; and, as he did so, she was struck with his noble figure, and proud, soldierly air; and the soft sadness that came over his face, as he surveyed the melancholy relics of his gallant vessel, touched her heart. He was not above thirty years of age, with a high, fair brow, and a cheek, though sunburnt, bright as a child's. His hair was of a silvery hue, that harmonized with his complexion, and flowed long and in shining waves about his shoulders. His eyes were as blue as if they had been mirrors to reflect the summer's sky, and, as she met them, were tender, yet ardent, in their expression. His smile was fascinating, and his rich voice was full of melody and most manly in its tones. Poor fisher's daughter! She gazed on him bewildered with love, and lost her heart ere she scarce knew she possessed one! He turned away from the window, and his eyes met the fervent gaze of the maiden. She blushed; her eyelids fell; her young bosom heaved tumultuously, and the worldly-wise stranger read her heart at a glance.

"The evening of that day (for hour after hour did he linger beneath the fisherman's lowly roof) they sat together in the door of her cot. He took her hand, and told her, in a low, gentle voice, how he had sailed homeward from Spain, where he had been fighting as a soldier; and how, with his companions, he had been, the last night, driven by the tempest on that inhospitable shore when within five leagues of his destination; and how that he had lost much treasure by the shipwreck, but that her presence had made him forget all he had lost; that her smile repaid him for all that he had suffered. Poor maiden! The hours wore away, yet they seemed minutes to her; the stars came out, and the tardy moon rose! He discoursed to her of love, and she listened! Her ears drank in his words! Her heart was no longer her own. He told her that he loved her, and received her ingenuous confession in return. He then told her of a brave tower, that stood amid broad lands five leagues northward, which owned him as master, and this, he said, he would make her the mistress of if she would become his bride. She believed and promised. He then said he must leave her, but would return in a few days in a fair ship, and claim its fulfilment. The next morning he took his departure. She wept sorely in his arms when he left her. But, ere her father, who had been pursuing his daily toil on the deep, returned, she had dried up her tears and clothed her face with smiles to meet him, lest her sorrow should make him sad. She did not tell him of her love or the promise of the stranger: it was the first time she had harboured a secret in her guileless heart. She was silent from maidenly modesty; for, with the love that had got into her heart, had entered many new feelings hitherto unknown to her.

"Sad and heavy passed the days, when one evening, as she stood upon the beach looking, now southward for the light skiff of her father, and, much oftener, northward for the expected bark of her lover, she saw the evening sun glancing on a white sail that appeared coming round a promontory a league distant to the north. It bent its course towards the beach. Her heart fluttered. She knew not what to do for joy; and, in her impatience, could have flown along the white sand to meet it! Steadily it bore down towards her. She now forgot to look for the little skiff of her father; her eyes were fixed alone on the coming bark! It approached nearer and nearer. She could see forms on the deck. As it came closer, high on the poop, standing alone like its master spirit, she discovered her lover. He waved his hand to her, and, as she answered it, the vessel came to; a boat was launched, and he sprang into it. A few strokes of the oar sent it to the land, and, leaping out, the handsome stranger clasped the lovely maiden in his arms.

"`Come, gentle maid,' he said, in accents of love; `come and be the bride of my home and heart.'

"`Not without my father!' she said, looking anxiously to see if she could descry his boat.

"`Think not of him now,' said he; `he shall soon come, and cheer with his presence your new home.'

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"`He will grieve when he finds I have left him,' she said, with filial tenderness. `I cannot go.'

"`He shall, ere long, see you again,' he said, gently leading her along; `come, dearest, fly with me to the abode I have prepared for you. This shall be our bridal night!'

"The maiden suffered herself to be borne to the waiting bark; its sails were trimmed to the breeze, and swiftly it cut its way through the crested billows towards the direction from which it came."

"Hast done?" asked the impatient Lester.

"Hear me!" said Elpsy, in a stern tone. "The morning's sun shone upon a dark square tower, with a single wing that looked upon the sea, and his beams penetrated a stained lattice, and fell in brilliant and varied dies on the floor of a chamber within it. In that chamber sat the fisher's daughter; and the fair-locked stranger was bending over her as she sat by the window, dallying with her golden tresses. The night upon the sea had been her bridal night! But, alas! unblessed by priest, unmarked by altar, or prayer, or vow! She was neither bride nor maid."

Here the witch's voice trembled with emotion, while her eyes grew rigid, and her brow became gloomy and fearful to look upon.

"Who did this maiden this foul wrong?" asked the youth, with a flashing eye.

"Hurtel of the Red-Hand!"

"Ha! that rebel Irish chief, who, to save his head, fled to the Colonies, and who, for his bloodthirsty spirit, got the title of `The Red-Hand?' " demanded Lester, with interest.

"The same."

"I would have sworn it! Go on."

She smiled grimly, and then continued:

"For many days he was devoted to his victim; but amused her, when she besought him to heal her wounded honour by the words of the holy mass of marriage, with idle excuses; and so she was put off from day to day, till she found there was life within her bosom, and that she was about to become a wedless mother.

"Gradually he got to neglect her, and daily grew more and more estranged from her; and at length, heading a secret conspiracy, his tower became the rendezvous of insurgent leaders, and day and night rung with bacchanalian revels. Lonely she sat, evening after evening, in her solitary chamber, with her face resting on her hand, and her eyes looking south over the sea; her thoughts winging their way to her lowly cot and its humble occupant, who, perhaps, mourned his daughter as having perished in the deep.

"At length she became a mother. *He* was away at the time, at the head of a party of conspirators bound on an expedition of treason and bloodshed. On the third day afterward he returned. She heard the tramp of horses, and with hurried joy opening the lattice for, notwithstanding his neglect, she loved him still saw him riding rapidly towards the tower, followed only by a single rider, and leading by the rein a palfrey, on which was mounted a beautiful lady; she saw that her head drooped, that she appeared sick and faint, and that he supported her by passing one arm about her waist. A pang of jealousy, the first she had ever known, shot through her bosom. They reined up beneath the window: she saw him take her in his arms from the saddle, and bear her within the tower. Then, with surprise, she heard him, in a loud tone, give commands for all the defences of the castle to be put up, as if he expected to encounter a siege. She returned again to her couch faint and sick at heart, and waited his

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appearance. An hour elapsed ere he came, and painful were the thoughts that agitated her bosom. When at length she heard his footsteps, she rose to meet him with a smile of love, with her infant extended in her arms. His dress was disordered and bloody, as if he was just from conflict; and she at once saw, for affection is quick and suspicious ever, that his brow was dark and angry.

"Ha!" he cried, scornfully, "what have we here?"

"The pledge of your former love," she said, with gentle reproof, offering it to his arms.

"By the head of St. Peter!" he exclaimed, pushing her rudely away, and fixing upon her a terrible look (which but one other living can give," said Elpsy, with peculiar emphasis, fixing her gaze upon Lester), "I brought thee not hither to breed brats! Fling it from the window!"

"And, without deigning to cast a glance upon it, he strode across the chamber, while, with a cry of pain and mortal anguish, she sunk down upon the floor. He turned and looked back at her for a few seconds, and then said fiercely,

"Rise, woman! I have brought a lady hither who will need thy services ere the dawn. Up, I say. Thou shalt be her servant if I bid thee. Such a station will best suit thy birth. Up, or I will tear thy brat from thee and cast it from the balcony."

"She clung convulsively to her babe and rose from the ground. But was she not changed in that little while, Robert More? Was not her deep love turned into deep hate? Ay! as if by the wave of a wand her soul was changed, and she became a different being. 'Tis but a step from the deepest love to the deepest hate in woman's heart, when she feels that she is deliberately injured. Then lightning is not quicker than the change he'll not deeper than her hate! She rose from the floor another creature. He saw the alteration in her countenance, and, for a moment, his guilty spirit cowered. But Satan helped him to banish all feeling from his breast, and he waved her sternly away.

"Whither?" she asked, meeting his fierce gaze with a cool glance of contempt.

"To the chamber opening from the hall," he said, in a tone of less authority, dropping his eyes before her steady look.

"As he went out he muttered to himself, but the mother's open ears caught the meaning of the words,

"That child shall die!"

"She shuddered, but spoke not: clasping her child to her bosom after he had left her, she tottered from the room and descended to the hall. Entering the apartment designated, she there beheld the lady whom she had seen ride up to the tower. She was reclining on a couch, and appeared to be overpowered by fatigue and grief. She was very lovely, with fine dark eyes that were filled with tears, and raven hair that was spread dishevelled over her pillow. She turned her face as the door opened, and her countenance brightened with hope as she saw the approach of one of her own sex. The young mother advanced to the couch and offered her consolation. The lady glanced at the swaddled infant, and asked if she were the wife of 'Hurtel of the Red-Hand.'

"No," was the sad, yet stern, reply.

"The lady ceased to inquire further, and, being in her turn asked how she came there, said that she was a noble lady and a wife."

"A noble lady!" repeated Lester, with interest.

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"Now that there is high blood spoken of, you can feel an interest in my story," she said, sarcastically. "Listen! She told how her lord had gone that morning at the head of a party of gentlemen to attack a strong position of the insurgents, when, anxious and impatient for intelligence, she rode out, accompanied by several servants, nearly a league from her castle, in hopes of meeting him or a messenger. She got no tidings of him, and was on her return, when one overtook her with a message from her lord, saying that he had gained a signal victory over the conspirators, who were totally routed with great slaughter, and that their chief, Hurltel of the Red-Hand, had barely escaped with his life."

"A battle with conspirators, and defeat of Hurltel of the Red-Hand. By Heaven! woman, my father once fought and conquered this same chief! Ha your looks! what speak was it was she no go on, it cannot be!"

The sorceress smiled mysteriously and continued,

"I had hardly received this joyful news,' she said, `when three horsemen, riding at full speed, came spurring behind us. They were passing us, when one of them, whom I recognised as Hurltel of the Red-Hand, turned in his saddle as he dashed by, and, looking at me earnestly, exclaimed,

""The countess, by all that's fortunate! This will help redeem the day's reverses, and give me a chance for my head!"

"As he spoke he threw himself, with his company, sword in hand, upon my servants, and, after a brief struggle, in which he lost one of his party, either slew or dispersed them; and then, ere I had time to collect my thoughts, he seized the rein of my palfrey and conveyed me hither. His object must be either ransom, or, more probably, the hope of being able, with me in his power, to make his own terms with the victorious party, of which my noble lord is captain. You, who have so recently become a mother, will sympathize with me at this crisis.'

"I will briefly pass over the events that followed," continued Elpsy. "Before dawn the Lady Lester was prematurely delivered of a male child; a fine, black-eyed boy, healthy and robust; but, through weakness and mental anxiety, she soon after became insensible, and neither caressed nor opened her eyes to look upon it. At sunrise the insurgent chief entered the chamber, and demanded which was the fisher's brat. There was an expression upon his face and a dark look in his eye that boded ill. With a convulsive shudder the mother shrunk from his gaze and flew to the bed, on the foot of which slept the two infants. She was just about to clasp her own to her heart, with the resolution to defend it with her life, when suddenly she checked the maternal impulse, and, turning to him, said, as if her conduct would depend upon his reply,

"What would you do with it?"

"Give it me!' he demanded, more fiercely, `or I will slay both thee and thy young one.'

"And he approached her menacingly as he spoke.

"She once more bent over the babes! She dared not disobey: yet a mother's love called loudly at her heart. Her babe's life was all in all to her. It must be saved! She thought only of saving it!

"I wait!' he said, sternly.

"Instinctively she caught up the babe of the noble lady and placed it in his arms.

"'Tis here! But spare, oh, spare it!' she cried, as he strode from the chamber with it in his rude grasp.

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"Her heart smote her for what she had done. Leaving behind her her own babe, which she had saved by this maternal deception, she followed, clinging to him, and entreating him to spare the innocent. He heeded her not, but advanced rapidly to a balcony that overhung the water thirty feet above it, and, heedless of her cries, cast it over. She sprang forward, and saw that the swaddling robe in which it was wrapped had caught the point of a sharp rock, and that it hung suspended by it within a foot of the water. With a cry of joy she had nearly sprung off to save the babe, when, seeing that, by a bold leap from the balustrade, she could reach a projecting rock, from which she could clamber down to the water, she prepared to take it. But her exclamation caused him to turn back; and seeing the fall of the child had been so singularly arrested, and that she was about to attempt its rescue, he grew black with rage, and with a violent blow, as she was in the act of springing to the rock, struck her from the balcony into the sea. As she fell she caught by the edges of the cliff, and, in some degree, broke her fall, but, nevertheless, descended heavily into the water. It was not deep, and she recovered her feet, caught the babe in her arms, and, staggering to a sandy part of the shore, sunk down insensible. When she recovered her senses the sun was high in the heavens. She attempted to rise, but found she was deeply bruised, and that her spine was much injured by striking against the rock in her descent. She looked up to the balcony. It was closed, and all was silent. It was evident that the murderer, supposing the fall fatal, had not the courage to watch her descent, and had retired.

"She immediately resolved not to enter the castle again. With her soul turned to bitterness, burning with vengeance against the author of her wrongs, and suffering with pain, she prepared to seek, with the infant she held in her arms, her father's cot. For her own babe she had no fears. She knew that it would ever be regarded as that to which the lady had given birth. It was fifteen miles to her native hut; yet weary, suffering, ill, she dragged herself thither by the evening of the second day. Her father, who had long mourned her dead, met her with open arms. He pitied and nursed her for many long months till she recovered her health; but her beauty of form was gone for ever. Her soul grew dark with her woes; vengeance took the place of love in her heart towards him who had so basely wronged her; and bitterness against all her species rankled in her breast, and hourly grew deeper and deeper. Her senses at length became unsteady. She grew restless and moody, and, after two years abode with her father, she wandered forth, leaving with him the boy, and never more returned to her natal roof. She sought a wild home in the vicinity of her own son, where she could daily see him, watch with pride his growth, and even speak with him unknown and unsuspected. But when, as he increased in years and stature, he began to look like his father, she began to hate him too, though, alas! it cost her many a pang to do so.

"She now learned, that on the evening of the day on which she had been hurled from the balcony, the husband of the lady, followed by fifty armed men, surrounded the tower and demanded her surrender of her captor. He replied that he would give her up on two conditions: first, that his lands should not be confiscated: secondly, that he should be permitted to ride forth, wherever he would, unmolested; which terms the noble lord promised should be complied with if his lady should say she had received no insult at his hands; and if, further, he would bind himself to quit the realm within nine days thereafter. To this he assented. The gates were shortly after thrown open, and, mounted on the blood-bay charger which he always rode, he paced forth from his stronghold, passed slowly and sternly through the lines of besiegers, and, after trotting deliberately till he had got a great ways beyond them, put spurs to his horse and rode off, no man knew whither: though there is *one* knows," she added, mysteriously, as if alluding to herself, "that within nine days he was on the sea, bound to the New World.

"The noble lord took possession of the tower, and joyfully embraced his lady, and thanked her, saying, that notwithstanding she had been a prisoner, she had not forgotten to make him a father;" and he took up and kissed the babe as if it had been his own flesh and blood, instead of sharing the mingled current that flowed in the veins of Hurltel of the Red-Hand and the fisher's daughter; and from thenceforward he took him home and made him the heir of his house. A little after that this brave lord fell in the wars, nor ever knew he the truth to his last dying breath. Thus ends my story, *Lord Robert of Lester!* Who, think you, was this noble lord and lady?"

The young man had listened to the latter part of her narration with thrilling attention. As she was drawing to the conclusion, he sprang from his seat, and laid a hand on either shoulder of the narrator, and looked steadily into her

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eyes, as if he would read there the dreadful secret he anticipated, yet dared not meet. He listened to each word that fell from her lips with the most absorbing and painful interest his lips parted his eyes starting from their sockets his face convulsed, and brought close to hers his fingers almost buried in the flesh of her shoulders! When, at the conclusion, she put the sarcastic question to him, which he trembled lest he could too well answer, his hands stole from her shoulders and suddenly fastened upon her throat.

"Woman! sorceress! die!" he hoarsely whispered, through his clinched teeth, with terrible energy.

She freed herself from his grasp with an extraordinary effort, and flung him from her, laughing loudly and wildly!

"Ha, ha, ha! *Robert of Lester!* Does my story please thee, my *lord!* my retainers! my *domains!*"

He looked at her for a moment with appalling calmness, and then, approaching her, said, in an even tone, but in a hollow voice that was horrible to hear,

"Woman or demon, tell me truly, who was this noble lady who gave birth to a son?"

"Elizabeth of Lester, the `Dark Lady of the Rock,'" was the firm reply.

"Was this change of infants surely made?" he asked, in the same tone.

"I have said it."

"And what became of her child?"

"'Twas left with the fisherman."

"Does he now live?" he asked, with sudden interest.

"He does!"

"As a fisher's lad?"

"He follows the craft of him who reared him."

"On the beach beneath Castle Cor?"

"You have said."

A strange expression, too complicated to analyze, passed across his features. But he continued with the same awful calmness:

"The woman the daughter what became of her?"

"Thou wilt know hereafter."

"And her own boy ha! *was it a boy?*" he asked, suddenly.

"It was."

"He was taken home by my by Lord Lester?"

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"Yes."

"Have they had no children since, woman?"

"None, ever, save him who was born beneath the roof of `Hurtel of the Red-Hand."

"And this infant this bastard child this low-born boy, grew up within the halls of Castle More as its liege lord?"

"He did!"

"And that boy stands before you?"

"He does!"

His calmness was appalling to witness. She shrunk from looking him in the face, and covered before the light of his eyes.

"Mysterious woman! how thou camest by the knowledge of these things I know not. I believe thou hast spoken truth; thy tale hangs too well together for malice to invent."

He struggled with strong emotion. His brow darkened, his face worked convulsively. At last he seemed to have resolved on a settled purpose.

"Who knows this hellish secret besides thyself?" he asked, his penetrating glance resting on her face.

"None but thee," she said, meeting his eye with a wary look, as if anticipating danger from the tone of his voice.

"To every human eye, then, but *thine*, I am Lord of Lester?"

"Who of mortal mould should suspect thee to be other than he, when she who bore thee not believes thee to be the fruit of her womb."

"Thou wilt swear this?"

"I say it."

"'Tis enough. Does this fisher's boy know the secret of his birth?"

"No!"

"Does the old man?"

"No!"

"Thou wilt swear it?"

"I say it."

"'Tis well, woman! Thou shalt die!"

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As he spoke he drew from his breast his hunting knife and sprang upon her. She detected the momentary lighting up of his eye ere he made the spring, and alertly avoided the blow by leaping through the door: he fell forward, and the blade shivered against the stone sides of the tower.

With a laugh of derision she fled along the passage pursued by him. Her voice and also her footsteps ceased as he reached the steps leading upward from the tomb, and, without any sound to guide him, he groped his way along the gallery. At length he approached the light; but, although he could see through the door out into the forest, she was nowhere visible! After vainly searching every part of the ruin, he abandoned the attempt, remounted his horse, and spurred towards Castle More.

CHAPTER V.

"Oh God! how changed my nature with all this!
I, that had been all love and tenderness
The truest and most gentle heart till now
That ever beat grew suddenly a devil!"

Lord Ivan and his Daughter.

What pen can portray, what language describe the feelings of the haughty Lester, as he rode at furious speed towards Castle More? He could neither think nor reflect! His thoughts were confused and tempestuous. He could not realize that he had actually listened to the accursed tale with his own ears. He felt rather as if he had passed through some dreadful dream, and the idea flashed on his mind that she had thrown a dark spell upon his senses, and that the whole was an illusion, and altogether the result of her art.

By degrees his thoughts became more settled and run in a direct channel. He checked his head-long speed and began to reflect: to recall, word by word, the narrative of Elpsy; weigh each sentence; match fact with fact; each circumstance with its fellow; and trace the unbroken thread to the last damning proof. The result was irresistible. A thousand circumstances to corroborate the tale of infamy rose like phantoms to his shrinking memory.

He remembered how, in childhood, a neighbouring baron, who had been out against the insurgents, playfully laid his hand upon his head, and told him he looked so much like Hurltel of the Red-Hand that he must take good care, when he became a man, he did not lose his head for the likeness: he remembered, too, how his childish spirit took fire at the similitude, and that he resented the insult with a blow! He further called to mind how, later in life, the more aged country people, in passing him, would shake their heads significantly; and often the whispered words, "Hurltel of the Red-Hand," would reach his ears. He recollected, also, how Lady Lester (alas! no longer, if this tale were proved true, to be regarded as his mother, yet whom he had loved hitherto with the intensest filial affection) had reproved him in his angry moods, and forbade him to frown so like Hurltel of the Red-Hand. He called to mind, too, how that, in childhood (unthought of again till too faithful memory brought it back), it had more than once reached his ears through the menials, that Lady Lester, in her youthful days, had been made a prisoner in some old castle by a rebel chief; and he could remember he had listened with childish interest to its recital as to a tale of enchanted castles and cruel giants. *Now* he could invest it with a too vivid reality! He had heard, also, he knew not how, and what, at the time, left no distinct impression on his mind, a scandal which said that Lady Lester did penance for unfaithfulness in her early marriage days: this cottage gossip he could now easily trace to her imprisonment by could he speak it? *his father!* He, too, had been twice called by spirited peasants, who, on certain occasions, had resented his arbitrary will a *bastard!*

All these things rushed to his mind. There was something in it beyond mere idle gossip something independent of mere accident! The tale he had listened to was to him a key to the whole. The inference was overpowering! It was as plain to his mind as the noonday sun, that the story he had heard from the lips of Elpsy was founded in truth.

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"'Tis true! 'tis *true!* 'tis TRUE!" he groaned, covering his face with his hands.

Oh, was not this an appalling and harrowing reflection for a proud spirit like his? Was it not a bitter, bitter cup that was presented to his lips? Alas, how cruelly barbed and how skilfully directed how fatally sent, was the shaft of inexorable fate! It pierced the spot where alone it could penetrate; where its wound would be deepest, and the smart the keenest. Struck down from its high seat to the very ground was that pride of birth which constituted the basis of his character; and withered, dead, bruised in the dust lay the haughtiness of spirit, which, springing from that soil, had flourished like the green bay-tree.

"Not only lowborn I could bear that, I could bear that! but, oh God! a *bastard!* Mercy! mercy! mercy!"

He hid his face as he gave utterance to these words, and sobbed audibly. He gave way for a few moments to the full tide of his strong and afflicting grief in the most agonizing manner! His soul was rent! his heart was broken! and, altogether, he presented a picture of moral desolation and mental wretchedness that was appalling to contemplate. What thoughts must then have passed through his mind and wrung his proud soul! The reflection that he must abandon all his plans and hopes as Lord of Lester; take leave of the luxuries to which he had been accustomed; descend from the rank of a noble to that of a peasant; be called "fellow" by the lowest hind; bear the scorn of the highborn and the jeers of the low; and, most of all, that he must for ever abandon, without hope, the love of Kate Bellamont, filled him with wo such as the heart of man hath seldom known.

"And need I forfeit all these?" he exclaimed, suddenly checking the current of his grief, his features lighting up at the same time with guilty exultation, and assuming an expression of deep determination; "need I make this sacrifice? May I not still be Lord of Lester?" he cried, rising in his stirrups and almost shouting with the force of his thoughts. "Ay, and *will I!* Ay, and *will I!* 'Tis but to silence, either with gold or true steel, this beldame, who is the sole depository of the secret of my birth!"

For a moment after giving utterance to this guilty idea he rode silently along; his honourable nature and his inflexible pride both having instantly risen at the criminal suggestion, and revolted at a deception so vast. But there were two strong motives which threatened to weigh down these better promptings, though honour pointed to the course he should alone pursue. He could not bear his proud spirit could never brook, that the despised fisher's lad the humble, low-nurtured peasant for such he was, notwithstanding his noble birth, should stand in his place, and *he* himself oh, it was madness to think of it sink into the fisher's boy!

"No! perish honour perish truth perish all that is noble or virtuous in my nature first!" he cried, with the reckless decision of one who has resolved to sustain wrong at the expense of right.

There was a second motive, the love of Kate Bellamont! Should he resign her for ever? Could he endure the scornful disdain with which he believed she would regard him? Above all, could he bear to have the handsome fisher's lad, whom he already looked upon, in some sort, in the light of a rival, sue successfully as Lord of Lester for her hand? Could he endure all this and be human? Could he resign all to become what he dared not contemplate, and live?

"No!" he cried, vehemently, "away with all justice and truth! let my heart be wrapped in a mesh of falsehoods first! But need there be falsehood? Silence, *silence* will effect it. Is there injustice when the victim is ignorant of his rights?" he asked, mentally, as if he were arguing with his own soul. "Yes, most foul! and silence will be a living tongue to torture me a never-ending falsehood to degrade and will cast over the soul a night that can never know a dawn! Shall I incur this load of guilt? Will what I gain by the purchase repay me for the sacrifice of truth and honesty? Shall I not even be happier, ay, and more noble, as the poor fisher's lad, having done justice, than as Lord of Lester and Castle More, convicted at my soul's tribunal of guilt, and knowing who and what I am?"

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Such was the train of reasoning that insensibly passed through his mind, and to which he gave utterance at this extraordinary crisis of his fate, and which promised to overthrow his former criminal resolutions.

"But should I do as my better nature prompts," he continued, after galloping forward a few moments, reining up and pursuing his former train of reasoning, "I need not be compelled to take the place of this Lester in his fishing hut, nor need I to remain within the atmosphere of Castle More, to meet the scorn of the noble, the insults of the lowborn. The world is all before me; I have a ready spirit, and a hand to sustain it, and can carve my own way through it; and with honour, too! Ay, I may yet win a name with the noblest born!"

Suddenly in the midst of this expression of his laudable and honourable purpose he stopped; a gleam of terrible fire shot from his eyes, while his face glowed with crimson shame.

"Ha, ha, ha! *honour!* Ha, ha, ha! a *name!* I had forgot," he repeated, with an accent bitter, sarcastic, and scornful beyond expression, yet with a wretched look of hopeless despair and misery; "what has a bastard to do with *honour?* What is it to him? I had forgotten I was more than lowborn! I'faith, 'twas well thought of! So all my lofty feelings go for nothing." His manner now changed, and his voice rang with passion. "What have *I* to do with lofty aspirations, with honour, or a name among men? Am I not branded with infamy? infamous by birth; attainted by my father's yes, for I will acknowledge him *my father's* blood! base through my mother's! What have I to do with honour? 'Tis not for me. I know it not. Henceforward I will forget its sound and meaning. What have I to do with honour? Ha, ha, ha! A name? Yes, I will win a *name*; I will show myself the true son of Hurltel of the Red-Hand. He shall not be ashamed of his blood. No, no! I will win a name that, be he on earth or in hell, shall make him smile and own me as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh."

The scornful energy, fierceness of spirit, and stern determination with which this guilty resolution was spoken, showed that at a single blow was crushed all pride of character; that the highborn loftiness of spirit in which he had been educated had fallen, and that honour was for ever shipwrecked. He felt himself, in anticipation, already an outcast from the world; a shunned and despised alien; an object of the scorn and pity of mankind. And such he was. He felt it to his heart's core. Eventually, perhaps, he might have forgiven the lowness of his birth, and risen superior to this contingency; but he could not forget its illegitimacy. What had a bastard to do among men! What had he to do with the love of highborn maidens? What was to him the luxuries, the pleasures, the social joys of life? Nothing. The honours of earth were not for him; "a bastard shall not enter even into the kingdom of heaven." Who, then, shall condemn the resolution of a proud youth like Lester, without due cultivation of the moral sense; unrestrained by religious principle, and thinking, feeling only as a man? Who shall judge and not pity? Who shall censure and not sympathize with him in his terrible human trial, and regard with charity even the darkest aberrations from morality and virtue to which it might lead him; remembering that he had the moral heroism and godlike virtue to resolve to become his own executioner; the voluntary herald of the sentence that should cut him off from rank, title, wealth, yea, love, and brand him as an exile from his species?

Notwithstanding the array of proofs to substantiate the narrative of Elpsy; notwithstanding the irresistible connexion existing in his own mind in support of its truth, yet there lingered in his heart a faint hope that it might not be as he believed. It became so dreadful when calmly contemplated, that he began to conceive that it was impossible for it to be true. There was but one way of confirming it, viz., to confront Lady Lester, and learn from her lips the truth of what Elpsy had related in reference to herself. If it should prove correct, then he resolved finally to decide on the method he should pursue. Gathering up the reins and pressing his armed heels into his horse's flanks as he came to this determination, he said, as he dashed forward to Castle More, the towers of which were now full in sight,

"From her lips Lady Lester's (if I may not call her mother), will I have corroboration of this foul witch's words. Fly, my good horse; we will soon learn whether thou and I are to part! But, if it must be so, no other shall back thee after me, my faithful animal; my own hand shall slay thee first!"

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The fleet hunter brought him in a few moments to the gate that led into the courtyard surrounding Castle More. At the sound of his approach it flew wide open, and, as he passed through, the porter removed his cap and bent low with servile respect.

"Ay," he muttered, "'tis so *now!* but he will be the first to scoff with a high head, and turn the key upon my back, when it shall be noised abroad that Robert of Lester is the brat of a peasant the left-handed offspring of Hurltel of the Red-Hand!"

He threw himself from his horse, and cast his bridle to his groom, giving him orders to hold him in readiness for him to remount at any moment, and entered beneath the lofty arch of the castle, over which were elaborately sculptured in stone the ancient arms of Lester. He rapidly mounted the spacious stairs to a large and lofty hall, hung with armour, and adorned with figures of mailed warriors, ancestors of that warlike house. From childhood he had looked upon these with awe and pride. Now he curled his lip with haughty despair, and strode past them with a bitter smile. At its farther extremity he tapped lightly at a door, partly concealed by tapestry of velvet fringed with gold, and adorned with needlework representing figures and scenes of a scriptural character. He was commanded to enter. With a beating heart, and choking with the anticipated confirmation of what left scarce room for a doubt, and which he had already begun to contemplate as if there were *no* question of its truth, he obeyed.

The room into which he was admitted occupied a small octagonal wing of the building, and from its single Gothic window commanded a prospect of the mere below, the distant forest, and a blue, wavy line of hills skirting the northern horizon. It appeared to be used partly as a boudoir and library, partly as a chapel: a small altar; a marble font containing water; a crucifix at one end, with two lighted wax tapers burning before it, appertaining to it in its more sacred character. It was hung with brown silk tapestry, on which was worked, in yellow silk, the history of the martyrdoms of the apostles. Immediately about the altar the hangings were of black velvet, giving that part of the room a religious and gloomy character. A rich, but soft, light poured in through the stained glass of the window, and shed a pleasing glow over all.

Near the window, working with her needle flowers of gold on an altar-piece of snow white satin, sat the mistress of Castle More "the Dark Lady of the Rock!" She was of a tall and stately figure, with an innate air of high birth and breeding: her features were strikingly noble, and still bore traces of eminent beauty. Her eyes were black and piercing; and her brows very dark and thick, yet not masculine, but giving rather softness and intellect to the expression of the eyes. Her hair was jet black, and confined beneath a close nun's cap, and her complexion was deep brown, which, with the general dark tinge of her face and features, had got for her from the peasants the appellation by which among them she was more commonly designated. The lustre of her fine eyes had given place to a melancholy hue; and the smile, which in youth had fascinated the gallant Lord of Lester, was sad and pensive. Calmness, gentle resignation, and devotion were now the characteristics of her countenance. She was evidently one who regarded this world as the path to that of a happier, and looked to that happier for the enjoyment which, without her deceased lord, she could not find in this. Twelve years had passed since the news was brought her that he had fallen before the walls of Saragossa, breathing her name in his last sigh. From that hour she seldom had been seen to smile; but, shunning all intercourse with those around her, she communed only with her priest and her God.

"I thought I knew the footfall of your horse, Robert, but did not expect you so soon," she said, in a quiet, subdued tone; "there is a quarter of an hour yet to sunset, and you seldom return from Castle Cor till it is very late. And Kate's birthday, too! How is this?"

She knotted her thread as she spoke, and looked up, showing a countenance chastened by widowed sorrow, and wearing, as she gazed upon him, a kindly look, rather than a smile, of welcome. The troubled expression of his features; his flushed brow; his excited manner, and nervous tread as he crossed the floor to the window, struck her with surprise and alarm.

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"What has happened, Robert? your feelings are wounded, I fear. Come and tell me what that saucy maiden, Kate Bellamont, has been saying to give you such uneasiness."

This was spoken with maternal affection, and an approach to playfulness of manner.

The young man stood by the window and gazed down into the placid mere, fixing his eyes vacantly on a fleet of stately swans that sailed on its glassy breast, and remained silent. He knew not how to commence the subject he knew not what to say!

"Robert, my son," she said, affectionately attempting to take his hand, "something has gone wrong with you to-day; make a confidant of your mother!"

"Would to God thou wert my mother!" he cried, almost suffocating.

"Thy mother, Robert! what do these words mean?"

"That my future happiness and misery depend on your lips," he replied, turning towards her and grasping her hands with strong emotion.

"Explain!" she said, alarmed and deeply moved by the distress and earnestness of his manner.

"Did you ever (sustain me, Heaven, at this moment," he gasped) "ever, face to face, meet Hurtel of the Red-Hand?"

"Robert, what motive, so terrible in its effect on your mind, can have led you to ask this?"

"Answer me, my mother speak, Lady Lester!"

"Yes!" and she shuddered, as if some painful incident of the past seemed to press upon her memory.

"Where? Speak, and tell me truly, if you love me!" he eloquently entreated.

"Heaven and the blessed saints preserve you, my son! 'Tis a sad story! Why would you seek to know this now? Be calm; you are ill very ill!"

"No, I am not. Answer me *where?*"

"He took me prisoner, and bore me on horse-back "

"Whither?" he cried, impatiently interrupting her.

"To his tower."

"And, ere thy husband rescued thee, I was born there?"

"Yes. But how heard you this? I knew not that it was known to you, though I had no motive, surely, in keeping the knowledge of it from you," she said, with surprise. "Is it this, then, that has so strangely excited you, my son?"

"Who attended on thee at that crisis?"

"Robert boy!"

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"Answer me, Lady Lester, I conjure thee! in the presence of this holy symbol of our religion!" he added, with stern solemnity, taking a small diamond crucifix from her worktable and holding it up before her.

"A pale young woman: I fear me, a leman of that evil man."

"Was she a mother?"

"Who has taught thee to put such questions as these, young man?" she said, with something of severity in her voice.

"Answer me, Lady Lester, I pray thee!"

"She had an infant of three days' old."

"Was it with her in thy room ere thou becamest a mother?"

"It was."

"Did you see it?"

"No; she kept it swathed up, as if from shame."

"Who first gave your infant to your arms?"

"No one. I had fainted, and, when I came to my senses, I found my babe lying on the bed beside me; and," added the lady, with a mother's light rekindling in her eyes, "with all a young mother's first love, I clasped it to my bosom."

"And this woman and her child?"

"I never saw them more. That day my noble lord rescued me; and after he had seen and kissed the babe, I remember he pleasantly said to those around, 'In losing one I have gained two.' My poor, departed Lester! Heaven be merciful to his soul!"

"And I am that babe?"

"Thou art, my son!" she said, affectionately.

"I am not!" he cried, fiercely.

"Not my son?"

"*Not thy son!*"

"What mean you, insolent boy?"

"In one word, I will tell thee. The guilty paramour of that woman having resolved to put out of the world the living witness of the wrong he had done her, threatened also her life when she refused to surrender it. Prompted by the instinct of maternal love to save it, she laid it, while thou wert in a state of insensibility, by thy side, and gave thine to him, palming it off as her own, which, by this stratagem, was saved and still lives. *I am HE!*"

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"Robert of Lester!" cried the lady, rising up and fixing her piercing eyes, bright with unwonted fire, upon his face, "mock me not; spare thy mother's heart!"

"Before God I speak truly. I am *not* thy son."

"Holy Virgin! Mercy, Heaven! mercy!" shrieked the lady, and fell nearly lifeless into his arms.

For a few seconds there was a deep silence, like that of death, throughout that little chamber. He had not anticipated this! Absorbed in the contemplation of his own misery, he had not thought of the blow he should inflict, by the disclosure of the dreadful secret, upon the mind of Lady Lester. It suddenly occurred to him that there was yet a balm in the existence of her true son which might heal the wound he had made. Filial affection caused him immediately to address, and, by touching this chord, endeavour to restore her once more to life and hope.

"Lady!" he said, in a hoarse tone, that so deep were the feelings that governed it startled even himself.

"Ha! Robert! my son!" she cried, standing up and looking wildly in his face; "what is this I have heard? Is it a dream some terrific dream?"

"Thou hast not dreamed, lady," he said, sadly.

"No, I have not," she cried, with energy, and with the sudden return of all her faculties; "no, I have heard thy lips deny me. Thou hast said I am not thy mother that thou art not my own child!"

"Do you remember the tale I have told you, lady?" he asked, calmly.

"Remember? each word is seared into my heart!"

"And do you believe me to be your son?"

"Believe? believe! I know not what to believe. What should I believe! I believe thou art my own boy mine, mine, *mine!*"

As she spoke she threw her arms with frantic wildness about his neck, and hugged him convulsively to her bosom.

"Lady, 'tis vain to shut your eyes to the truth. I am not your son but your son lives!"

"He does, he does live, and I clasp him to my heart," she cried, energetically, folding him closer to her bosom.

"Nay "

"Nay *nay*, but I *will* hold thee! they shall not tear thee from me! No, no! they must take my heart too, for its strings are bound all about thee, and thou art tied too long and too strong to it by the thousand chords of a mother's love to be parted from it now. Ha, ha! They shall not part us! Shall they, boy?"

He looked up into her face and saw that her mind wandered; that reason was falling from its throne!

"Mother!" he said, in tones of gentle persuasion: "mother!" and he affectionately kissed her cheeks; "mother!" he repeated a third time, in the most touching tones of filial love "I am, I will be, your own dear son!"

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The softer feelings of her soul came back; all the mother rushed from the heart to the eyes; and dissolved, melted by his appeal, she burst into tears, and wept freely and long upon his shoulder.

At length she became composed; when, embracing his opportunity, though he had been severely tempted in the interval to let it rest for ever, he spoke again with cautious delicacy upon the fatal subject. She listened in silence. She heard him with calmness as he went on and explained to her the successive steps by which the exchange was effected, and unfolded to her, link by link, the connected chain of the witch's narrative. He convinced her not of its probability, but of its possibility. Collecting all her strength of mind, she tried to contemplate the subject with composure. She succeeded: weighed it well, in all its parts and bearings; nicely balanced each particle, and sifted each doubtful circumstance. Suddenly she turned to him, and said eagerly, and with an eye kindling with hope,

"It may not be so, Robert! She may, in the agitation of the moment, when both were swathed, have caught up her own child!"

"At such a moment, above all, would a mother know her own!" he said, firmly, but looking as if he would, if he dared, still cherish a hope.

"Yes, yes; and she must, too, have seen it afterward," she said, in a tone of deep despondency. "But who told thee this fatal tale?" she asked, quickly.

"Elpsy, the sorceress!"

"Ha!" exclaimed the lady, turning pale. "I fear, then, it is too true! This fearful woman has knowledge of hidden and wondrous things through her unholy art. Oh, God! that she had used it to a better end! But, then, there may have been a mistake! Malice her hatred of her species may have caused her to give the facts this frightful turn! Dreadful being! thus to loose, even by raising a doubt of thy birthright, my last hold on earthly happiness, and wreck all my hopes in thee. Her face ever has haunted me as if for evil! It seems to me as if I had seen it in the dreams of my childhood. I know not how it is, but I never looked upon her without presentiments of evil and vague sensations of suffering, as if her very presence was associated with scenes of terror. Now are they all, indeed, realized! But I will not give thee up, Robert, my son my own son!" she cried, frantically! "I will cling to the hope that the fatal exchange was not made!"

He suffered her to embrace him again and again, and then, after a few moments' silence, and speaking in an indifferent tone, he said,

"Lady Lester! Was thy noble husband of fair complexion?"

"No, dark as the Spaniard's, yet it was exceedingly rich to the eye with its bright blood!" she said, with conjugal pride.

"Were his eyes blue?"

"Black as night, large and staglike, yet soft as a fawn's in the gentleness of their expression but terrible as the eagle's when roused."

"Were his locks golden?"

"The plumage of the raven not more black and glossy!"

"Was he tall of stature and strongly-framed?"

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"Scarce even as tall as thyself now; his frame was light and elegant, but manly: to sum him up in all," she said, carried away by the prideful recollections awakened by these allusions to him, "he was a statesman; a patron of letters and the arts; a gallant knight, a brave soldier, and an accomplished scholar: he was called the handsomest man of his time: above all, he was a Christian!"

"*Am I like him?*" asked Lester, startling her with the depth of his voice, and at once showing her the drift of his seemingly aimless questions. "Is my stature slight? are these locks raven? are these eyes black? is the hue of the Spaniard on my cheek?"

The lady shrunk from his words, covered her face with her hands, and despairingly shook her head.

"Say," he added, with increasing energy, "is there the faintest lineament in my face a scarce perceptible cast of the eye a bend of the brow a movement of the lip a motion of arm or finger aught in my carriage, walk, or voice, that reminds thee of thy noble husband?"

"No, no, no! Stop, stop, you will kill me!"

"One word more! Answer me truly, Lady Lester, as you stand before Heaven, have I not the same fair skin the same light flowing hair the same blue eyes the stature, the very voice ay, the very selfsame frown of Hurltel of the Red-Hand?"

"Ha! now I see it! Oh, Jesu Maria! Thou art his very image! Mercy, mercy, mercy!" and, with a shriek wrung from a breaking heart, she fell, as if dead, upon the floor.

For a few moments he stood gazing upon her with the cool, decisive smile of a man for whom fate has done her worst, and who defies and laughs to scorn her farther triumphs over his soul. His fixed countenance was more fearful than phrensied agitation or tremendous wrath. It was the dark, still cloud that rests upon the crater ere the volcano bursts into flame. Gradually, as he gazed on that beloved countenance, pale and deathly in its aspect, he sunk on his knees beside her, took her insensible hands within his own, and kissed her unconscious brow, while fast and thick dropped the heavy tears upon her face.

"Mother, for mother thou art, indeed!" said he, feelingly, "I would not have struck this blow to thy heart; but I could not stand before thee a deceiver, an impostor! I could not encounter the affectionate glance of thy pure eyes, meet thy gaze of maternal love, and know they were not mine. Yet thou art my mother! all the mother I have ever known. Have I not drawn life from that breast? Has not my infant head been pillowed from the first on that maternal bosom? Didst thou not hear me when my infant lips first lisped thy maternal name? Hast thou ever known other son than me I other parent? Thou *art* my mother! I *am* thy son, though the blood of strangers, whom I have never known, flows in my plebeian veins! Mother, we must part! The house of Lester may not have a baseborn lord! Would to God I could have turned aside this stroke from thee! But it is past! Henceforward thou art nothing to me I nothing to thee. Farewell, farewell, my own, my beloved mother!"

He bent over her, and affectionately and passionately embraced her, pressing his lips to hers, and bathing her face with his hot tears. She seemed to be awakened to sudden consciousness by the act; and throwing her arms about him, she faintly articulated, "My son! my son!" and relapsed into insensibility. He clasped her unconscious form in one more long embrace, kissed her for the last time, and gently disengaged himself from her arms.

His movements became now direct and decided. He approached the escritoir, and hastily wrote on a leaf of her missal,

"Lady Lester nay, *mother dearest* MOTHER! I have just taken my last leave of you. I go forth into the world and commit my fortune to its currents. Baseborn guilty-born attainted by my father's crimes, I am unworthy

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your love or a place in your thoughts. Henceforward let me be nothing to thee! Forget that I have ever existed. Though I depart, yet is Lester not without an heir! you not without a son! *Thy* child thou wilt find with the fisherman Meredith, at Castle Cor. He is the perfect semblance of thy husband, Robert, Lord of Lester, as you have described him to me; and, when your eyes behold him, your heart will at once claim him. He is proud and high-spirited, and worthy of the name he is destined to bear. Seek him out; and may he fill the place in your heart from which I am for ever excluded. Farewell, my mother, for other mother than thee have I never known will never know!

"Robert, "*Son of Hurltel of the Red-Hand.*"

He placed the paper open before the crucifix, where she was wont to pray, and was himself unconsciously in the act of kneeling to seek a blessing from Heaven, when he hastily recovered his erect attitude, saying, with a thrilling laugh of reckless hopelessness,

"Never more do I bend the knee to Heaven! What have I to do with prayer?"

He approached the door, and then turned back to gaze an instant with a melancholy look on the prostrate form of Lady Lester:

"Nay, I must not leave thee so!" he said: returning, he tenderly raised her up, and used means to restore her.

After a few moments she revived and gazed wildly around her.

"Robert, is it you? are you beside me? Oh, my son, I have had *such* a tale of horror revealed to me as I slept."

She pressed her fingers upon her eyelids as if to recall what appeared to her a dark dream. As she did so he stole from her towards the door lingered turned back severed a bright lock from his temples, pressed it to his lips, and placed it within her hand; he then hastily kissed her pale forehead, saying, half aloud,

"*Here I bury all human feelings!*"

The next moment he precipitately fled from the room.

Roused by the sound of the closing door, she shrieked his name, and, hastening through the dark hall, called in tones of distressing anguish,

"Robert, my son! my boy! my dear boy! leave not your mother desolate!"

He stopped his ears to the sounds, quickened his steps, and threw himself into his saddle.

"'Tis full late, my lord, to ride forth alone," said the groom, as he held the stirrup.

"Lord me not, Tyrell. If thou hast chanced to be born in wedlock, thou hast better blood in thy veins than I!"

"How mean you, my lord?" said the astonished menial.

"Didst ever hold stirrup for a fisher's son?"

"No, my lord!"

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"Thou liest. For thou hast but now done so. Your lord has found out that he is but a fisherwoman's brat; and a fisher's brat is about to find out that he is a lord."

"You speak in riddles, my lord."

"Set thy wits, and those of yonder gaping felows, to work to unriddle them," was the reply of the degraded youth as he buried his spurs deep in his horse's flanks. "Give the compliments of the son of Hurltel of the Red-Hand to your new lord, knaves, and say he has taken the liberty to borrow his hunter for a time!" he cried, turning round in the saddle as he rode off.

The next moment he dashed across the drawbridge and disappeared in the twilight gloom of the forest, leaving the wonder-stricken retainers to pick the kernel from the difficult nut he had left them to crack; and, by putting their sage heads together, with the aid of some expressions dropped by the frantic Lady Lester, they were not long in arriving at a shrewd guess at the truth.

CHAPTER VI.

"Guiltless am I, but bear the penalty!"

"Wild was the place, but wilder his despair:
Low shaggy rocks that o'er deep caverns scowl
Echo his groans: the tigress in her lair
Starts at the sound, and answers with a growl."
Zóphiël.

"Hurl'd From the topmost height of his ambition, It became his ambition to mate him With the lowest."

The night was fast approaching as the desolate outcast entered the forest. He hailed the gathering darkness with joy, for it was in unison with the gloom of his soul. The howl of the wildest storm would have been music to his ears! He could have mocked with shouts of gladness the rattling thunder, and played with the shafts of the glittering lightning.

He rode deep into the wood whither he cared not so that he left behind him all that he had lost. For half an hour he thought of nothing but urging his horse forward at the top of his speed. He banished thought, reflection, sensation. He dared not think. He found relief only in animal action and rapid motion, and rode furiously onward without knowing or regarding the course taken by his horse, who instinctively followed the dark windings of the forest paths.

At length the moon rose and shone down upon him through the tree tops. Its light seemed to restore him to himself. He checked his rapid course, and gazed at her pale orb; as he looked, reflection returned, and he began to realize his situation, and to taste the full bitterness of the cup of which he had drunken. The past, the present, the future, flashed with all their naked colours upon his mind. The picture his imagination painted with the hues they lent was too appalling to contemplate; and, as if the fabled influence of the planet, the soft light of which had restored him to reflection, had acted upon his fevered brain, he was suddenly converted into a maniac. He rose upright in his stirrups, and shouted, shrieked, till the forests rang again. He shook his clinched fists at the placid moon, that seemed smilingly to mock his woes. He spurred on his horse till the animal groaned with pain, and plunged madly forward with his phrensiéd rider! He would then rein him up, and, gnashing his teeth, lift his hands above his head, and curse God and man. Then he would again shout with phrensy, and gore his steed till he became furious and snorted with rage, and ride once more forward with the speed of the wind.

These passions were too violent to last. His wild excitement gradually subsided; his horse was suffered to move at

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his own pace; and, with his arms folded moodily, and his chin drooping on his breast, he gave himself up to the stern and gloomy thoughts of his situation, and, for a time, buried in the depths of his own meditations, seemed to be wholly unconscious of external objects. He rode on in this way for more than an hour, when he was aroused by the sudden stopping of his horse. He looked up and saw before him a dilapidated gate, which barred his farther progress. Beyond, visible by the full flood of moonlight, was a lonely square tower, flanked by a single wing, topped with a battlement. He listened, and thought he heard the dashing of waves upon the beach. The whole scene was new to him! Where could his faithful steed have borne him? From the moment he had left Castle More behind all had seemed like a blank to him. How far, and whither, could he have ridden? He looked up at the moon. It had not risen when he left Castle More, yet it now rode high in the heavens! By her position it was near midnight.

Indifferent where he wandered, he leaped the sunken gate, and rode up to the tower. It was not in ruins, yet wore an aspect of desolation and neglect. Its loneliness harmonized with his own situation, and was grateful to him. He rode round the angle of a buttress, when the sea suddenly opened before him, and he saw that the tower stood on a rock thirty or forty feet above it, and that where it overhung the water projected a small balcony. A sudden thought flashed upon his mind as he discovered this.

"It must be!" he exclaimed, with animation; "'tis the tower of Hurltel of the Red-Hand! This moat, yonder ruined drawbridge, its situation, and, above all, that balcony, one and all, identify it with Elpsy's description. By the bones of my red-handed sire! thou knewest what thou wert about to bring me hither, sagacious animal!" he added, sarcastically, patting the noble horse on the neck; "'tis fitting I should take possession of my father's towers with the inheritance of his name. Ha, ha! I am not quite a vagabond!" and he laughed scornfully.

He started with surprise, for the laugh seemed to be echoed from the tower.

"'Twas a human voice, or else a spirit mocking! If demons do rejoice over the miseries of mankind, they may well hold a jubilee in honour of mine. Laugh on, imps! I am a fit subject for your merriment!" and he laughed with nervous derision.

Again he started, for he was answered by a laugh so wild that it chilled his blood. The sound seemed to proceed from an upper room in the wing of the building.

"Fiend or flesh, it shall rue this merriment!" he cried, leaping to the ground and hastening to the door of the tower.

It was ajar; he dashed it open with his heel, and found himself in a long, low hall, at the extremity of which was the window that opened on the balcony, through which he caught a glimpse of the glimmering sea. By the light it afforded he crossed the hall, and, standing on the balcony, glanced an instant over the vast moonlit expanse of water, and then, with a strange interest, the whole of Elpsy's story rushing vividly to his mind, he shudderingly cast his eyes down the rock which stood in deep shadow. Even by the indistinct light he could discern the sharp projection on which the garments of the infant had caught in its descent, and not four feet distant from him, on a level with the window, was the rock on which the fisher's daughter *his mother* was in the act of springing, when hurled into the sea by *his father*. On that very balcony had he stood to do the deed! Strange, wonderful, overpowering were his sensations. He held his breath with the intensity of his thoughts.

"Here," said he, mentally, placing his hand on the balustrade, "has lain my unknown mother's hand; it warmed this senseless iron, which can give me back no warmth in return. Here pressed the foot of my father! Here they parted! How! ah, *how?* Where are they now? Where is he? does he live? Where is she? A fearful thought forces itself upon me that I dare not dwell upon! This strange tale of the sorceress; her wonderful and minute knowledge, that could be only known to the actor; her emotion at different portions of the story; a hundred things, light as air, that have insinuated themselves into my mind, have made me think she might be fiends! it will out! my mother! But, then, she told me that she was dead. Well, be it so, yet I can fall no lower! Were my mother living, could her lot

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be better than this fearful weird woman's? Ha, ha, ha! I have no pride now!" he added, with a hollow laugh of mingled despair and phrensy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he heard repeated, in tones so unearthly that his heart ceased to beat, and a thrill like ice shot through his veins.

The next moment he was at the top of a flight of steps leading from one side of the hall to an upper room, from which the voice seemed to proceed. A stream of moonlight, falling through a window, showed him a door on the landing-place, which he threw open. He found himself in a small room, lighted by a lattice of crimson-stained glass looking south towards the sea: into it the moon, in its western circle, had just begun to shine, its red-died beams tinting the twilight of the chamber with the hue of blood. Seated high in the recess of the window, he discovered the dark figure of a female; her knees drawn up to her chin, and her hands clasped together around them. As he opened the door she leaped down like a cat and sprang towards him. The sanguinary light of the room had affected his imagination, not untinged with the superstitious fears of his time; but this sudden apparition, though he had prepared himself to see something either human or supernatural, caused him to start back with an exclamation of surprise.

"Come in, Robert of Lester! I welcome you to the room which first welcomed you to the light," said she, in a voice which he at once recognised as that of the sorceress.

The singular information her words conveyed suspended for the moment all other emotions in his mind save curiosity at finding himself so unexpectedly in the chamber where he was born. He gazed about him for a few moments under the influence of the strange thoughts and emotions the circumstance called up, and then turning towards her, said,

"Why art thou here, wicked woman? Didst thou anticipate my presence, and art thou come to mock the misery thou hast wrought?"

"I fled lest thou shouldst do a deed of blood thy hand might rue. I fled not for myself, but for thee."

"You need not fear me now. There exists no longer any motive for secrecy," he said, gloomily.

"How mean you?" she eagerly asked.

"Ere to-morrow's sun, 'twill be in every boor's mouth, from Castle Cor to Kinsale, that I am no longer Lord of Lester!"

"Speak explain!" she said, hoarsely, grasping his arm with both hands, and breathing quick and hard.

"I have told the Lady Lester that he whom she thought her son was not her son," he firmly replied.

"Ha! *thou* thou hast told thy shame? Speak, Robert More have you breathed to mortal ear what I have told thee of thy birth?" she demanded, with fearful energy of speech and manner.

"I have. 'Tis known to every servitor from hall to stable!"

"Didst give thy name?"

"Robert, son of Hurltel of the Red-Hand."

"And this did thine own lips, of thine own free will?"

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"Never man spoke freer!"

"Then hell be thy portion! Accursed be ye, Robert Hurtel! Had I thought thou wouldst have become the trumpeter of thy shame had I believed thou wouldst have breathed to mortal ear thine infamy, I would have seared my tongue with hot iron ere I would have told thee the secret of thy birth. The infernal demon has prompted thee to do this! Didst thou not seek to slay me, that thou shouldst be the sole keeper of the foul secret?"

"I did, at the moment, but thought better of it!"

"Base! lowborn! miserable that thou art! Why was not my tongue withered ere I told thee this?"

"Would to God it had been, woman. What was thy motive in ever letting it go from thy own breast?"

"Love of mischief hatred of mankind; and to lower thy pride, knowing from what dunghill thou wert sprung. But I did not think thou wouldst use my secret thus; and wreck the gifts that thy mother's stratagem had purchased, and after secured to thee by years of absence, privation, and misery."

"How?"

"Did she not, for thy sake, keep the secret of thy birth coming not even near thee when, on the ninth day, Hurtel of the Red-Hand being gone over the sea, she might safely have claimed thee of Lady Lester, and given her back her own!" she said, vehemently.

"Rather for her own sake from maternal pride at having her son sit among nobles," was the stern reply. "And if these were her motives, as I doubt not they were, at what price did she purchase this honour for her child? The price of the deepest guilt, by keeping the true heir from his birthright. I did not view it in this light before. By the cross! I am a well-born! a guilty mother, too! 'Tis well you told me she was no more; I should care little to meet her in my present mood."

As he spoke, the woman sunk her head upon her bosom, and deep groans escaped her, whether of defeated hopes, of sorrow, of shame, or of remorse, he knew not. Suddenly he laid his hand upon her arm, and looked impressively in her face, and said,

"Woman! who is my mother?"

"Thou wilt never know!"

"Art *thou*?"

"Ha, ha, ha! *I*? Do I look like the gentle maiden that won the love of Hurtel of the Red-Hand? Are these matted locks tresses of gold? Is this complexion like the blended ivory and rose? Is my voice soft and full of love? Are my eyes like the gazelle's, and gentle as the dove's in their expression? Is this hideous form such as would lure youth to embrace it? Wilt thou acknowledge thyself the son of 'the witch' 'the sorceress' 'the beldame Elpsy' (such were thy gentle terms) the beleagued with demons the familiar of the evil one the "

"No, no! Avaunt!" he shouted, with a furious gesture; "thank God! I am not sunk so low as that!"

"Ha, ha! Thy pride is fallen far indeed when it can enter thy thoughts, and even go from thy lips, that Elpsy of the Tower gave thee birth. Oh, ho! I am well avenged in this for thy mad folly in throwing away thy earldom. Oh, how I do hate thee for that act! for it thou shalt never know peace in body or soul!"

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"I defy thee, woman, and all thy arts!"

"Yet the tales of my deeds have made thy human soul to shrink! Beware how thou speakest lightly of what thou knowest naught, and which is hid from mortal ken!" she added, with mysterious and solemn earnestness.

"Whither turn thy footsteps now, Lord of Lester?" she asked, with chilling irony. "Doubtless thou hast come to take possession of thy fair lands here. They are not so broad, indeed, as the domains of Castle More, and thy castle needs some furnishing and repair. Doubtless thou wouldst like to fit it up ere thou bringest home to be its mistress the fair Kate of Bellamont!"

"Breathe that name again, woman, and I will take thy life!"

"Thou art now thy very father's image!" she said, with derision. "Even in this moonlight I can see that devilish shape of the eyes that his were wont to assume when he meditated murder! Ho! I dare to say thou wilt be like him in more than the glance of the eye. Dost mean to follow in his footsteps, and head a band of lawless insurgents; or wilt thou, as 'tis said his brother did "

"His brother?"

"Thou didst not know before thou hadst once an uncle? So: thou shalt no longer be kept in ignorance. He was a bold, bad man, and therein true to his race; was called Black Hurtel, and roved the Danish seas a daring bucanier. 'Twas said he could float his ship in the blood of the men he had slain! He was killed on the French coast in a fierce fight; but his vessel was captured, and his dead body, with his living crew (for the captors would not leave one alive to blacken the face of the earth), were sunk in the deep sea. Perhaps, like him, thou wilt take to the wave, and carve thy fortune in blood! Blood is sweet, and there is music to the ear in its gurgle where it is shed with a free hand! Look you," she said, pointing through the window; "the sea is spread wide before you, and seems to invite thee with its glancing waves. It knows not of thy disgrace, nor has it voices to whisper thy infamy; while every bird, tree, and stone will nod and gossip to one another as thou passest by

"There goes he who *was* the Lord of Lester!"

"Woman, you madden me!"

"Perhaps," she continued, in the same cutting tone, while he paced the little chamber with a phrensied step, "thou wilt rather come and share my tower i'the ruin, if the new Lord of Lester will give thee leave; doubtless he will honour thee by asking thee to hold his stirrup on occasion. But, if thou wilt rather habit in this tower, I will be thy seneschal. I love its old gray walls! many is the moonlight night I've sat in the window and looked on the sea, as it danced, and glimmered, and seemed to beck and nod, and laugh when I laughed. Ha, ha! I have had brave times here, gossiping with the sea!"

As she said this she looked from the window, and suddenly her eye seemed to be arrested by some unexpected sight. She gazed for a moment eagerly, and then said, in the enthusiastic tone and manner of a sibyl, skilfully assumed with the tact of one accustomed to turn to her own purpose every passing circumstance,

"Look thou, Robert Hurtel! I have had pity on thy state, and have, by the art thou hast dared to scorn, brought from many a far league away, to thy tower's foot, a ship to waft thee and thy fortunes! See how proudly it stands in towards the land, looking like a great white spirit, with the moon glancing on its canvass wings. Oh, 'tis a brave bark!"

The young man (her words taunting, malicious, and hateful as they were, not having been without some effect in influencing him in determining on his future course) sprang alertly to the window and gazed with interest on the approaching vessel. It was about a third of a mile from the land, standing directly towards the tower before a light

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breeze. It was apparently about seventy tons burden, short and heavily built, rising very high out of the water, with a very lofty stern. It had three masts, each consisting of one entire stick, tapering to a slender point, and terminated by a little triangular flag. On each mast was hoisted a huge, square lugger's sail, which, with a short jib, stretched from the head of the foremast to a stunted bowsprit, and a sort of trisail or spanker aft worked without a boom, was all the canvass she carried or that belonged to her peculiar class of craft.

He watched it with eager attention as it came bounding landward, flinging the glittering spray from its round bows, its wet sides shining in the moonlight as if sheathed with plates of silver. A chaos of hopes, wishes, and conflicting resolutions agitated his mind as it approached: after a short struggle, he resolved to throw himself on board if her master would receive him, and depart with her wherever the winds should waft her. Having come to this determination, he watched her motions with additional interest; and when, after coming in so close to the shore that he could discern that her decks were crowded with men, she wore round and stood northward, his heart sank within him; and, dashing his hand through the crimson glass, he was about to hail, when Elpsy checked him:

"Hold! see you not they are only coming up to wind to lie to! Look! they are already swinging round their clumsy sails."

The vessel came up slowly and heavily to the wind, and, by means of her mainsail, lay as still as if at anchor. In a few moments afterward, as they eagerly watched, they saw a boat let down, and several men descend over the side into it. He uttered a joyful exclamation when he saw this movement; and, without reflecting upon the character of the vessel, or the object it could have in view in landing on so retired a coast at such a time, he only thought of it as a means of bearing him from the hateful shore, and perhaps opening for him some path to action and mental excitement.

"See that flash of light on her deck! There is another gleam!" exclaimed Elpsy.

"'Tis the glancing of the moonbeams on steel!" he replied, in a gratified tone.

"There is a sound a man should know!" she said again.

"'Tis the ringing of arms!" he replied, in the same animated manner.

"What think you they are, young man?" asked she, with a peculiar smile, laying her hand impressively on his arm.

"I know not, nor care, so I may cast my fortune with them!"

"Thou art, of a truth, thy father's son!"

"And, by the cross, he shall not be ashamed to own me!" he replied, in a desperate and determined tone.

"I will tell thee what they are for I have passed my life by the seaside, and know the nature, and have learned to know the occupation and nation of each ship by its fashion, as I would tell a tradesman's by his garb."

"What, then, is the nation of this barque?"

"He is a Dane."

"Its nature?"

"To sail in shallow waters, and run before the wind."

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"Its business on the sea?"

"To rob, pillage, and slay!"

"Ha, a bucanier?"

"A Dane."

"'Tis but another name for pirate in these waters. By the cross! when I saw the glitter of steel in the hands of its crew, I half guessed it."

"Wilt thou now link thy fate with theirs?"

"Am I not fit to be their comrade? Are they outcasts; what am I? Are they branded with shame; who am I? Has society cast them from its bosom; was I not born in bastardy? Am I not fallen lower than the lowest he among them who hath been born in wedlock? Why should I hesitate to mate with my fellows? What has the honourable world to invite me to? What if I could bury in oblivion from the reach of my own thoughts the black stain upon my birth and hitherto noble name, and, under a new one, with a strong heart and virtuous resolves, throw myself into the arena of honourable contest, and should succeed in winning a name that men would do homage to should I not wear it, feeling that a sword was suspended by a hair above my head?"

"How mean you?" she asked, struck with the impassioned and despairing tones of his voice.

"I mean that, if, after carrying the secret like a living serpent coiled in my heart for years, I should, without suspicion, chance to win a fair name, the time at length would come when some one, with a too faithful memory, would recognise the bastard Hurltel the quondam Lester in the successful adventurer; and then No, no!" he said, bitterly, "no, no! It may not be! The presence of this ship points me to the course I should pursue. I obey the fate that has directed it hither!"

"Wilt thou become a pirate?" she said, with a natural and feeling manner, as if prompted by some suddenly-awakened interest in him. "Yesterday Lord of Lester to-day a pirate!"

"Yes."

"Curse the tongue that told thee of thy birth! But," she continued, muttering with her usual quick tones and nervousness of manner, "it was so pleasant to tell him, for his father's sake, he looked so like him! And then it was a pleasure to humble his pride, which he made even me the victim of: and so, as my master would have it, I could not, for the life o' me, longer help telling him the love-story I had kept so many years in my heart for him. Ho! ho! ha! ha! and a pleasant tale it was, too!" she added in that phrensied strain which seemed to be most natural to her.

While she was speaking the boat, which appeared to be full of men, put off from the vessel, and they could distinctly hear the command to "let fall," followed by the splash of the falling sweeps.

"Give way!" in a stern, deep tone, came directly afterward distinctly to their ears; and, shooting out from the vessel's side, the boat moved in towards the cliff.

As it neared the shore, one of the men stood up in the stern, and was heard to command them to cease pulling; and, for a few seconds afterward, he seemed to be reconnoitring the beach. Apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, he ordered them to give way again, steered directly to the foot of the tower, and skilfully run the boat alongside of the rock almost beneath the window.

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"Now lay off an oar's length from the shore, and wait for me," said the one who had steered the boat, and who appeared to be the leader. "Be on the alert against surprise, though there's little fear of any one being within a league of the old tower. Carl, you and Evan take the coil of rigging and come with me."

As he spoke he leaped on the projection of the rock; then measuring the cliff with his eye, he placed his cutlass between his teeth and began to ascend. By the aid of numerous fissures and bold spurs jutting out from the sides he reached the top, closely followed by his men. Here he paused a moment, resting on his cutlass, and looked about him. He stood directly beneath the window from which Elpsy and the young man were looking, and was plainly visible to them. He was a short, stoutbuilt man, with a ruddy complexion, browned by the winds and suns of every clime. His hair was gray, and hung in straight locks about his ears; and, judging by the deeply-indented lines of his weather-worn visage, his age was about fifty; yet his compactly-built figure, his light motions, and athletic appearance, gave indications of many years less. His countenance, turned upward to their full gaze in his survey of the tower, wore an expression of careless jovialty, united with desperate hardihood. The most striking characteristic of his face was a thick red mustache covering his upper lip. He had on his head an immense fur cap, and wore a short, full frock of a dark shade, secured at the waist by a broad belt, stuck with large, heavy pistols of the kind known, at the period, as the hand-harquebuss. He wore, also, voluminous breeches of buff leather, buckled at the knee, red cloth gaiters, and high-quartered shoes with pointed toes, and garnished with sparkling buckles of immense size. By his side hung the empty sheath of the sabre on which he leaned. His men, save the fur cap, for which they substituted red woollen ones of a conical form, and the frock, instead of which they wore long jackets, were breeches, buckler, shoes, and gaiters his counterpart in apparel.

"'Tis the very spot I once knew it! The unchanged sea the rock this gray tower! It seems as if but a day, and not eighteen years, had passed since I banqueted here with Hurltel of the Red-Hand," he said to himself, gazing round with revived recollections at each object. "Well, strange things have happened since! He is dead, or an exile with a price on his head; all our brave band scattered; and I, only, am left to stand once more on this familiar spot. The old rookery looks desolate enough, and seems to sympathize with its master's fortunes! Open your lantern, Carl, and let us enter! This moon will scarce afford light where I wish to penetrate! Heaven grant no evil spirit haunts here to keep guard over the treasure I have come to carry off! But, if it still remains, I will e'en cross blades with the devil for it, and win it, will he, nil he."

He passed as he spoke round the tower, and the next moment the listeners heard the heavy footsteps of the three men echoing through the hall. The young man was about to spring from the room to meet them, when Elpsy held him back.

"Would you run upon death! They would sheathe their cutlasses in your body ere you could open your lips. Hold, and hush! There is time enough. We will see what their purpose is. I have half a guess, from his words, at their business here."

"What!"

"Hurltel of the Red-Hand, the story goes, had secreted in some part of the tower large sums of silver and gold, with which to aid the conspiracy he headed. He had neither time nor means to take it away with him, and doubtless it still remains here, and this bucanier is acquainted with the secret."

"Ha!" he exclaimed, with surprise, "who told thee this?"

"Rumour, said I not!" she replied, after a moment's hesitation.

"And how should these know where to look for what has been concealed for years?"

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"Hark!" she cried, as a heavy noise reached them from a distant part of the building, "they have opened the trap of the tower, and will descend into the vaults. He is one that knows well the place."

"Doubtless, from his language, some one of my hospitable parent's fellow-chiefs, who used to revel here in the days you tell of. I will see what they do, and take opportunity of forming good fellowship with my father's friend. Nay but let me go, woman!"

He broke from her as she attempted to detain him, and, cautiously opening the door, descended with a cautious and rapid step into the hall. At its opposite extremity he saw, by the glimmer of a lamp held by one of them, the two men standing over an opening in the floor, and their leader just in the act of letting himself down into the subterranean chamber beneath.

"Hold the ladder steady, Evan!" he said. "Thrust your lantern down at arm's length, Carl, so that I can see where to place my foot. Ha! there, I find bottom," he added, his voice sounding hollow from the depth; "'tis dark and damp as a Calcutta blackhole! Faith, it's more like a tomb than an honest underground apartment. I hope I shall not see Hurtel's ghost guarding his box. Tumble down here, boys, and be ready to hand above decks as soon as I find out where it's stowed away!"

The others, leaving their cutlasses behind, followed him into the vault. Their heads had no sooner disappeared than the young man crossed the hall with a free step to the trapdoor, and looked fearlessly after them. He had from the first, when the vessel came in sight, deliberately resolved to attach himself to the party; and now the frank, blunt manner of the old sea-rover struck his fancy, and confirmed him in his resolution. But he was at a loss how to make his intentions known how first to address men ready to shed blood on the instant without question, and among whom, at such a time, the very discovery of his presence might be fatal ere he could make known to the chief his intentions. While watching them as they groped about through the vast vault, an idea, characteristic of his now reckless disposition, suggested by the ghostly apprehensions of the leader, entered his mind. He paused for an instant, and then, favoured by the darkness, dropped noiselessly into the chamber. With a step that gave back no sound, he approached them as they moved in an opposite direction from him, throwing the light all forward, and waited the opportunity he had chosen for discovering himself.

"'Tis twelve paces to the south, eight paces to the east, and six paces to the west again which will bring me to the wall, and on the very stone Red Hurltel and I placed over the gold," said the captain; "here are twelve paces, well told!" he added, placing his foot immediately afterward emphatically on the stone floor.

These words at once gave the youth a key to the course he should adopt. His quick eye, as the leader turned to pace east, comprehended the remaining angle at a glance, and, gliding away by the wall, he moved cautiously and noiselessly along till he felt his foot press upon a loose slab. He knew he must be on or near the spot; and drawing himself to his full height, and unconsciously assuming a stern and resolute look, called up by the novelty and danger of his situation, he waited the angular advance of the captain, who, with his men, was too intent on accurately marking his steps to look up even for a moment.

"Now west!" said the leader; and, turning as he spoke, he had counted on to four, *five*, and was about to take the last step to the wall, when, pronounced in a deep tone, that rung hollow through the vault, he heard the word,

"Forbear!"

He lifted his eyes and fell back upon his men as the lantern shone full upon the object, exclaiming,

"The ghost of Hurltel, by all that's good! Evan, come back here, you villain! Carl, give me that lantern, coward!" he shouted to his men, who turned and fled with affright.

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

He caught the light from the hand of the terrified Dane, and turned upon this apparition, which, notwithstanding his coolness, had not a little disconcerted him. He held the lamp, though standing off at a chosen distance, to the face of the supposed ghost, and said, with an odd mixture of natural boldness and superstitious fear,

"Fore Heaven, comrade, you have grown full young in the other world! But there is no mistaking the cut of your eye. Faith, but you can smile, I see," he added, more freely. "There's no more mistaking your smile than your black, ugly frown! So, suppose we shake hands, and, after we get the chest aboard for they say you don't want this sort of ballast in the seas down below why, we'll empty a can together, and spin a yarn about old times before the cock crows!"

As the intrepid old sea-rover spoke, he extended his rough hand to grasp that of the other. The young man hesitated to take it, for he was scarce sure of his reception when it should be discovered that he was flesh and blood.

"Never mind if your fingers be a little cold or so, 'tis the nature o' ghosts. I can give you a grasp that'll put warmth into 'em, and last you till you get back where you hail from. Come, old friend, give us your digits, just to say you ain't offended at the liberty I am about to take with your chest o' sparklers; and afterward I will just thank you to step one side a bit!"

The young man smiled at the intrepidity of the seaman, and took the proffered hand.

"Warm! by the bones of St. Nick! The old fellow below has been keeping you over a hot fire, messmate. Well, you must confess, you lived a wonderfully wicked life; and so, as the priests say, the devil will fry it out of you. Sorry for you, on my word! Will lay by fifty of these guilders in prayers for your soul! So take heart. Now just step aside off that slab, which you stick to as if 'twas a tombstone, and we'll bear a hand and bouse this old box out in the snapping of a bolt-rope."

"I am no spirit, but a habitant of this world, like thyself!" he said, with firmness, and a straightforward frankness that he wisely calculated would have its effect; "I am a young adventurer, without name or family, weal or wealth. I would take service with thee, and follow thy fortunes on the sea!"

The bucanier listened with surprise; and as he became convinced, from his words and manner, that he was no shade from the land of spirits, which shadowy beings he seemed to fear no more than mortal substance, his countenance instantly changed, and he surveyed him with a puzzled look of surprise and doubt.

"So! this alters the case! Who art thou, then? what art thou doing here and on this particular stone? 'Tis mysterious, i'faith! Guarding this treasure, which no man save Hurtel and I saw laid here; so like him, and not be he! Yet thou canst not be Red Hurtel in the flesh, for his hair would be as gray as mine by this time. Thou sayest thou art not his spirit. Who, and what, then, in the name of St. Barnabas, may you be?"

"His son."

"Ha! ho! There it is, as plain as my hand!" he said, slapping the flat of his cutlass into his left palm. "Priest never had aught to do with thy begetting or thy christening, I'll be sworn! I now remember he had a leman-lady in the tower when I knew him. A proper youth," he added, looking at him with interest, "and as like your father as one marlin-spike is like another! So you inherit the old tower, I dare say, and follow in his steps. St. Claus and the apostles! I would not be surprised if you laid claim to the gold here!"

"I care neither for tower nor gold, good captain. To follow your fortunes I alone ask."

"Do you know what fortunes I follow?" inquired the other, significantly.

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"I care not, so there is work for the free hand and ready spirit."

"A chip of the old block! There's my hand to it. You shall have your will, my brave one! Your father and I were comrades in that cursed affair that made the country too hot to hold us. I have been a rover since, and, trusting to my gray head, have ventured back to carry off what gold I heard he had not time to remove. Thou shalt go with me for thy father's sake, boy."

He grasped the old man's offered hand, and, for the moment, felt that he was less alone in the world. What a change had one brief day made in the feelings and destinies of this haughty young man!

"Bear a hand, you pale runaways!" cried the captain to the men, who, seeing that their spirit had proved of flesh and blood, returned, scowling darkly on the cause of their discomfiture. "Take hold of the edge of that stone, and lift it from its bed. Place your hands on the right spot, and it will come up like a cork."

The men made several ineffectual efforts to lift it, though even assisted in their last attempt by their captain.

"How is this?" he said; "it should move with a finger's touch. Ha, I have it! I had forgot. You might heave till you were gray, boys, and it wouldn't stir a hair. Look at some of my magic."

He stooped as he spoke, and pressing the stone horizontally towards the wall, it moved from its bed, and slid away slowly, as if on wheels, beneath it exposing a cavity two feet square and about three feet deep, containing an oaken box, bound with strong bands of rusted steel.

"Here it lies, like a biscuit in a bucket! Let us see if the gold has got rusty."

He searched a few moments, and at length bore hard upon a corner of the box, but without producing any effect.

"The spring is as tight as if Old Nick had his foot on it. Let us try what this good steel, that has served me so often at a push, will do now."

He pressed the point of his cutlass with steady force against one corner, when suddenly the lid flew up, and a glittering pile of silver and gold, and a remarkably shaped dagger, a foot in length, wider at the point than the handle, and exceedingly rich with precious stones, met their eyes.

There was a general exclamation of surprise at this display of treasure. The young man took up the weapon and examined it with curiosity.

"That belonged to Hurtel of the Red-Hand, and he prized it, too!" said the old pirate. "It shall be thine, young man! Holding it with that grasp as you do, and your kindling eye, I would swear my old comrade stood before me. If nature put the father's looks on all children as she has on thee, it would be a blind father that wouldn't know his own child. But it's only bas hoit! I mean to say that children honestly come by seldom show the breed they hail from as some other sort o' craft do I'faith, I haven't bettered it much! But, no harm meant, my brave fellow! Keep that yataghan for your father's sake. He knew its use, and, if you are long under me "

"*Under* you?" repeated the youth, his natural spirit breaking out.

"Ha! I like that! Better men than I will soon be under you, I see 'tis in you born and bred! So! let us heave out this precious metal. Six thousand told pounds, if my memory serves me. Heave heartily, boys. There she moves! Now she rises on her toes! Steady strain. Hearty, hearty. There you are!"

"Hafey golt 'tish dat dere, Evan," said one, straightening his bent loins.

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"Ap carnach! ant yer may will say tat, poy!" responded Evan, breathing himself and passing the back of his hand across his brow, from which started big drops of perspiration.

They now laid hold of it and dragged it beneath the trapdoor: with the united efforts of the men, the captain, and even Lester or Hurtel, as for the present he should be called they got it to the floor above, reascended, and closed the scuttle.

"You will want fresh hands, captain," said the youthful novice, at once readily entering into the spirit of his new vocation, and thirsting for excitement as a foil to reflection; "shall I call two of your men from the boat?"

"Ay, ay! do so!" said the captain; adding, as he darted away, "True as steel, by St. Claus! I would rather lose the gold than lose him. He is worth his weight of it!"

While he was speaking his protégé reached the balcony, and, bending over, ordered, in an authoritative tone, two of the men to ascend to relieve their mates. There was a general exclamation of surprise from the party below at the sound of the strange voice.

"Treason!"

"We are betrayed!"

"To the rescue of our captain!" were the various exclamations, in as many different languages, followed by glancing of steel and clicking of pistols, several of which were levelled at the window.

"Ho, fellows! will you not obey?" said he, sternly; "up, up with you! By the cross! if I were your captain, knaves, I would teach you to linger after an order was given."

"Who in the devil have we there?" said one, in a gruff voice. "Shall I pink him, mates?"

"Who talks of pinking? What, ho, ye villains!" shouted the captain, who now appeared at the window. "This youth is my lieutenant, and see that you obey him, or I will make a pair of earrings of a brace of you for the main-yard-arms."

"That's another thing," said several voices. "Orders is orders, if they come from the devil, so as he is got the commission in his pocket!"

"Two of the strongest of you lubberly oxen, clamber up here. Spring! be nimble! nimble! Back the boat directly under, and keep her steady."

A moment afterward two of the men reached the top of the rock and sprung into the balcony. It took but a short time to get the chest upon the balustrade, lash it with the rope they had brought, rig a fall with a brace of oars, and swing it off.

"Stand ready below there!" cried the captain.

"All ready."

"Handle it as if it was a baby. Gently, gently, or you will knock the boat's bottom out! Swing it more aft! There, now, let her drop amidships! Easy not too fast! There she lies between the thwarts like a pig in a pillory!"

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

The box was safely lowered into the launch, and followed with alacrity by the men: the captain and his new lieutenant were also preparing to go down, when each, at the same instant, felt himself touched from behind, and, turning round, Elpsy confronted them.

"Who art thou, in the name of Beelzebub's mother?" demanded the captain, staring with astonishment, not unmingled with superstitious dread, on the deformed and hideous being who had so suddenly and mysteriously appeared to him.

"I would speak with thee, Edmund Turill!"

"Then thou art Sathanas!" he cried, with astonishment; "how knowest thou me?"

"It matters not. I know thee," she replied, in a tone of mystery. "That youth goes with thee?" she added, inquiringly.

"He does!"

"See, then, that he is well treated, and receives not ill at thy hands. Remember, once thou hadst a son!"

"Who art thou, i'the name of all the saints, woman?"

"It matters not. When thou thinkest of thy poor boy's bones, gibbeted for sharing thy guilt o'er the gate of Cork, the winds whistling through them with a sad wail, look kindly on this youth, and take him to thy heart, as if he were thine own flesh and blood!"

"I will do it," he said, with emotion.

"Swear it."

"I swear it!"

"'Tis well. One question I have to ask thee, and truly answer it."

"Name it, woman!"

"Where wanders Hurltel of the Red-Hand?"

"'Tis said he died in the Indies!"

"'Tis false!" she cried, with energy. "He can never die unaccursed by her he has wronged. No, no! he will have one to watch his pillow in his dying throes he would rather burn in hell, to which he is doomed, than see. No, no! his time has not yet come! his master will not let him slip out o' life so easily. Oh, it will be a glory to see him die; and mock his groans; and laugh, laugh at his terrors! Ha, ha, ha! Oh, will it not be a jubilee to see him struggle with the death!"

"I'God's name, woman, tell me who thou art?"

"Dost not behold what I am? Wouldst have fair winds, I will raise thee foul: wouldst have a smooth sea, I will make it boil and hiss: wilt say a prayer, I will turn it into a curse ere it can leave thy lips."

"Avaunt, sorceress!" he cried, crossing himself with horror.

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"Ha, ha! so you can feel my power! Oh, well! it is a-pleasant to make men's stout hearts quake. Dost know me?" she asked, impressively, approaching her face close to his.

"No!" he said, retreating and preparing to descend the rock. "Avoid thee, Sathanas!"

"Listen!" she said, approaching and laying her hand on his arm, and whispering low in his ear.

"*Thou!*" he exclaimed, instantly starting back, and surveying her with mingled surprise, curiosity, and disgust.

"Wouldst care to leave thy revels and their lord, and, stealing to her lone room, offer thy drunken love to her now! Ha, ha, ha! Does she not look a comely leman for thy licentious love?" she added, with malicious irony.

He gazed on her a few seconds by the light of the moon, and seemed too much overpowered by surprise to speak. At length he said, in a tone of horror,

"Hideous as thou art, it must be as thou sayest, for only thus could I be know to thee! But, holy St. Claus!" he added, in a tone, "this lad is he "

"No matter who he is! see thou harm him not!"

"I will be a father to him, woman! 'Fore Heaven," he exclaimed afresh, gazing upon her with mingled curiosity and pity, "was there ever such a "

"Mind me not! spare your sympathy! Go! Stay!" she cried, earnestly recalling him; "if you ever meet *him*, breathe not into his ears what and whom you have this night seen. I have made myself known to thee for this youth's sake. Farewell, young man," she said, approaching Lester as he stood on the rock, to which he had bounded from the balcony at the beginning of their conference. She extended her hand as she spoke. He took it, and grasped it warmly, saying, in a soothing tone,

"Good-by, Elpsy. I have no ill-will against thee in my heart. Thou hast done but thy duty!"

The sorceress seemed to be moved, turned away from him without speaking, as if her feelings choked utterance, and stalked away through the hall, and left the tower.

"Come, my lad," said the captain, turning away and speaking with feeling, after following with his eyes her retreating form till it disappeared in the forest, "she is a poor, unhappy creature, and it'll come hard, I'm thinking, on him that made her so. But this is no time for sentiment. Let us aboard and make an offing ere the dawn; for, if we are spied lying here, we shall have the king's bulldog down upon us from windward I saw lying in Cor Bay, who will bark to some purpose if he should catch us here on a lee shore."

Thus speaking, the old seaman lightly descended the rock to the boat, followed by his youthful lieutenant, and in a few minutes they reached the vessel.

The moment his foot touched the deck the captain gave orders to make sail: the long, crooked tiller was put hard up to windward; the heavy mainsail swung back to its place; the vessel's head turned slowly off, and, feeling the wind on her quarter, she stood in landward for a few seconds to gain headway, and then came gracefully round with her starboard bow to the wind. With each broad sail drawn nearly fore and aft, she lay as near it as her short blunt build would permit, and stretched away from the shore on a long tack towards the south.

CHAPTER VII.

"If solitude succeed to grief,
Release from pain is light relief;
The vacant bosom's wilderness
Might thank the pang that made it less.
The heart once left thus desolate
Must fly at last for ease to hate."
The Giaour.

The narrative once more returns to Mark, who, it will be remembered, had arrived, on his way to Castle More, at a ruin in the midst of the forest he was traversing, when the approach of two horsemen caused him to withdraw from the path. As he did so, they were encountered and stopped by some one who unexpectedly met them as they were galloping past the lonely pile. Curious to know who they were and what could be their business at that late hour, he entered the deep shadow of the tower, and approached so near them as to discover that the men wore the livery of Lady Lester, and that the person with whom they were talking was none other than the witch Elpsy, with whose person he had been familiar from childhood.

After Elpsy disappeared from the eyes of the old bucanier and his young lieutenant at Hurltel's tower, she had continued to move rapidly through the forest towards Castle Cor, without turning either to the right or left. Sometimes she would skip forward with mad hilarity till exhausted; at others, leap, and clap her hands, and shout, till the dales of the old wood rung again with her shrieking laughter. From the unnatural speed, and the wild, straightforward direction in which she moved, her sole object seemed to be to reach some point for which she aimed in the least possible time. The scared owl hooted aloud at her approach, and flew, with a heavy flap of his thick wings, deeper into the wood; the hawk left his nest with a shrill cry; the deer fled from her path! On, on she bounded and leaped mocking their notes of terror, like a demon pursued. At times, when she crossed an open glade, where the moon poured down her unobstructed radiance, she would suddenly stop and mutter, but without appearing to notice the pale orb the sight of which, by directing her thoughts into another, but not less turbulent channel, seemed to have exercised a momentary influence on her. She had travelled six miles in less than one hour's time, when she suddenly stopped in the full light of the moon, looked up, and shook her open hands towards it with a laugh of derision.

"Oh, ho! you need not look and watch, and watch and look, and keep your pale face and shining eyes always fixed on me! Dost think I would commit murder? and the little twinkling stars peer down as if they could espy a knife in my hand! Look, ye little glittering winklings," she cried, spreading upward her open palms, "dost see a knife? Ha, ha, ha! ye are out there. I am too much for ye. No, I know ye well, with your winking and your blinking at each other, and how, in the darkest night, one of you always keeps watch, to spy the murders done in the absence o' the sun; and then you whisper it through heaven, and tell it to the earth, and then we hang for it. Oh, ho! I have a charm will put you to sleep. Ha! you laugh, and grin, and gibber, that I have lost in a half hour's tale what I have won by years of silence. Well, well, there'll be a time! there'll be a time!"

Dropping her head, she appeared a moment as if in sullen thought, and then muttered, in a tone and manner which, more than words, gave a key to the wild phrensy that had hitherto possessed her,

"If *he* cannot be Lord of Lester, neither shall *HE*! He dies! The eye of the moon pierces not this wood! He dies! 'Tis long yet to dawn," she abruptly added, moving forward, and speaking with more coherency. "If I can find him ere the myrmidons of Lady Lester can reach him, should she send for him, Castle More will ne'er own other lord than he who, but for my foul tongue may it wither in my throat! would now have been Lord of Lester. He dies! dies! dies!" and, hastening her footsteps, she continued to repeat the word at every stride, accompanying it with a threatening gesture of her arm.

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

Her rapid speed soon brought her to the ruins of the abbey. Bounding like an ape over the fallen blocks, she entered the door in the tower, and with an unfaltering step traversed the gallery to her subterranean abode, which, after Lester's angry and fruitless pursuit of her, she had left for Hurltel's tower, fearing that he might despatch a party from Castle More in search of her, for the purpose, by her death, of effectually silencing all question of his birth.

Entering her subterranean abode, she produced a light without flint, or steel, or fire, but by smartly drawing two marks, in opposition to the sign of the cross, on the wall with a small stick, the end of which immediately emitted a blue flame, and, after a fierce, hissing noise, shot up into a bright blaze. This, to the peasantry who had witnessed it, was one of the strongest evidences of her being in league with the devil, who, it was asseverated, kindled her stick for her in the unquenchable fire.

She lighted a fragment of a rush candle by the flame, and, opening a small box containing medicinal preparations, took therefrom a small vial containing an amber-coloured liquid, and held it to the light. She looked at it for a while with a look of vengeful satisfaction, and then placed it in her bosom; afterward she took a rusty poniard from a crevice in the wall, carefully felt its point, which was ground to a keen edge, and, with a look of satisfaction, thrust it up into her sleeve. Then extinguishing the light, she hastened past the tomb of Black Morris, and with a quick, determined step, traversed the gallery towards its outlet.

As she approached it she heard the tramp of horses. With a quick, apprehensive cry, as if she at once divined the cause, she flew through the passage into the moonlight, and saw two horsemen approaching at a round pace, and going in the direction of Castle Cor: as they came nearer, she recognised them as the chief forester and the seneschal from Castle More. She permitted them to gallop along the road till they were within a few feet of her, when she suddenly stepped forth from the black shadow of the tower, and, with one arm outstretched brandishing the stiletto, confronted them. The riders, taken by surprise, pulled their horses back to their haunches, and both instantly exclaimed, with superstitious dread,

"Elpsy!"

These were the horsemen Mark turned from his path to avoid.

"I am Elpsy," she repeated, in a lofty tone. "Whither ride ye, so fast and free?"

"If ye do not tell me true, Horses each shall cast a shoe, And evil bide ye, ill betide, As ye on your journey ride!"

"There be strange doings at the castle, mother," said the seneschal, pitching his voice to the true gossiping tone; "there's me young loord "

"Fait! but it's jist this " interrupted the other; "our young masther, Lord Robert, is not masther's son at all at all, and masther's son "

"Murther! an'it's you dat have it wrong, Ennis, honey," cried the other, interrupting him in his turn; "it's jist this, ould Mither Eelpsy; Lord Robert is not my Lord Robert at all at all, and the raal Lord Robert is "

"And is it not the very words I was afther tilling the crathur?" interrupted the forester. "I will give it to ye, Eelpsy, dare, in the right way."

"Hist with your tongues!" cried the impatient woman, having heard enough to convince her that Robert had told the truth in saying that he openly published his own shame. "Hold with your senseless words, fools! I can tell ye more than both of ye together, and all Castle Cor, know."

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"We know dat, ould mither! Don't forget to crass yourself, Jarvey, honey," added the speaker, aside, making the sign of the cross on his breast. "It's the great dale ye know, and the likes o' ye, and it's not we that is to gainsay it this night."

"Whither ride ye?" she demanded, impatiently taking hold of the bridle of one of the horses.

"Och, an' isn't it to bring with all speed that young jintleman o' the world, Mark Meredith, the ould fisherman's son, to be sure, to Castle More," said the forester.

"At whose bidding?" she demanded.

"Our lady's, the jewel!" answered the seneschal.

"Go back, and tell the Dark Lady of the Rock that thus says Elpsy, the sorceress: 'He whom she seeks she will never find!'"

"But it's the disthress she'll be in," said the seneschal.

"And it's the deep grief o' the world that's upon her now," added the other.

"Och, but it will be bad news to be afther bringing back to her that sint us," pursued Ennis, with a howl.

"Widout iver having gone at all at all," said Jarvey, in a tone of grief.

"A cush-la-ma-chree, Jarvey, but it's find the lad we must!" cried Ennis, with sudden resolution.

"And it's the ould mither that's here, bliss her, 'Il maybe till us where he may be jist at this present," added Jarvey, insinuatingly.

"Do you hesitate to obey me! Go back, even as you came. If *she* ask you where the lad is, tell her Elpsy has said, '*Lester has no lord!*'"

"Och, hone! and will it be the world's thruth, Elpsy, hinney! It'll break the spirit of her, in her lone bosom."

"And what'll the castle do widout a lord! That I should live to see it!" wailed the seneschal.

"And must we go back to the Dark Lady wid dis heavy sorrow to the fore?" asked the forester.

"E'en must ye! So!" she cried, turning, with a sudden jerk of the rein, the head of one of the horses towards the direction in which they had come. "Ride, ride," she added, in a commanding but wild tone, "nor look behind till ye are safe within the gates, lest ye care to see the evil one astraddle of your crupper."

"The houly crass protict us!" they both ejaculated, crossing themselves.

"Good e'en to ye, mither. It's yourself is the crathur for knowing the world's thruth," added Jarvey, as if by flattery he would disarm any evil intention she might cherish in reference to himself.

"And it's to her we're indibted for not riding tree leagues for nothing at all at all, whin the lad's not to the fore! Faix, it's my thanks ye have, ould Elpsy, for't, an' its yer due, were ye the ould divil himself," returned Ennis, gathering up his rein. "Kape your head straight between yer shoulder, Jarvey."

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"It's me, honey, will never be after looking behind," replied Jarvey, setting his face towards Castle More.

Thus taking leave of the wily woman, these two old simple-minded retainers rode back again; their obtuse minds probably scarce comprehending the nature of the loss Lady Lester had met with, the exchanged fortunes of their late young master, nor the important object of their mission.

She looked after them as they galloped away till they were lost in the gloom of the forest, when, clapping her hands, she broke into a peal of frantic merriment, which was more like the shriek of a fiend than like human laughter.

"Ah, ha! have I not done it well! I met them here just in time. Satan stands my friend yet! If he did make me lose the game, he has helped to keep another from winning it. No, Lester shall never have a lord at the expense of him who, but for my accursed tongue and his silly *honour!* would still have been its master. Ho, ho! have I not done it! Now it remains for me, ere he can learn the secret of his birth, to send him where low and highborn are all on a level! This! and, if this fail, *this*," she said, grasping first the vial and then the dagger, "shall do my will! It's a wicked act I know it! 'tis a deed of hell! I would not harm the poor lad no; for he is like an own child to me but, then, he is *not* my child and shall I see him in the seat from which *he* has been cast out? No, no, this steel shall drink this poison shall dry up, his noble blood first!"

"Of whom do you speak in such fearful words, mother?"

She started with mingled terror and astonishment, and beheld standing at her side the unconscious object of her thoughts. Her surprise at his sudden, and, as she at first believed, supernatural appearance, for the moment deprived her of her speech; she dropped the hand that held the vial, which was dashed in pieces against a stone, and gazed on him for several seconds with a disturbed and remorseful countenance.

"Did you hear all my words?" she at length had the resolution to ask, advancing a step towards him, and speaking in a deep, husky tone.

"No, mother. I have been in the shadow of yonder bastion, waiting the departure of those horsemen."

"Then you could not hear their speech?" she interrogated, with an eagerness of voice and manner that he could not account for.

"No," he answered, firmly.

"You have not spoken with them?"

"No."

"They have not told you that is, you are Mark Meredith, the grandson of old Meredith, the fisherman? Speak, boy!"

"Surely I am, Elpsy; do you not discern my face by this moon? I fear," he said, in a kind tone, "you have not taken good care of yourself of late, and are a little fevered. Go down to our hut, if you can walk so far, and you will find a meal of fish there, of my own taking, which I left my grandsire preparing for me. Bid him give you my portion. Good-night, Elpsy, I have business at Castle More."

As he spoke he stepped aside to pass her and pursue his way. His hospitable and kind invitation had touched her. She was not so seared that gentleness and words of kindness could not find a vibrating chord within her bosom. Gradually, as he spoke she relaxed her hand from its grasp on the poniard, which, on discovering him, she had

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instinctively concealed in the folds of her scarlet cloak, and extended it towards him in a grateful manner. But the expression of his intention to proceed to the abode of Lady Lester caused her suddenly to draw it back, while in a quick, harsh tone of voice, and with great vehemence of manner, in which alarm and apprehension were visible, she cried,

"Castle More! What hast thou to do at Castle More?"

"I bear a message to Robert of Lester! Detain me not, Elpsy; I have already lingered on the way."

"Who sends thee?"

"The young lady of Bellamont."

"Thy message?"

"I know not. 'Tis in this sealed packet."

"Is this all for which thou art sent?"

"It is."

"No instructions no commands?"

"None, save to make no delay at Castle More, lest my young lord and I should renew a quarrel we had this day."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing. But why these rapid questions this anxiety of manner? What has come over thee, Elpsy?" he asked, with surprise.

She had put this series of interrogations to him with an irresistible energy and rapidity, that left him no alternative but direct and instant replies. At first she gave him no answer; her face worked convulsively, and she seemed to be contending with some strong feelings, that she in vain strove to get the mastery over. At length she muttered within her lips,

"I had feared! But 'tis safe, safe. 'Tis a pity to slay the fair young lad; but, if I do not, he will know that which he never must know become that he never shall become! He must not see Castle More. He must die rather! Mark, come to me," she said, in a hollow and unearthly tone; "I would whisper in your ear what I would not have the laughing and grinning devils that flit about us in the air, hear! Come to me and listen!"

While she was speaking she nervously grasped the handle of her dagger, and took a step towards him. Her manner hitherto had already aroused his watchfulness, and the tone of her invitation by no means increased his confidence. He did not, indeed, suspect any attempt upon his life by her; but, being familiar with her restless and violent nature, he was prepared to expect some annoying violence; and for this he was cautiously on the watch.

"Wilt not approach?" she said, in a coaxing tone. "'Tis a sweet and fair tale I would tell thee! Ha, ha! as fair and sweet as I told the Lord Robert yestere'en! Wilt not come?" she shouted, as she saw he continued to step back as she advanced; "then will I come!"

She, with these words, made a spring towards him, seized him suddenly by the breast, and brandished her poniard in the air. He was not unprepared for this, sudden as it was: he caught her upraised arm, and bent it backward over

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her head till she shrieked with pain, and, with a cool and determined exertion of his whole strength, cast her from him so violently as to hurl her to the earth. She sprang to her feet like a cat, and, with a yell of rage, again leaped upon him. He avoided her attack by lightly springing to one side, when, missing her blow, she fell forward and struck her head on the edge of a stone, and sunk to the ground senseless and bleeding.

He instantly flew to her relief, lifted her from the earth, and attempted to assuage the flow of blood from a severe contusion that she had received on the forehead. In a little time the loss of blood restored her to consciousness; it also had the effect of subduing her high fever of excitement, and making her comparatively calm. She permitted him to bind a handkerchief, that he took from his own neck, across her temples; but she neither spoke nor acknowledged his attentions, but sat in sullen silence on the ground.

"Elpsy," asked the youth, at length, "why do you seek my life?"

"You can never know!" she replied, slowly shaking her head with morose inflexibility.

"Have I wronged you?"

"Ask me not!"

"Is it thirst for blood, evil woman, that drives thee to this crime?"

"I would not slay thee, but thou and I, boy, can never live in the same land!" she said, obstinately.

"Thou mightst have spared this attempt, then, on my life, for soon the deep sea will roll between me and my native isle."

"How! Explain your words!" she asked, with awakened interest.

"I am resolved, as nature has denied me nobility of birth, to give it at least to those who come after me."

"Speak on!" she cried, hanging on his words with intense expectation.

"I am going from my father's roof into the world, to see if I cannot make men forget from what I have sprung!"

"Is this thy purpose, boy? Speak truly!"

"It is, Elpsy. Seven hours ago I had nearly linked my fortunes with the yacht that takes the earl to England on the morrow but "

"But, what?" she eagerly demanded.

"My father I thought of him, and "

"Would not."

"I cannot desert him to suffering and want."

"And is this all?" she asked, her face lighting up with a newly awakened thought.

"The sole cause."

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She began eagerly to search her belt, and drew forth from it a heavy purse. Shaking it with a gratified air, she then poured its glittering contents on the ground beside her.

"See that pile of gold! To-morrow go in this king's ship, and it shall be yours there are three hundred guilders told 'twill give the old man food and raiment for a longer life than his will be, and afterward buy a coffin for his bones. Wilt go?"

"Mother," said he, his heart leaping with joy and hope, yet both tempered with the doubt to which he gave utterance, "this wealth! is it thine? How came you by it?"

"It matters not."

"I dare not touch it. I fear 'tis the price of sin or, perhaps, of blood."

"Fool; 'tis wealth I've had in store these eighteen years, given to me by times by one who, if there be justice in Heaven or hell, is now accursed on earth. There is no more evil in it than in every piece of gold that the earth contains all gold is evil it is all but the price of honour, of honesty, or of human blood. Take it, and depart from this land."

He gazed on the glittering heap, and hope, by its aid, pictured bright visions of the future, and the fruition of all his aspiring wishes. Ambition once more awakened in his heart. Yet he hesitated. But, while he did so, he thought of Kate Bellamont of the proud Lester of his hopes of the future of all that he had loved to contemplate; he even gave a thought to Grace Fitzgerald: all that an aspiring mind like his, at such a time, could be influenced by, had its effect upon him. She narrowly watched his countenance, read rightly his thoughts, and, feeling assured of his acceptance of it, mentally congratulated herself that her object could be effected without the shedding of his blood. She waited till she thought his mind was sufficiently ripe for her purpose, then replaced the gold in the purse, and, balancing it in her hand, said,

"Before you take this purse, I name one condition of its acceptance."

He looked to her to mention it.

"That you for ever drop your present name and assume another; that you never breathe to mortal ear the place of your birth, nor give clew to your country."

"I gladly promise this for already I had resolved on it, Elpsy. I have *one* great motive for doing so. But what can be yours?"

"'Tis no matter. You promise this?"

"Cheerfully."

"Then take the gold for thy grandsire's support."

"Thanks, thanks, kind Elpsy yet "

"Not a word of objection. I have two favours to ask of thee."

"Name them," said he, with an eagerness that evinced a desire to serve her.

"Promise that you will hold no speech with any one before thy departure."

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"I do," he said, after an instant's hesitation.

"Swear that thou wilt never set foot on this isle again."

"Nay, I will not swear it," he said, with determination.

"Wilt thou obey me? Swear it!" she cried, in a tone of fierce command.

"Who art thou that I should yield thee obedience, woman? I yield obedience to none save my Maker!"

"Wilt thou swear?" she asked, with more composure.

"Never."

The resolute attitude he so unexpectedly assumed disconcerted her for an instant. At length she said,

"Wilt thou promise never to return here under thy own, that is thy present name?"

"Yes, most freely. Now farewell, Elpsy; I must hasten to Castle More."

"You go not to Castle More!" she exclaimed, with singular emphasis.

"I am intrusted with a message, and must deliver it."

"Give it to me, I will be its bearer."

"Nay, I must myself place it in Lord Robert's hands, in person."

"Give it me, boy! I will bear it safely to its destination."

"No, Elpsy."

"Go to Castle More, and you sail not on the morrow," she said, in a determined tone, replacing the gold in her belt.

He hesitated. After a brief struggle between his duty to Grace Fitzgerald and her cousin, and his own wishes, he at length said, falteringly,

"May I trust you to deliver it, Elpsy?"

"Yes."

He turned the billet, with its lock of hair, over and over, gazed on it long and fondly on every side, and, from his reluctance to resign the precious treasure, there appeared to have arisen a new bar to Elpsy's purpose. At length he made a compromise with his feelings by slipping off the braid of hair, and hastily concealing it in his bosom, while he gave her the unsecured packet.

"Place it only in the hands of Robert of Lester, Elpsy."

"None else shall see it."

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"Speedily, if you are not too ill."

"It will take many a harder buffet than that thou gavest me to make me ill. He shall have it ere thou art half a league on thy return."

"Then, Elpsy, I go. Fare thee well, and may Heaven have you in better keeping than your life now gives hope of. Will you call at times when I am away to see my grandfather? He will be lonely."

"Many will be the gossip we'll yet have together. Now go! Take my blessing 'twill do thee no harm, if it can do no good! When does the ship sail?"

"The Earl of Bellamont will return from Kinsale in the morning, and 'tis said that before noon she will be under weigh."

"The sooner the better. Go at once on board, nor let the rising sun find thee on the land. Farewell."

"Farewell, Elpsy. Don't forget the poor old man!"

"He shall never want while Elpsy lives. Now fare thee well, and *remember!*" she added, impressively.

They now separated; the young man rapidly retracing his way to his hut, with a buoyant tread and lightness of spirit, his imagination filled with dazzling visions of the future; Elpsy bending her steps steadily in the direction of Castle More, her soul exulting in the master-stroke of policy she had effected. When he was no longer visible, she stopped, and, opening the packet, by the light of the moon curiously examined the locket and its device, the application of which, without understanding its motto, she intuitively comprehended, and then read the contents of the billet with a loud, scornful laugh.

"And would she meet him *now* with love? Ha, ha! The haughty maiden would toss her head, did he bear this to her, she knowing his birth. Oh!" she added, with a malignant chuckle, "that I had let him married her ere this secret had let out would it not have been a brave thing then to have brought down the pride of these gentles! If I could have kept the secret till their honeymoon was over! Fiends!" she exclaimed, with maddened disappointment, "what precious revenge I have lost! Shall I not have a taste of what is left me? Shall I not yet tell her *who* and *what* he is? Oh, will it not be joy to my soul to witness her ravings! I'll do't! I'll do't! There's something left yet to live for! There's mischief yet to do in the earth. But I must first watch this sprout of Lester this fisher's boy! I shall not have to touch his life if he'll get off before he learns his true rank; but I'll follow him like his shadow, nor will I take eyes off him till the ship he sails in goes out of my sight beyond the ocean's edge. Then will I to Castle Cor, and see if Lady Kate will receive me, the bearer of this locket, `with love!' Haven't I a tale for her delicate ear! Oh, there is yet something to live for! Elpsy'll not die while there's devil's work to do! So! methinks I feel a little giddy for walking," she continued, tottering against the trunk of a tree; "but I'll soon fall into my old gait. A little bloodletting of a moonshiny night is ever good for the health."

Thus muttering to herself, she turned back towards the ruin, and began to walk in the direction taken by Mark, at first slowly; but, gradually gathering strength with motion and excitement, she soon strode through the long, dark glades of the forest at a rate that soon brought her in sight of him. Keeping so far in the rear as not to be discovered by him should he chance to turn his head, she followed him out of the wood, then down to the seaside and along the beach, till she saw him, just as the day broke, lift the latch of the door of his humble cot and disappear within. She then sought a recess in the cliff in the rear of the hut, where, secreting herself in a clump of low bushes that grew about it, she remained concealed until some time after sunrise, when she saw him reappear accompanied by the fisherman, and beheld both go together to the beach, launch their little fisher's bark, hoist the sail, and leave the shore. She eagerly watched them as they stood off from the land, and with unspeakable triumph saw them run alongside of the yacht. With emotions of malignant joy, she beheld Mark take leave of his grandsire

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and get on board, and the solitary old man quit the vessel alone and steer in shore towards his desolate hut. As his skiff grated upon the beach, she met him.

"So ho, father Meredith! thou hast been selling thy fish to a good market. The English have the silver coin, which thou wilt scarce find at the Cove ayond. What price gave these warsmen for thy herring the morn, gossip?" she inquired, assisting him with her arm from the boat as she spoke.

"It was no sale o' the herring at all, woman Elpsy," said the old man, shaking his head mournfully, and placing the stone kedge of his boat in a crevice in the rocks so as to secure it against being borne off by the ebbing tide; "it's no a sale o' the fish, woman dear, but o' my own flesh and blood. Och hone! och hone! and it's the ould gray-headed man'll never see his face more!"

He turned towards the yacht as he spoke, and stretching forth his hands towards it, wailed aloud: at length his lament ceased, or, rather, changed to a flood of tender epithets, eloquent with the depth of Irish sorrow, which he applied to the youth, while his dim eyes were vainly strained towards the vessel, to distinguish once more his beloved form.

"What means this sorrow, father Meredith? Who hast thou sold?"

"The lad my grandson! a-cush la-ma chree! I have sold him for gold. There, woman, take thine again! I will none of it!" he cried, with sudden vehemence, drawing the purse she had given Mark from his jacket, and throwing it at her feet. "'Tis the price of blood, and I will not have it, evil woman."

"Hear me, father Meredith," she said, deliberately placing her hands upon his shoulders, and looking him earnestly in the face. "I know the purpose of thy visit to yonder king's ship. I know whom thou hast left there. Thou hast done well and wisely in permitting him to depart. He has left gold for thy wants, and has told thee how he came by it. 'Twas my gift to him and thee."

"'Tis the price o' his blood, woman!" he said, with a heavy moan of mingled grief and indignation.

"'Tis the price of his life, old man! Were he not now in yonder brigantine, the sands ere this would have drunken his blood," she added, with fierceness. "Hist! ask not what I mean. What I have said is true. I have sent him away to save his life, and that there may be one less murder on the earth. Go to thy hut and content thee with this gold. 'Tis a friendly gift, old father. 'Twill save thee from labour so long as thy life shall last. I will come and gossip with thee o' evenings, and, hey! sirs," she cried, skipping on before him with fantastic gambols, as he placed his slender oars on his shoulder, "won't we pass the time merrily? I will make fairies dance before thy door o' moonshiny nights for thy entertainment; call the mermaids up from the bottom o' the blue sea to sing thee to sleep when thou art aweary; and tell thee tales o' hobgoblins and spirits till the moon fades in the morning. Oh, we will have times, father Meredith!"

"But will he come back, Elpsy, woman?"

"The devil forbid!" she responded, half aloud. "Ay, father; thou wilt yet see him return a brave sailor, and with piles o' wealth. Faith, sirs, I would not wonder if he should build thee a castle with his gold, and make a lord o' thee. Ha, ha, ha, father Meredith! thou wouldst make a proper lord!"

"He, he, he! Elpsy, thou art pleasant. If the lad's gone, I'll make the best o't till the saints give him back in good time. Come to my hut and break thy fast, avourneen! He was ever o'er lofty, and had notions above his class. He was unhappy, the creature, because he was not equal with the young Lord o' Castle More. Be-dad! Elpsy, honey, one would ha' thought he were of gentle blood!"

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She started, and closely scrutinized the old fisherman's face; but, seeing nothing to confirm her now constantly active suspicions, she said,

"He was above his birth, as you say, gossip! The sea will be a school for him, and teach him his place. He will make a better sailor than lord. Ha, ha, ha! will he not, father Meredith?" and she laughed coldly and sarcastically as she spoke.

"He was always a good sailor, Elpsy, woman! Ne'er a ship came int' the Cove he went not up to her main truck; nor a craft lay becalmed i' the sight o' the bay he went not aboard and through every part o' her. He knew every rope in a ship as well as an admiral, the crathur! Ah, woman, he could do an officer's duty this day as well as the keptain o' the yacht yonder. He seemed to take to a seaman's life nat'rally, and it was ever discontented he was in the skiff. He loved to talk o' big ships, and foreign lands, battles by sea, and storms, and shipwreck, and the likes o' them things; and, with all his high notions, he ever loved a sailor betther than a lord, and the sailors all liked him, the jewill!"

"He is in his place, then, father Meredith," said Elpsy, chiming in with the favourable train of the old fisherman's garrulous praises of the youth. "Thou wouldst not call him ashore now an thou couldst."

"Nay, I would not say that, Elpsy, woman. Yet I begin to think the lad be best where he is. Yet it will be a dark day to my soul when the ship sails a-sea with him the light o' my eyes! the core o' my heart! Och, hone! Sad will be the day to the soul o' me, Elpsy, woman! Come in, crathur, honey, an' take a bite o' the breakfast. It's you it is that's the comfort o' my lone bosom now, avourneen!"

"No, no, I have much to do the mornin', old man!" she said, turning from the door as the fisherman, after standing his oars up beside it, placed his hand upon the latch. "Take the gold freely; it is thine!" she added, casting it through the window upon the earthen floor of the cabin. "When the ship sails I will eat."

"Take a drap o' the dew, Elpsy, dear!" continued the old man, the grief, which at his age is always superficial, having, like a child's, been diverted for the time by the rattling gossip of the weird woman.

"Elpsy will fast from all save water till the masts of yonder yacht are shut from my sight by the meeting of sea and sky!"

She waved her hand with a lofty gesture as she spoke, as if she sought to impress the fisherman by her manner alone, and strode away from the hut towards the path that led up to the castle.

Grace Fitzgerald, after communicating the result of her interview with Mark, had left Kate to her repose. But, with grief at her feud with Lester, and her lively anticipations of beholding him at her feet, to be raised from that humble posture to her forgiving embrace, her mind was too active for rest, and sleep fled from her pillow, leaving it in the sole possession of her ardent thoughts. With the first blush of day, her face scarce less roseate than the morning sky with the consciousness of her object, she rose and threw open her lattice, and turned her face, with earnest expectation, towards the forest-path which led northward towards Castle More. From time to time she would lean far out of the window, and, with eager ear, listen as if to catch some distant sound. At length, with a look and exclamation of disappointment, not undivested of a slight shade of feminine pique, she closed the lattice and cast herself upon her pillow again, saying, in a tone of wounded pride,

"I care not! he is unworthy of a thought! I will forget him and try to sleep!"

She closed her eyelids, as if, at the same time, she expected her fevered thoughts, like the flower which folds its leaves together when the sun withdraws its light, would also shut themselves up and leave her to repose. But she now thought more vividly and acutely than before. It at length occurred to her that there might have been some

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delay on the part of the messenger. Perhaps Lester had not yet got her packet, or had just received it, and was now on his way to her!

"I will wait a little longer!" she said, unclosing her eyes, and rising and going to the lattice.

A long time she remained here, with her eyes fixed on the forest path, and her ears acutely set, to catch the most distant sound of horses' feet.

"He comes not yet!" she sighed, with deep disappointment. "Yet he may soon be here! Hark! is not that his horse? No, 'tis a deer bounding along to the spring!"

At the moment a cool vein of wind from the sea chilled her, and, glancing at her dress as she drew it together across her bosom, she discovered, what she had hitherto been inattentive to, that she was in her night-rob.

"And I dare say I should have run to meet him as I am! What a foolish child!" she said, blushing with confusion and innocent shame. "'Tis fortunate he did not come before! I will dress, and by that time he may be here!"

Hope, hope, hope! Star of woman's love! In thy celestial journeyings, thou dost never set on the limitless empire of her affections. Her wide heart has no horizon beneath which thou canst go down and disappear. Patient, long suffering, ever hoping to the last, she steers by thee her bark of love through storm and danger, faithfully and fearlessly, never losing sight of thee till, from her expectant eye, death steals the power of reflecting longer thy radiance!

When she had completed her toilet, and found that there were still no indications of Lester's approach, she became impatient, and, throwing a hood and veil over her head, she left her chamber and hastened below. For what purpose she hardly knew impulse alone prompted her footsteps. She hastened through the hall, and descended into the castle yard, and directed her course towards the forest. She had entered the verge of its gloomy shades, which the morning sun had scarcely yet driven out, and was penetrating its depths, when she suddenly stopped.

"Where am I going? what am I doing?" she exclaimed, as if her feet had been involuntarily obeying her thoughts hitherto, and she for the first time had discerned that she was really doing what she supposed she was only thinking of doing. Such absent reveries are peculiar to young persons in love!

"Am I really going to meet him? I did not know that I did love Lester so. But he would scorn me to find me here I will hasten back as I came though I scarce have any consciousness how that was! What a simple creature I have made of myself. I am afraid of my own ridicule. Oh love, love, you do play the mischief with maiden's hearts when once you get into them!" she said, sportively, yet ending her words with a deep sigh.

Turning back, she retraced her steps slowly towards the castle. As she approached it, her eyes were attracted by the pavilions, which still remained standing, and, bending her steps towards the lawn, she entered that which had been the scene of the yesterday's festival. No signs of the banquet remained all, save the curtains of the tent, and one or two rustic sofas within it, were removed. She seated herself on one of these, and raising the north side of the tent-hangings by one of the silken cords attached to them, was enabled, without being seen, to command the avenue to the forest. With her person bent a little forward, and holding her handkerchief in her hand, as if prepared to wave it at an instant's notice, she sat watching in the direction in which she expected Lester to appear.

"I will meet him here," she said; "I would not have even cousin Grace, good as she is, to witness our interview of reconciliation. Oh, why does he linger so! Well, Robert, I have been taught a lesson in a knowledge of my own heart by this; and, let us but meet in peace once more, I will bear much ere I will make either you or myself so miserable again."

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

She sighed deeply as she spoke, and a glittering tear, like a drop of dew shaken from a spray, fell upon her hand.

"Surely he cannot love me, to linger so!" she said, dropping her aching eyes, which had long kept watch on the distant path.

"Proud maiden, thou hast spoken truly! he loves thee not!"

Kate turned in alarm as the stern, harsh voice that spoke these words sounded close to her ear, and beheld the weird woman.

"Elpsy!" she cried, rising and speaking between terror and surprise.

"The *witch* Elpsy, lady," added the sorceress, sarcastically.

"What would you, woman?"

"Thyself."

"How mean you?" exclaimed the maiden, shrinking involuntarily back.

"Fear me not, lady!" she said, slowly and with mysterious emphasis, as she gazed on the face of the fair girl, her eyes gloating with a diabolical light; "I would not harm thy body, while I hold the key to thy soul."

"Fearful woman, if woman, or even human, thou art, what terrible meaning lies hidden beneath your words?"

"Thou lovest Robert of Lester?"

"Elpsy, I will not be questioned. Leave me," said Kate, her brow glowing between maidenly shame and anger.

But Elpsy, without heeding her command or seeming to observe her emotion, said, with the sardonic quiet that malice can put on when it would wound,

"Thou didst despatch a messenger to Castle More the last night, lady?"

"How knowest thou this?" she demanded, evasively, startled at her knowledge of what she believed known only to the parties immediately interested.

"Is there aught, daughter of the house of Bellamont, that happens among mortals," she said, in the elevated tone of mystery and supernatural power she was wont to assume at such times, "that Elpsy the sorceress is ignorant of?"

"I know thou art a dread and fearful woman," said Kate, with a thrill of aversion, "and have power to do evil, which, rather than good, I have heard it is thy delight to do."

"Ha, ha! thou hast well spoken," she responded, with a chuckling laugh, that caused the maiden, with all her firmness, to shudder and start back to the extremity of the pavilion.

"You fear me. Well, it is what I would have. Ho! 'Tis pleasant to be feared by the lovely and the pure by the strong and the mighty; to be sought out by the noble, and have the homage of the low! Oh, it's a brave thing, this holding sway over the minds of mortals. Kings may govern their bodies *we* hold the empire of their souls! Ha, ha! So you fear me, trembler?"

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"An angel would tremble before thee, guilty one!"

"Ha, ha! I know it. Thou hast spoken it. It is the reward held out to us that we shall one day master the good spirits."

"And how? Alone by the power of darkness and of sin! You conquer through fear, not by strength. Therefore it is that good spirits dare not enter the abodes of the prince of evil. Woman, thou art fearful; thy spells sinful; thy soul lost for ever!" she cried, with virtuous horror united to the natural enthusiasm of her character.

"Soul!" repeated the sorceress, with a writhing lip of derision; "*soul!*"

"Hast thou no soul, woman, in the name of God!" exclaimed the maiden, appalled by the emphasis she laid on the word as she repeated it a second time.

The sorceress gazed on her a moment fixedly ere she replied, and then advancing a pace towards her, said hoarsely,

"Yes!"

"Woman," continued Kate, with solemn earnestness, turning pale at the manner in which she pronounced this monosyllable, "I know thou art wicked and full of evil; but thou canst not have bartered thy eternal life? have made compact with Sathanas, at the hazard of thy salvation?"

Elpsy was moved with surprise by the energy with which she was addressed, and, banishing her derisive smile, answered in a more natural tone,

"By compact no, lady! none save but with my own nature; even as all who are mortal do barter away their souls when they obey the devil within. I have served him in the shape of evil passions till his I am, soul and body!"

"Say not so, Elpsy," said Kate, touched with pity by the sullen despair and abandonment of her manner, although in it not a shade of remorse or penitence was apparent even to her charitable gaze; "if you have sinned, there is forgiveness to be had of Heaven! It is not too late to secure your soul's future happiness. I know there is much that is kind and humane in you when you are not gored by insults, or under the influence of angry emotions. Abandon your course of life; seek forgiveness of Him who died for the chiefest of sinners. I pity you, Elpsy."

The sorceress hung her head upon her breast in silence: her bosom heaved with inward struggles; her harsh features became convulsed, and the maiden thought she saw a tear fall from her eyes to the ground. Encouraged by these signs of good, she added, approaching her in a kindly manner,

"Cast off this assumed character, if, as I sincerely trust, it is not irrevocably made thine own by thy soul's price. I will furnish for thee a neat cottage not far from Cormac, the forester's, and thou shalt have the comforts about thee thy old age craves. Do not despair of forgiveness, Elpsy. God is merciful, and will meet thee in kindness more than half the way if "

"Angel! fiend! mock me not!" shrieked the woman, suddenly lifting her face furrowed with tears, gnashing her glittering teeth, her eyes flashing, her clinched hands shaking with nervous excitement, and her whole bearing that of a pythoness enraged and fear-stricken. "There is no God no heaven for me! Yes, I am bought, body and soul! Talk not to me of your Christ! For a moment I was carried back to childhood as you spoke," she continued, with a sudden change of manner; "for I have been once innocent as thyself. But 'tis past!" she cried, fiercely. "Your words can move me no more! They have pressed out the last drop of moisture that remained in my heart! I am adamant now hard hard hard as iron! Ha, ha, ha! Elpsy a Christian! Accursed be the name!"

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

Kate Bellamont, at this sudden and terrific outbreak from one whom she believed had been softened by her words, retreated from the vehemence of her language and the savage wildness of her manner, with the look and attitude of one who suddenly beholds the lion which he has tamed start suddenly from his playful embrace, and assume all at once the savage ferocity of his nature. She was astonished beyond expression by this unexpected ebullition of feeling, and her mind was appalled both by her terrible language and the new ground she had assumed.

"Elpsy, stand from the door and let me pass!" she said, with firmness, yet trembling through every fibre of her body, as Elpsy, after speaking, continued to gaze on her in gloomy silence, and with a lowering and menacing aspect.

"Nay," said the sorceress, placing herself full in the way, and speaking with more mildness even than was usual to her, "I have news that concerns thee."

"Me?"

"None else."

"Of what?"

"The young Lord of Lester."

"What of him? Thy looks thy language that fearful smile!"

"Dost love him?"

"It matters not to thee. Speak what thou hast to say, and quickly," she cried, with an indefinable foreboding of evil.

"Thou dost, maiden. It is written in every lineament; speaks in every action yea, Robert of Lester is thy second self. Ha, ha, ha! Did I not say I held the key to thy soul ay, and I can unlock it, too!"

Having, in the first heat of her vengeance at finding herself defeated by the course taken by Lester, resolved to divulge to Kate Bellamont the secret of his birth that she might triumph in her humility and wretchedness, Elpsy's fertile mind soon taught her how best to effect her malicious, and, save its wickedness, aimless purpose. She now, therefore, in a tone of assumed carelessness, added,

"But thou lovest him because he is noble like thyself! Were he lowly in name and humble in birth, thou wouldst scorn him," she added, with the manner of one who is trying the moral pulse of her victim: "this is ever the way with the highborn."

"Were he lower born than the hind who herds my father's kine, he would still be Lester, and noble to me!" she said, with a spirit that became her lofty beauty and devoted love.

"This will never do," muttered Elpsy, thoughtfully, intent on her cruel design, and forgetful of, and insensible to, the gratitude due to the maiden for the kindly interest she had so recently expressed in her welfare; in repayment of which, with all the maliciousness of a demon, she was now taxing her ingenuity to dash from her lips the cup of happiness which young love had offered to them.

"Were he a cowherd, he would have a cowherd's common soul, maiden!"

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"Being common he then could not be Lester. But being Lester, though a swineherd, that inherent nobleness, that is the birthright of his nature, would shine out through his mean garb and calling, and make him still, to my eyes, the Lester I love."

"Were he a slave a serf ay, chained to a galley, wouldst thou love him still?"

"If misfortune, and not crime, brought him to this degradation then should I not love him less, but love him more!"

"If 'twere crime?"

"Couple it not with his name, woman," she said, with flashing eyes. "But why this dark and subtle questioning? Speak, I command thee!"

"Thou hast no power to command me I no will to obey. I will probe her yet deeper!" she muttered. "If, maiden, there were a stain upon his birth "

"Well " she quickly interrupted, with painful eagerness visible in every lineament of her beautiful countenance: for her feelings were highly wrought up, and, excited to expectation of something evil by the manner of her interrogator, she was all nerves and on the rack of torturing suspense. "Well speak, prithee, woman! Why do you pause?"

"If 'twere proven he were a a "

"Say "

"A nay, 'twill wound thy ears!"

"Speak I fear not for I know thou canst lay no crime to his charge!"

"A *bastard!*" she said, laying a deliberate stress upon each syllable.

"Evil woman! away! Leave me!"

"It may be proved that he is not only this, but "

"Away! Oh that I should listen to thy foul and slanderous speech."

"*Low-born!*"

"In the name of Heaven, woman, cease! and give me way out, or I will alarm the castle, and have thee punished for this insolence!"

As the indignant girl spoke she prepared to pass her, when the woman laid her hand firmly on her wrist and detained her, while she said, in a serious and imperious manner,

"Maiden, hear me! I am not mocking thee! What if I can prove him to thee to be a lowborn bastard the son of a peasant-girl, and palmed on Lady Lester as her own?"

"Thou canst do no such thing with all thy wicked arts to aid thee," scornfully replied the maiden.

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"What if I could do it! Wouldst love him then?"

"Yes."

"The bastard?"

"Yes, I tell thee."

"The son of a lowborn peasant?"

"He would still be Lester to me, so long as honour and truth were the habitants of his bosom."

"Wouldst thou love him then?"

"Better and better for each misfortune he brought not on himself."

"Or serf or galley-slave or peasant or bastard, he would still be Lester in the eyes of thy love?"

"Yes! Stand aside, and let me pass forth."

"One word more, fair virgin. I must try," continued she to herself, "my last card now. Her love outwits my invention. 'Tis a shield that turns aside all my shafts. I think I now know her weakness, and so will put it to trial. Suppose," she asked, in an indifferent tone, "this Robert of Lester should take offence at thee "

"Well " she said, with interest.

"And should ride from thee in anger "

"Proceed prithee "

"And, being too proud to atone, lets his pride grow till it beget hatred and scorn of thee "

"Well "

"And so, from wounded love and rage, he forswears his noble name, and leagues himself with pirates; and, out of revenge to thee, goes forth to slay, and deluge the earth with blood and rapine!"

"Have you done?" she asked, in a tone of disdain for what she deemed the idle words of the speaker.

"I have," she answered, with a peculiar smile, that troubled and perplexed her. "But I would ask thee wouldst love him then?"

"I will answer thee if such things could be, which ne'er can be No. In this case, guilt would place for ever an impassable gulf between us. But, as thou hast so much interest in him, let me pass that I may meet him, for I hear his horse's feet in the forest," she said, with the contempt of incredulity, yet trembling so well the supposed case advanced by Elpsy tallied with the circumstances under which Lester left her lest there might be some dreadful truth at the bottom.

"His horse's feet thou wilt never hear more. Himself thou wilt never see more, save to thy sorrow."

"Explain, woman," she almost shrieked, grasping her by the shoulders, and speaking with wild vehemence.

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"Robert of Lester has become even as I have spoken. Maddened by thy coldness his pride stung his self-love wounded his feelings lacerated, he has fled his home, and leagued himself with bucaniers."

"In the name of the blessed Heaven above, do you speak but a tithe of the truth, woman?" she demanded, with fearful emotion.

"He galloped to the seaside, and a Danish bucanier being by chance in shore, he threw himself on board, and put to sea with her."

"One word, only one word more! You saw this?"

"I did, and came hither to tell thee."

"Would to God I knew if thou didst tell the truth or no," she cried, almost sinking upon the ground.

"Behold this token which he gave me, bidding me return it to the giver, who, he said mark the words, maiden! was henceforth only worthy the scorn and contempt of the noble heart she had broken," spoke the false witch, taking, as if struck by a sudden thought, the locket and message from her bosom and placing it in her hands.

"It is too true. Merciful Heaven, sustain me! Nay! Elpsy, touch me not. I shall not fall. No, I *will* not fall! If if he can scorn me I nay do not support me my pride will will oh Lester, Lester you have killed me!"

With a deep moan, as if her heart were bursting, she fell into the arms of the sorceress, who, not wholly unmoved by the wretchedness she had caused, placed her on one of the settees, and, with a look of triumph, gazed on her pale cheek, and watched the irregular and long-drawn heaving of her bosom. Her success had been complete, and she experienced a joy kindred to that of a fiend's when he beholds the fall of a good man. She had made the happy miserable, and was content! She had wounded the pride of the noble, and was satisfied. She had been the bearer of guilt to innocence, and her task was accomplished!

After surveying for a few moments the lovely victim of her malice and of her hatred of the highborn, which seemed to be placed deeper than any other feeling in her bosom, she drew from her bosom a small vial, and, removing the stopper, stooped over her and moistened her lips and nostrils. The volatile essence of the evaporating fluid was instantly inhaled, and produced a reviving effect. The colour returned to her cheek, and, opening her eyes, she fixed on the sorceress a wild gaze.

"It is not all a dream, then!" she cried, putting back her hair from her forehead and staring at her; "she is there! Lester! is he is he oh I cannot speak what I would I remember ah! I remember all. *She* told me so! Woman!" she all at once shrieked, "is thy tale false or true? Say it is not true," she added, rising and holding her by the cloak, "and I will fall down and kiss thy feet."

A triumphant light gleamed in the ruthless eyes of the sorceress. "Thou art humbled by grief," she said, with torturing coolness. "It is a pleasant thing to see the proud and high come down. Oh, if I had been noble too, as well as fair, in my youth, I had been a bride instead of but I will not wound thine ears, maiden, with a word thou canst never know the meaning of. It is only for the lowborn virgin to be taught it by some highborn youth. What I have told thee is true. Robert of Lester has leagued himself with pirates. One day I may tell thee more of him."

"Hist!" she whispered, hoarsely. "I will hear no more of him. He is nothing now to Catharine of Bellamont. Hark, there is the sound of horses' feet! *He comes!* False one, he is here!" she cried, darting forward to the door of the pavilion.

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Elpsy smiled grimly and followed her.

The sound of horsemen approaching was now distinctly heard, but it was the noise of many horses advancing at speed. In a few seconds they beheld emerge from the forest, not the form of Lester, but that of the Earl of Bellamont, attended by three or four mounted servants.

"Has Elpsy spoken the truth, maiden?" asked the sorceress, her eyes gleaming with the unpleasing smile habitual to her, when she observed Kate to turn her face away in disappointment.

"Torture me not, evil woman; thy words, whether false or true, have almost broken my heart."

At this instant the earl caught sight of his daughter, and, turning aside from the avenue, galloped across the lawn towards the pavilion. He was a gentleman of noble presence, with a dark, intelligent face, and dignified features. The resemblance between himself and daughter was instantly apparent. He rode with grace, and displayed admirable horsemanship in the management of his fiery steed.

"A kiss, my sweet child," he said, as he threw himself from his horse beside her. "You are abroad early! What, in tears? I have not been absent three days, and yet you welcome me, Kate, with as much emotion as if I had but returned from India. Nay, then, weep on my breast, silly one, if you will. What, Elpsy here too!" he exclaimed, now for the first time seeing the witch standing within the door of the pavilion "I see it all. She has been alarming you with some evil foretellings! Woman, have I not forbidden thee to harbour or appear on the domains of Castle Cor? Moral blight and misfare follow thy footsteps as surely as does pestilence the path of the baleful dogstar. Depart!"

"I have done mine errand, proud earl, and therefore will go but not at thy bidding I depart," she added, gathering her scarlet cloak about her hideous person.

"I care not if it be at the devil's as it is most like to be so I see thee no more! Cease, my dove, that moan. Her charms are sand her words false her prophecies the wildest dreams! Heed them not, if, as I suspect, she has filled thy tender ears with them."

"Thou lovest thy daughter, earl?" she said, interrogatively, as she prepared to depart.

"Too well to see her made miserable, vile sorceress!"

"See, then, thou do not make her so."

"How mean you?" he demanded.

"*Beware of a black plume!*" she added, mysteriously.

"Explain your meaning, woman!" he said, struck by her manner and the menacing tones in which she gave him this prophetic warning.

The sorceress made no reply; but, turning her face towards the path that led to the seashore, she rapidly traversed the lawn, and, waving her hand warningly, disappeared down the path leading to the beach.

The cause to which her father attributed her sudden and unwonted grief greatly relieved Kate; and by allowing him, through her silence, to retain the impression he had formed, she was saved the embarrassment of making him a confidant of her wounded affections by unfolding to him the true cause a task, in her present state of mind, impossible for her to perform, and one which, at any time, would have been a sad trial to her maidenly

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sensitiveness. In a few moments she became more composed: the tide of her affections, which had been forced back upon the fountain-head, having found a channel in paternal love through which to flow, if not in the same direction as before, yet nearly in as deep and strong a current.

She accompanied him to the castle, and for the remainder of the morning was so occupied in forwarding the preparations for his departure and that of her cousin, that she had little time to devote to her own peculiar sorrows, leaving them for the lonely hours that would find her, after they were gone, in the solitary chamber, mourning over her crushed and blighted love. Yet a faint ray of the light of hope shone through the darkness of her heart, and the faintly-cherished belief that the tale of the sorceress might be false kept her from abandoning herself to that hopelessness of grief, shame and utter wretchedness into which she would have sunk had the truth been made manifest to her, divested of every shadow of doubt.

CHAPTER VIII.

"The wind blows fair! the vessel feels
The pressure of the rising breeze,
And swiftest of a thousand keels,
She leaps to the careering seas."

Willis.

"Commanding, aiding, animating all, Where foe appear'd to press, or friend to fall, Cheers Lara's voice."

Lara.

Towards noon of the day on which the events related in the last chapter transpired, a signal was displayed on one of the towers of Castle Cor, and shortly afterward the yacht, which hitherto had appeared so lifeless, got under weigh. Like a snowy seabird seeking her nest, she spread her broad white sails and stood in towards the land, fired a gun, and hove to within cable's length of the beach. A well-manned boat, with a crimson awning stretched above the stern-sheets, and gay with the flags of England and of Bellamont, presently put off from her, and pulled to the foot of the path that led up to the castle. In a few minutes afterward a party was seen descending the cliff, consisting of Lady Bellamont, Grace Fitzgerald, Kate Bellamont and the earl, on the arm of whom the latter leaned pale and sad, followed by a large number of attendants, and others who had come to witness the embarkation. On arriving at the boat, which lay against the rock so that they could easily step into it, they were received by the commander of the yacht in person a bluff, middle-aged seaman, his manners characterized by a sailor's frankness, united with the ease and courtesy of a well-bred gentleman.

"How is the wind, Kenard?" asked the earl of the officer, as he came to the place of embarking; "'tis somewhat light and contrary, methinks, for our voyage."

"It comes from the south by west, my lord, but we can lay our course till we clear the cape, when it will be full fair. I trust our cabin will be honoured with a larger share of loveliness than I had anticipated," he said, smiling with gallantry as he saw Kate Bellamont and the countess were of the party.

"So you did not give me the credit for being so *very* lovely until you had seen me, Master Kenard," said Grace, wilfully misapplying his words.

"When I look on your face, I assuredly can have no wish that my cabins should be graced with more beauty than I behold there, fair lady," answered the seaman, lifting his cap gallantly.

"A pretty speech to come from the sea," said Grace, laughing.

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"Come, fair niece, the winds wait for no one," said the earl, stepping from the rock upon the cushioned seats of the gig, after having taken a tender leave of his countess and daughter.

"Adieu, then, sweet cousin!"

"Adieu, dear Grace!"

And, for a moment, the lovely girls lingered in a parting embrace, kissing again and again each other's cheeks, while their full eyes ran over. It seemed as if they never would separate!

"Nay, my sweet Grace, will you give all your adieus and affectionate partings to your cousin?" said the countess, interrupting their lingering parting.

With another warm embrace, another kiss, and a fresh shower of tears, Grace released herself from Kate's entwining arms and threw herself into those of Lady Bellamont. The earl then gently took her hand and led her into the boat.

The baggage, in the mean while, had been placed in it by the servants and seamen, and the earl and his niece having taken their seats beneath the silken canopy and once more interchanged adieus with those on the rock, the captain bade the men give way in the direction of the yacht, the yards of which, at the same moment, were manned to receive the noble party. The boat, urged on its way by eight oars, cut swiftly through the crested waves, and in a short time after leaving the land was alongside. The deck of the vessel was within a few feet of the water; and half a dozen steps, let down by a hinge into the boat, formed a safe and easy means of getting on board. As Grace, who had not ceased to wave her handkerchief to the party on shore, placed her foot upon the deck, her eyes rested, with surprise that nearly broke forth into an exclamation, on Mark Meredith, who stood close beside her, manning, with other young sailors, the rope that lifted the stairs. Forgetful of his duty, he looked with all his soul after her retiring form, as, leaning on her uncle's arm, she walked aft amid the loud cheers from the crew on the yards.

"Run away with it!" cried the officer of the gangway to the young seamen at the fall.

But Mark was deaf to the order, and was nearly thrown down by the rapid movement of his companions ere he could recover himself.

"So, so, my green un! you must have quicker ears than this if you would serve King Billy. And what are your eyes doing aft? Tom," he added, to a seaman who was fitting a tompion to the starboard gun amidships, as Mark, blushing and confused, retreated from this reproof among the crew, "is this lad in your mess?"

"Ay, sir," said the man, ceasing his occupation and respectfully lifting his cap.

"Then teach him that a seaman must look ahead and not astern," said the officer, dryly.

"Ay, ay, sir," was the equally dry response.

"Lay in, lay in, off the yards!" now shouted the lieutenant; "all hands make sail!"

The boatswain's whistle rung sharp and clear as it repeated the call to the deck; and in an instant the yards, save two or three men left on each to assist in loosening the canvass, were deserted, and the sailors descended with activity to the deck.

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The yards were now swung round to the wind, and every light sail was spread to woo the gentle breeze that came off shore. Yielding to its influence, with a ripple about her prow as she began to cleave the water and a slight inclination towards the direction opposite from the wind, the graceful yacht slid smoothly over the sea, with a rapid yet scarcely perceptible motion.

Grace stood beneath the awning that covered the quarter-deck, and, as they glided down the bay, watched the shore, which seemed to move past like a revolving panorama. Castle Cor, with its lordly towers, rose to the eye lone and commanding for many a league; and she could fancy, long after the flag that fluttered on its topmost tower was no longer to be seen, that she could discern the white kerchief of her cousin waving to her from the cliff. As the vessel continued to gain an offing, the battlements of Castle More, far inland, became visible; and as her eyes wandered from the cliff to these towers, her thoughts ran rapidly over the scenes in which Lester, the preceding day, had been an actor; and she wondered as she thought. Had she known all had Kate made her her confidant after her interview with the sorceress, she would have had food for wonder indeed!

Gradually the scenes with which she was familiar faded from her view. The towers of Castle Cor and the far-distant battlements of Castle More sunk beneath the horizon, and she found herself, on turning, after taking a long, last, lingering look at these dear objects, to the scenes about her, that the vessel was moving before a steady breeze past the outermost rocky headland of the bay, and boldly entering the open sea. The sun was shining redly in the west, his broad, flaming disk on a level with the ocean, the top of every leaping wave of which he touched with fire: a dark cloud hung just above it, with lurid edges; and the whole aspect of the heavens was to her eye angry and menacing, and betokened a tempest. The yacht cut her way swiftly through the water, as if, so it seemed to her imagination, flying from the approaching storm, with every sail flung broad to the breeze, which, after the course was changed to the east on doubling the headland, blew directly aft. She cast her eyes along the decks, and saw that the most perfect quiet and order reigned throughout, and that every seaman was employed in some occupation of his craft, or stationed at his post ready to obey the orders of his officer. Now and then an old sailor would cast his eyes to windward, look a moment at the sun, then lift them to the sails, and, with an approving glance, again pursue his momentarily interrupted task. This trained coolness of men accustomed to meet the dangers of the deep, but whose very feelings were subdued and regulated by the stern discipline of their profession, reassured her; and when she saw the captain of the yacht carelessly lounging over the quarter-rail, chatting with his first lieutenant, and her uncle lying at his length on one of the luxurious couches calmly reading a book, all her fears vanished, and she watched the descent of the sun, which resembled a vast round shield of dead gold, into the sea, with a pleasure unalloyed by apprehension. Slowly and majestically it descended till half its orb was beneath the sea, which now no longer reflected fire, but grew black as ink up to its blood-red face. All at once it appeared as if dark lines had been drawn across its disk, as though traced by a pencil.

"Look!" she involuntarily exclaimed, pointing towards it; "see those lines on the sun."

The earl threw aside his book and sprang to his feet, so sudden and energetic was her exclamation. The captain and his officer both started, and also looked in the direction indicated by her finger.

"What?" cried the former, after looking an instant, "lines on the sun? *Ropes*, lady! By the rood, 'tis a ship!" he exclaimed.

The upper portion of the luminary was yet above the horizon, and the practised eye of the seaman detected in the delicate tracery, that had struck and pleased the eye of Grace, the outlines of a distant vessel lying under bare poles. He looked a little longer, and distinctly saw her hull rise on the swell in bold, black relief against the sun.

"My glass!" he hastily demanded.

It was placed in his hand by an under officer, when, directing it towards the object, he looked steadily for an instant, and then, turning to his noble passenger, gave him the spyglass, saying,

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"Tis a pirate, my lord! Doubtless the same I have been advised to look out for, as having been seen in these seas."

"What cause have you to suspect it?" asked the earl, surveying the stranger through the telescope.

"His wish to avoid observation; his lowering his sails; his peculiar rig three straight sticks for masts and the knowledge that they swarm in these waters," was the confident reply.

"They have disappeared!" exclaimed Grace, as the upper rim of the sun sunk beneath the watery waste, leaving all the sky cold and cheerless.

"He is still there, maiden," said the captain, "but has no longer a bright background to show his spars on. If he is trying to hide from us, he has made no calculation for the sun, and has been raw enough to run directly in its wake; but doubtless he dropped sail just where he was the instant he discovered us."

"From fear, captain?"

"No, my lord," was the reply, in a voice lowered so as not to reach the ears of Grace. "These fellows are night-birds. His object is to hide himself till dark, and then no doubt taking us for a merchant coaster pop down upon us, under cover of the darkness, when he is least expected. But we have him our own way now, thanks to the kindly sun and our fair young lady here."

"Can you cope with him, should he come down upon you under cover of the night?" asked the nobleman.

"I shall not run from him, my lord. I have eight bulldogs here that can growl and bite as well as e'er a mastiff in his majesty's service: and from the size of his sticks, and his light rig, he carries not so many. But, more or less, he lies to windward of us, and so has the advantage; and, if he can outsail us with a flowing sheet, will, if such be his pleasure, be down upon us ere the middle watch is called. Besides, there is a cap full of wind gathering in that quarter, which will help him along if his humour takes him this way."

"Is there a probability that we shall be pursued, Kenard?" asked the nobleman, with seriousness, glancing anxiously towards Grace, who was watching, with a childish pleasure, the black waves as they leaped up to the stern, broke in glaring white heads, and fell in crystal showers back into the sea again.

"There is, my lord," was the quiet answer.

"It is my desire, then, that you use your best efforts to escape."

"My lord!" exclaimed the hardy seaman, in a tone of disappointment, yet emphasizing the words as if he had not heard aright.

"Exert all your skill and seamanship to avoid a meeting with this bucanier, if such he be," repeated the earl, who perfectly comprehended him. "Those who are unfitted to encounter danger should not be thoughtlessly exposed to it," he added, looking towards his niece. "There is one here, whom you see, that cannot profit by your success, yet will suffer everything by your defeat. Were I alone, my brave captain, I would give you the weight of my blade in this matter. As it is, we must fly."

"We will but let him come within reach of my barkers, my lord, and wake him up with a couple of broadsides, and be off again before he knows what has hurt him."

"I must be obeyed, Kenard," said the earl, decidedly, turning away and joining his niece.

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"That Dick Kenard should ever run away from a bucanier," said the seaman, grumblingly, to himself, as he took up his trumpet to give orders, "and without showing him his teeth, is a disgrace both to himself and his majesty's navy. Bluff King Billy himself, were he on board, would be the first to stand by me for a hard brush. This comes of leaving my snug little clipper, the Roebuck, and taking command of this gingerbread yacht, fit only for boarding-school girls to sail about in on a parklake. Howel," he said, to his lieutenant, in no very good-humoured tones, "have all sail made on this penny whistle; stretch out every rag she's got; make every thread tell. Set stun'sails both sides alow and aloft. See to it!"

For a few moments the yacht was a scene of apparent confusion, but really of the most perfect order. Commands were given and repeated, and instantly obeyed. Additional sails rose on either side of those before standing, as if by magic. Men moved quickly in all directions, yet each obedient to his own officer, and each engaged in obeying a particular order, as if but one had been given, and he the only one to execute it. The masts were soon white with broad fields of canvass, stretching far out on either side of the vessel; and the increased ripple around the bow, and the gurgle heard about the rudder, indicated that she felt the new impulse, and was moving with increased velocity.

The captain, who had, in the mean while, walked the deck with a moody pace, looked up as the bustle made in increasing sail ceased.

"She is under all she will bear, sir!" said the lieutenant, approaching him.

"What way has she?"

"Five knots."

"'Tis her canvass presses her along then," said the captain, looking aloft with a gratified eye, "for there is scarce wind to float a feather."

"She moves wing and wing, like a duck," said the officer, in reply; "for I've sailed in her many a cruise before you took command of her, sir, and know what she'll do; but, with the wind a point or two forward the beam, a spar would work better and gain more headway than she will."

"Pray Heaven the wind soon chop round ahead, then," said the captain, with energy; "I would not lose the chance of a brush with this three-masted rigger for a post-captaincy. Keep good lookout astern, and watch everything like a change in the wind: report if you see anything moving between the sea and sky," he added, going to the companion-way.

"And what if I can change the wind for you by bringing her to, a few points, by degrees," archly suggested the lieutenant, in a low voice, as he was about to descend into the cabin.

"'Tis a temptation, i'faith, Howel," he said, laughingly; "but wouldst have me keep a false log? No, no. Not Dick Kenard, for a score of pirates."

The captain disappeared as he spoke, and the lieutenant, with his speaking-trumpet beneath his arm, and his right hand thrust into the breast of his jacket, mechanically paced the deck fore and aft the starboard guns in the waste, leaving the whole of the quarter-deck to the earl and his niece.

Twilight was stealing over the sea, and the headland of Cape Clear looked, through the hazy distance, like a cloud resting on the water. With her head reclining on her uncle's shoulder, Grace watched in silence the stars, as one by one they came out of their blue homes and took their places in the sky; and her fancy amused itself, as she saw them light up one after another, with the idea that the invisible angels, which are said to keep watch over the

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earth, were hanging out lamps to give light to it in the absence of the sun. The musical murmur of the parted water, as it rippled past the vessel's sides; the occasional dash of a wave against the stern; the gentle, rocking motion of the yacht, as it coursed along, threw over her spirit a pensive sadness. Twilight is sacred to thought! Its dreamy influence begets reflection. There is something in its deep silence that elevates and spiritualizes. To religion and its mysteries, the mind then insensibly turns, and always for its good. If men think at all, they will think at this magic hour. If they are religious ever, they will be devotionally so then. There is no man, however humble or however lost, who does not at times feel its sanctifying influence. It is the sabbath of the day, and its time to the thoughts of the heart of man is a holy time.

The mind of Grace experienced the sacred influences of the hour. For a while she gave herself up to her thoughts, that would take to themselves wings and fly whither they would. At length night came on in all her starry glory, and the meditations of the maiden grew less ideal; and returning from contemplating, as young and ardent minds delight to do, creation and its wonders, religion and its mysteries, the wearied wing of her imagination rested among those whom she had left at Castle Cor. She thought of Kate and of Lester grieved at their quarrel, and sympathized with her unhappy cousin. She then thought of Mark; of his intrepidity on the cliff; of his pride, and of his low station. She caught herself wishing, she could hardly tell why or wherefore, that he had been noble; and began devising some way of drawing him from his degrading occupation of a fisherman, and elevating him to a worthier station when all at once she remembered, what she had forgotten, that this was in part accomplished that he was on board the same vessel with herself! She started at the recollection, and looked around confused. But the darkness concealed her changing colour from her uncle, who nevertheless spoke, as she so suddenly lifted her head from his shoulder.

"What, dreaming, my Gracy? It is growing late, and time for you to retire. We will take some refreshment below, and then I will resign you to your maid for this little head should have a softer pillow than an old uncle's arm."

As the earl spoke, he took the hand of his niece, and descended with her to the cabin, where, after partaking of their evening meal, they parted, one to go to the deck and join the captain, the other to retire to the state cabin. This was furnished with costly hangings, couches of down, gilded sofas, thick carpets, tables inlaid with pearl, a toilet stand and laver of ebony and marble, and pier glasses extending from the ceiling to the floor; while nothing that could contribute to the comfort or administer to the luxury of the occupant was wanting.

When the earl returned to the deck it was nearly ten o'clock, and the moon was high in the east. He wrapped himself in his cloak, and walked for an hour thoughtfully, occasionally casting his eyes to windward, or stopping to examine the compass. The captain, in the mean while, leaned over the quarter, fixing his eyes steadily towards the direction from which his vessel had come; at one moment putting his night-glass to his eye; at another giving an order to the lieutenant of the watch, and now and then addressing a brief sentence of caution or reprimand to the helmsman.

Seven bells had struck, and it was near midnight, when, after taking a long and scrutinizing survey of the horizon, he crossed the deck towards the earl, and said, with impatient disappointment,

"We are safe enough, my lord. There will be no one to trouble us to-night."

"I am glad it is so, Kenard. You may have been mistaken in his character."

"No. But he probably has discovered what we are, and has thought better of it. Ha! did not the main-topgallant-sail flap then?" he asked, looking aloft.

"The wind is lulling, I believe," said the earl.

"It is, by Heaven!" exclaimed the seaman. "What headway do we make? Heave the log."

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"She logs full four, but makes not above three and a half knots way," repeated the officer of the deck.

"We have a strong current setting to the south and east in our favour by the dip of this ripple, which will make it four again. Ten minutes ago we were running eight! There is a chance of exchanging compliments with our neighbour, my lord; yet I have done my best to keep out of his way."

"But, if we have no wind, he must be in the same situation."

"He will have it first, and bring it along with him. There was a wind—bag hanging over the sun that will soon be piping a merry note. There flaps the fore—topsail against the mast! The wind is leaving us. She does not now move two knots through the water," he added, glancing over the side. "We shall have it dead calm in ten minutes. Take in the lower stunsails, Howel, and stand by to hand all the light canvass! we shall have it soon! Preparation is half the victory, my lord," he added, turning to the earl with a formal bow.

"What mean these preparations?" inquired the earl; "for I profess to be better landsman than seaman."

"And it requires no unskilled hand to sail the ship of state, my lord, of which, I hear, you are an able officer," said the captain, in a complimentary manner. "This southwest wind, which has held us so fair, is dying away to make room for a tight blow here away from the northwest, which I have been watching suspiciously. There heaves a cloud now towards the zenith; you can scarcely discern its outline for the haze, my lord; but you will find no stars in that direction, and the horizon looks thick and black."

"The wind has quite gone," said the earl, raising his palm to catch the air.

"It is now time to make ready to welcome its successor. Turn up all hands, Howel. Take in every stitch of light sail!"

In a few moments the yacht was stripped to her two topsails, spanker, and jib.

"Put a single reef in the topsails, Mr. Howel," ordered the captain, as he saw that the dark cloud rose rapidly in the northwest.

"It is done, sir!" reported the officer, a few moments afterward.

"Very well! Secure the guns with single lashings only, and have the decks clear for action!" was the next order.

"Action, captain?" exclaimed the earl, who had witnessed these preparations with interest.

"It is best to be prepared, if that dark cloud rolling towards us should chance to conceal a foe in its bosom. A dark cloud, as well as a dark eye, sometimes hides dangers, my lord."

"You may be doing right, Kenard, but Heaven defend us from other dangers than the elements threaten us with."

These several orders were executed; and the yacht lay rocking, with scarcely any progressive motion, on the sluggish surges, which all at once began to heave and swell, as if lifted by some vast and mysterious power beneath. She was nearly divested of her canvass, yet still beautiful in her nakedness, showing to advantage the graceful symmetry of her tapering spars, and the exquisite shape and proportions of her hull. Like a bird seated on the water, she yielded to every undulation of the heaving billows with a grace that seemed the instinct of life.

The stillness that now reigned was profound and awful.

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"List, my lord," said the captain, after the lapse of a few moments, during which all eyes were turned to watch the storm—cloud walking the skies in its power, and flinging its broad shadow on the sea.

The earl bent his ear more acutely, and heard a deep moaning sound, like winds bowling in caverns under—sea. Gradually it grew louder, and at the same time the dark cloud cast itself across the skies towards the zenith, its edges streaming in advance, like hair blown out by the wind. In a few seconds the moon was darkened, the stars became suddenly extinguished, and an impenetrable gloom fell like a pall over the deep. Not a breath yet moved the air. But deeper and more awful grew the moan of the storm as it swept down the sea. Louder and louder it came, and now was distinctly heard the roar of agitated waves, tossed by the shrieking winds; and between the sky and sea, which seemed to meet within reach of the hand, glared a line of white foam, seeming, to their imaginations, the glittering and gnashing teeth of the mad tempest. The earl hid his head within his cloak, and uttered a prayer for the safety of the souls on board; the captain stood upon a gun, with his eyes upon the coming storm, professionally cool and collected.

"Two steady men go to the aid of the helmsman," he said, in a calm, low voice. "She will bear nothing, Howel; we must make an Eolian harp of her. So! stand by the topsail halyards."

"All ready, sir," replied the lieutenant, in the same subdued tone.

"Let go all!"

The topsails came down by the run, and in a moment's time were furled by the active seamen.

"Let go the jib and spanker," he now shouted, in an energetic tone.

"All gone, sir!"

The yacht was now under bare poles, and left to the mercy of the hurricane. The roar of the coming tempest was now deafening, and the vessel began to pitch wildly, yet there was no sensible agitation of the air.

"Every man throw himself on his face to the deck!" cried the captain, suddenly, in a loud tone. "My lord, you will be safer below. Our decks will be swept clean as your hand."

"I will remain, Kenard."

"And I will remain with you, uncle," said Grace, suddenly appearing before them like a spirit, in her snowy night—robe, which seemed like a garment of pale light in the surrounding blackness and gloom; "I will share the danger by your side," she added, with decision.

There was no time to refuse her entreaty or conduct her to the cabin the tempest burst upon them, as if a cloud, swelling with wind and rain, had broken over the vessel. Instantly all who were on their feet were prostrated. Howling and shrieking through the rigging, accompanied by a crashing and splintering that appalled every soul on board with the present sense of danger, it swept over them with terrific fury. Borne down by its weight, the vessel careened till she lay almost on her beam's end, while the mad surges leaped over her bulwarks and deluged the nearly perpendicular decks. The darkness became illumined by a wild, strange light from the foaming sea, and every object was distinctly seen by its supernatural glare. The captain got upon his feet, and, climbing to windward, lashed himself to the main rigging, and gave such orders as the crisis demanded. But his voice could not be heard, and his presence and example were alike useless at a moment like this. The vessel was driving in the van of the tempest with inconceivable velocity. The waves seemed to lift her hull, and hurl her onward like a feather. The brave seaman beheld many of his crew swept off, and saw them, without the power to help them, struggling amid the boiling sea; but their shrieks were lost in the louder shrieks of the wind, and the flying vessel

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soon left them far astern. Others were lashing themselves to the rigging; others clinging to the guns; and all were exerting themselves to preserve their lives. Casting his eyes aloft, he saw, with a pang of grief, that his maintopgallant-mast was gone, and that his fore-top-mast was wounded and tottering fearfully at every pitch of the vessel. The first fury of the tempest was spent, and there being a momentary lull, it occurred to him that it might yet be saved.

"Ho, there, forward!" he shouted.

His words seemed to have an electrical effect upon the crew, as if the sound of a cheerful human voice, in that fearful moment, inspired them with hope. Half the danger was lessened to their minds, and twenty voices replied,

"Ay, ay."

At the instant, there came a second blast of the tempest, and a huge sea breaking over the vessel, swept the captain into the waste, and bore three more of the men into the sea, who the next moment were lost in the darkness astern. The first glance of the captain, on recovering his feet and sustaining himself by clasping round a gun, was to the fore-topmast.

"She yet stands it!" he exclaimed, "but another such a blast will pitch it end foremost through our decks. Ho, my lads, which of you will take a couple of fathoms from the topgallant-halyards and go aloft and fish that stick?"

Many an eye was turned upward, but not a foot moved.

"A light lad will do it best. The spar must be saved where it is; for, if it falls inboard, 'twill make a hole through our decks big enough to let the ocean in. Be quick, lads!"

"I will do it, sir," said a young sailor, springing into the weather rigging, with a coil of rigging on his arm.

"That's my lad. You shall wear an epaulet for this."

With the eyes of the whole crew upon him, the intrepid young seaman ascended the rigging, though with much difficulty, as the wind pressed him so closely against the stays that he could scarcely climb from one rattling to another. After great peril he gained the top. Here, breaking from its latticed guard a couple of oaken slats, he swung himself into the topmast rigging, and, ascending to where the stick was splintered, commenced with great coolness, while the storm howled terrifically about him, to wind the rope about both it and the pieces of wood he had torn from the top. At every pitch of the vessel the wounded spar would gape wide, and threaten to carry him with it into the sea. But to the eyes of those below, who could plainly see him by the white light shed from the phosphorescent waves, he appeared to be as cool as if engaged in an ordinary duty on an ordinary occasion. After taking numerous turns about the mast till his rope was exhausted, he skilfully fastened the ends, and then, by a stay, descended like an arrow to the deck.

"What lad is that?" asked the captain, who had silently watched his labour.

"The fisher's lad," replied one.

"Gallantly done, my lad," said the captain. "This night has made thy fortune for thee, young man."

"I believe there is a vessel in sight, sir."

"What is that you say? Come aft, for this wind will let nobody hear anything but its own howl."

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"I discovered aloft what appeared to be a vessel to windward, scudding under bare poles," repeated Mark.

"Ha, say you? Then we are like to have company in the gale."

As he attempted to ascend to the weatherside to look for the stranger, a fresh gust of the tornado burst upon the vessel and threw her upon her beam's end, the sea breaking over her bulwarks from stem to stern with the force and volume of a cataract.

"My niece, my niece!" cried the Earl of Bellamont, suddenly; "save her oh, God! she is lost!"

The first shock of the tempest had thrown the nobleman and Grace to the deck; but he had contrived to shelter her in his cloak, under the lee of the companion-way, during its continuance, and, save the apprehension attendant on the danger she was in, she had suffered comparatively little. Her attention had been drawn, in the mean while, to the bold enterprise of the young sailor. She would have shrieked as he volunteered, but her voice failed her. She had watched his ascent and the progress of his perilous duty with trembling and with prayer; and, when he descended to the deck, she released her hold upon her uncle, and clasped her hands together in gratitude for his preservation. It was at this moment the vessel was thrown upon her beam's end, when, caught up by a wave, she was borne far from the reach of the earl, whose cries now drew all eyes towards him.

"My niece! Grace! Where is she?" he cried, in tones of despair.

"Here, uncle!" she faintly answered from the sea.

Guided by her voice, they discerned her at some distance from the vessel, her body immersed in the water, clinging by one hand to a stay which lay level with it. Every heave of the sea lifted her nearly out of the water to let her descend again far beneath its surface. Yet she held firmly to the stay with that tenacity which is taught by the love of life.

The earl no sooner beheld her than he was about to jump overboard to her rescue, when Mark, with a rope fastened around his waist, run along the level bulwarks and arrested him before he could take the leap.

"Stay, my lord! Hold firmly by the end of this rope, and I will save her or perish in the attempt."

As he spoke he cast himself into the sea; and partly by swimming and partly by the aid of the stay, he had nearly reached her, when a wave lifted her high on its crest, and forced her to release her grasp.

"Save me, Mark!" she cried, and sunk in the hollow it left, and almost within reach of his arm.

He dove, and brought her to the surface scarce ere she had gone beneath it. She instantly clasped her arms firmly around him with the instinct of self-preservation; her cheek lying against his, and her rich tresses blinding him.

"She is safe; draw us inboard," he shouted, buffeting the waves with one arm, the other encircling her with a firm grasp.

The earl, assisted by the captain and sailors, the next moment drew his half-drowned niece from the sea, dripping like a naiad, while the captain did the same office for the brave youth.

"Two epaulets, by the rood!" he exclaimed. "'Twas a lucky day Dick Kenard shipped a lad of your mettle. Ho, there, men! We must now look to the craft. Save the ship first, and think of ourselves afterward, is my maxim, my lord. Bear a hand with an axe! Cut away the masts!"

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"Cast the lee guns overboard, and she may right, captain," said Mark, shaking the salt spray from his locks.

"We can but try it, my boy. Overboard with the barkers!"

Forthwith the men set to work and pitched the starboard guns into the sea, and, after cutting loose the fore and main yards, and giving every man's weight to the weather side, the yacht righted with a tremendous roll to windward and a lurch that threw every man flat upon the deck.

"There she is on her legs again," cried the captain, exultingly. "The storm seems to have shown its roughest paw, and we'll ride it out yet. We are less a topgallant-sail and a brace of yards, my lord; but an hour's calm will make all shipshape again. But the poor fellows that are washed over-board! there's no getting them back. They are gone to their last muster," he added, with manly sympathy.

The fury of the tempest had been spent on the yacht; and though it now blew a stiff gale, it was no longer attended with any of those tremendous gusts which had characterized it at the first. The sea no longer boiled and tossed confusedly, but on every side rolled its waves in one direction to leeward; and though they broke in snowy heads, and lifted themselves in mountainous billows, the regularity of their motion indicated that the tornado had settled into a steady though violent hurricane. The clouds, although still dark and laden with wind, flew higher above the sea than before, and in the east they broke into masses, showing between white places in the sky.

"She will bear her spanker close reefed, and a hand's breadth of the jib, Mr. Howel. Pass the word forward to set the jib, sir!"

There was no reply.

"Where is Mr. Howel?" he demanded, with a foreboding of the fatal result.

"He was washed overboard by the last sea we shipped," replied one of the men.

"A noble seaman gone! a lovely woman widowed! It has been a fatal night! Marston, ho! Where is my second lieutenant?"

"Mr. Marston was struck by a spar, and knocked into the water as we went over on our beam," answered another.

"This has been a dear night indeed, my lord," said the captain, addressing Lord Bellamont, who was supporting Grace in his arms by the companion-way; "I have lost my two oldest officers, and how many of my best men I know not. Edwards! Thank God, I have one lieutenant left. You must be my second now, and act as my first! Muster all hands aft. Let us see who are missing, and then let us set to work and put the crippled craft under an inch or two of canvass, if only to ease the foretopmast, which, with this pitching, in spite of its support, will soon take leave of the ship."

The men were mustered aft, and thirteen less than the yacht's complement answered to their names.

"Ah, poor fellows!" sighed the captain, "they have got a seaman's end! but they would have had the same fifty years hence; or else have been thrown into a hole on shore, which is worse than they now have got. A short life and a gallant one, is my maxim, my lord," he said, turning round and speaking to the earl. "Poor brave boys, Heaven give them a snug berth aloft! Well, lads, let us get a bit of sail on the craft, and cry afterward. My lad," he continued, addressing Meredith, "I see you are a sailor! You must take poor Marston's place, and wait till you get on shore for your commission. Go forward and set the jib at once. Here! a dozen of you close reef this spanker, and let us see how long it will take for the wind to cut it up into ribands. Lively, men, lively! Stand by there, at the helm, to bring her smartly up to the wind as soon as she begins to feel her canvass. Hoist away briskly!"

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In a few minutes the yacht was lying to under a reefed jib and close-reefed spanker, with her helm lashed to the starboard bulwarks; the steersman, with the two men who had been detailed to assist him at the beginning of the storm, having been carried forward into the waste on the first billow that broke over the stern.

The force of the wind gradually lessened, and, in half an hour after the jib was set, an order was given to set the foresail, and shake the reefs out of the spanker.

"Put her away a point or two, and give her headway," said the captain to the lieutenant, as the above orders were executed. "So, steady! there she walks bravely! See, my lord, how like a duck she rides on the top of the waves. She's a tight boat for so gayly painted a craft, or we should, ere this, have been helping the mermaids string coral in their sea-caves below. Never judge a ship by the colour of her bends, is my maxim, my lord."

The yacht was now under steerage way, and rose regularly on the billows, which before had broken against her sides flinging the spray in showers upon her decks. The wind blew steadily, but no longer with violence; the storm-cloud, broken into a myriad of fragments, was scudding across the heavens towards the southeast; the waves momentarily diminished in size; and at intervals the moon shone down through an opening upon the sea, like the smile of hope beaming on the tempest tossed mariners: all things indicated the termination of the hurricane, to the fury of which they had so nearly been sacrificed. The pumps were now tried, and it was ascertained that less than three inches of water had been made.

"A capital craft, my lord. The Roebuck would scarcely have ridden out a tornado like this, especially after having been laid on her ribs. I congratulate both your lordship and your niece on your escape from a grave in the sea, for which landsmen, I am told, have a strange antipathy. But bury me, my lord, in the deep sea; let the green waves, which have borne me living, wrap about me dead. Let me lie where the ripple of driving keels and the song of the sailor shall be my requiem."

"You are eloquent, Kenard; and perhaps you are right."

"It matters little where a man's bones are laid, my lord; and the sea is as safe a repository, and will yield them up as readily at the judgment day as the earth. Ay, more readily, it may be," said the captain.

"It may be so," replied the nobleman, smiling at the literal way in which the seaman viewed the subject. "If it is now safe to unclothe the companion-way, I will convey my niece to the cabin for a change of wardrobe."

"We shall have no more washing decks to-night," replied the captain, giving the necessary orders to remove the companion-way and hatches, which had been firmly closed as the storm came on.

They were now opened, and the earl awoke Grace, who, after her submersion, had dropped into a gentle sleep in his arms, and assisted her to her stateroom, where, arousing her terrified and almost insensible maid from the floor, he left her with a kiss of paternal affection, mingled with gratitude for her preservation.

"Shall I come to the deck again after I have changed my dripping dress?" she asked, with playful entreaty, as he was leaving her.

"No, my child, you need rest after your bath. Your cheek is pale as marble," he replied, tapping upon it.

"I shall be sick here; I miss the pure air; there is a suffocating sensation of closeness; and I think I feel the motion of the vessel more below. I must go on deck again, uncle," she said, earnestly. "Besides, the moon is coming out, and it will be pleasant to watch the caps of the waves sparkling in her light."

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"There is no resisting you, Grace; I will come down for you when you are ready. Let us be thankful, my child, for our preservation," he added, devoutly.

"I am, uncle, indeed," she said, with touching sincerity.

And, as the earl closed the door of her stateroom, she kneeled by her couch in her wet garments, and offered up a short, heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude for her safety; nor in it did she forget the youth who had been the instrument of it. How much nearer did the gallant service he had performed for her bring the handsome but humble young sailor to her heart! How much closer did the union of his name with her own in prayer bind him to her young and warm affections! And when she rose from her knees, her thoughts, it is to be feared, ran much more upon the instrument of her preservation than upon the Being who directed it.

When the earl returned to the deck, the moon was riding in a broad field of blue, unobscured by a single cloud, and on all sides the waves leaped towards it to fall back into the shining sea in showers of silver. The clouds were drifting far to leeward, and the darkness and terror that had hitherto reigned had given place to brightness and serenity. The yacht was gallantly riding over the crested waves, parting them with her prow and dashing to either side their glittering drops in snowy jets of spray. The fore-topgallant-sail was set, and drawing freely; and, notwithstanding the loss of her topsails and main-topgallant-mast with its yard, she held her course and was making good headway through the water. Two of her larboard guns had been shifted to the starboard, and other means had been taken to put her in suitable sailing trim. The men were engaged in clearing the decks; serving the rigging where it had been chafed; fishing the foremast, which Mark had before temporarily secured and thereby saved; and otherwise repairing the disasters of the storm. Some of them, the earl observed, were filling the beds around the guns with shot, disposing cutlasses and muskets in stands and becketts about the masts, and making altogether very plain preparations for fight.

"You see, my lord, we are hard at work," said the captain, approaching the earl as he saw him come to the deck. "In half an hour, save bending a new set of topsails, we shall be as sound as we were before this squall. See that those guns are as dry as a boatswain's whistle," he shouted to the men.

"What is the meaning of these hostile preparations, Kenard?"

"I have reason to believe the pirate is lurking in this quarter. He was seen from aloft during the blackest of the storm, scudding through it, like the flying Dutchman, under bare poles. If he should discover us as we are, we should have a hard matter to escape him."

"He is likely to be as crippled as ourselves."

"Not he, my lord; the masts of these craft are stout single sticks, and their sails are fashioned so as to come down by the run at an instant's warning. There is no way of sinking one of those fellows without knocking his bottom out. Lively, men, lively. Ha! that's my lad! make them fly!"

It was Meredith he addressed. In the absence of the usual number of superior officers, prompted by an active spirit and the impulsiveness of his nature, and inspirited by the scenes in which he was placed and to which he readily adapted himself, he had involuntarily echoed the encouraging cry of the commander. The seamen, with that instinct which teaches men the presence of a master spirit, without questioning his authority, moved with more alacrity, and obeyed his orders without hesitation. They had borne witness to his courage and fearlessness, his contempt of death and promptness of action in danger: these were virtues which, in their eyes, were above all others, and in his case they atoned for want of years, experience, and seamanship. The charm by which he governed them, as if by common consent, was simply the exercise of the same mysterious power which, since the world was made, has governed the mass of mankind. Decision, bravery, and high moral energy of character! in one word, *courage*; the attribute through which one man leads a nation speaks, and it is so! the dragon of human

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adoration! an attribute pre-eminently possessed also by spirits as well as men, and through the influence of which Lucifer was enabled to lead whole armies out of Heaven into hell!

"Is not that the bold youth who saved my niece?" asked the earl. "I think I should know the voice."

"The same, my lord; and, saving your lordship's presence, he is worthy the hand of any niece, humble or high, whom he so promptly perilled his life to save; for none but a brave man and a gentleman at heart would do so noble an act; that's my maxim, my lord."

"Doubtless a true one, Kenard. I shall bear this youth in mind."

"Do so, my lord; and I will, with your leave, set you the example. Though I am glad of the opportunity, I regret the necessity. My lad!"

"Sir," said the youth, coming forward with his cap in his hand.

"As I am without a third lieutenant, I have promoted you to this rank, and his lordship will see that your appointment is confirmed in the right quarter. You were bred upon the sea, and though, perhaps, have never sailed in a ship, are, I perceive a natural sailor. Now you may go to your duty, sir."

"Thank you, sir!" said Mark, with manly emotion. He could say no more, but turned away to hide his tearful gratitude.

"Hear there, forward. Obey this youth, who fills the place of poor Marston."

"Ay, ay, sir," cried the men, simultaneously; and, as their new officer walked forward, many a cap was respectfully touched to him, and many a gray head uncovered before the stripling such is the tribute true bravery everywhere receives! so universal is the homage it irresistibly challenges!

"Do you see, my lord! That lad will make his way, mark me. Observe how readily he assumes the duties of his station. He is already in the rigging! going aloft to see that the men are properly fishing the fore-topmast."

"Your protege shall not want advancement through my forgetfulness, be assured, Kenard. But why are you so anxiously looking through your glass to the windward?"

"For the three-masted frigatoon."

"You are doubtless mistaken in her character!"

"I cannot be, my lord. No honest trader in these waters ever had such a rig. She is a pirate, and, if she is anywhere near us, will be sure to give us a taste of her quality ere long."

"And we are far less prepared to meet him than before."

"Four guns, and a dozen men and two good officers less, my lord; nevertheless, we must do what we can to fight him off. That he is in our neighbourhood somewhere, I am confident. These gentry are like sleuth hounds; once on your track, double and turn as you will, they never lose it till they run you down. I believe I see an object in the wake of the moon, under that cloud to the windward," he suddenly added, looking steadily through his spyglass. "It is gone. It may have been the cap of a wave! There, I think I see it again. By "

"Sail, ho!" shouted Mark, from the fore rigging.

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"Where away?" demanded the captain, without removing the glass from his eye.

"Just in the moon's wake, three points off the weather quarter."

"I see it. 'Tis the same, my lord. I was sure he would not take his eye off of us. Edwards, see all clear for action. Station all the men you can spare from working ship at the guns, and select twenty of the best for boarders. Be prompt. Keep away a point, helmsman. Aloft there! Get through with your duty and come down. I give you command of the lee battery, sir," he said to Mark. "Cheerily, men, all! Prepare for battle with merry hearts, that's my maxim, my lord," he added, turning round to the nobleman.

"How do you make her out now, Kenard?" asked the earl, who had heard the announcement of the stranger's vicinage with a pang of anxious solicitude for the safety of Grace; "I am unable to hold my glass steadily with this pitching of the ship."

"She is walking this way with a nimble foot," replied the captain, who, after giving his brief and rapid orders, once more turned to observe the motions of the strange sail. "She is a three-masted lugger with her three huge topsails spread without a reef, ploughing her way towards us, and sending a cloud of spray to her masthead."

"Is she heavily armed?"

"I cannot see; but above her bulwarks is something like a mass of human heads."

"How far off is she?"

"Not more than two miles."

"In what time will she overtake us?"

"She must be going seven or eight knots; we do not make more than five," he said, glancing over the side. "Probably in two hours' time."

"In two hours! We can increase our sail; you have studding-sails, captain?"

"But not a stun'sail boom every deck-spar is washed overboard. Crippled as I am, I cannot carry one stitch more sail, my lord. We must let him come as he will, and trust the issue to Providence. That's my maxim, my lord."

"Providence give us the victory!" said the earl, devoutly.

"Amen!" responded the captain, taking the glass from his eye, and reverently touching his cap.

The earl immediately went below, and met Grace coming from her stateroom wrapped in comfortable garments, and enveloped in a hood and cloak.

"My dear niece," he said, taking her hand and leading her to a sofa, "I have come to prepare you for a scene of trial and danger infinitely greater than that we have just passed through. Hitherto we have had to contend with the terrible display of the power of the Almighty, when he moves upon the deep in his anger but it was tempered with mercy. We have now to meet the fiercer passions of men, to whom the word mercy is unknown."

"Speak, dear uncle!" she said, with a calmness that surprised him. "I fear not for myself I have a trust, thanks to my sainted mother, that places me above all fear of death."

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This was spoken with that serene confidence which innocence and purity alone can wear.

The earl pressed her hand in silence, touched by the sweet simplicity of her manner, and admiring the sublime hope which elevated her above the fear that gives bitterness to the cup of life.

"There is a strange vessel bearing down upon us, which the captain has reason to think is a pirate," he said, with more composure.

Grace turned pale, but betrayed no emotion beyond an upward glance of her eyes and a movement of her lips, as if in silent prayer.

"It is our intention to fight him, and only surrender with our lives. In case we should be overcome, and the pirates board us and I should not survive to protect you any longer " Here the earl stopped from emotion, pressed his niece to his heart, and then hastily added, "you are my brother's daughter! you have his spirit and decision! I will trust to you."

"Uncle, speak! explain, my lord!" gasped the young creature, terrified at his manner rather than his words, which her innocence could not comprehend.

He drew from his breast a dagger, and silently placed it in her hands.

"For what is this, my lord?" she gasped, half guessing its fearful meaning.

"You must sacrifice yourself before you suffer these ruffians to lay hands upon you," he said, with emotion that nearly rendered his words inaudible.

She clasped her hands over her forehead and stared in his face with a wild glare her colourless lips parted with horror and her whole frame shivering. Like a thunderbolt, the horrible reality of her situation had flashed upon her.

"Ha! what? ha! what? ha wh " and with a piercing and most heart-rending shriek she fell upon the cabin floor. He raised her, and spoke to her in tender accents of sympathy.

"Enough," she gasped "enough, uncle say no more."

"Dear niece, be calm!"

"Nay do not think Grace Fitzgerald is not herself," she said, with forced calmness. "Uncle!"

"My dear child!" he answered, folding her to his heart.

"Give it me!"

"Oh God!" groaned the earl, overcome with the full realization of the evil that threatened her. "Must it be, my child?"

"It must. Give me the dagger," she added, with energy. "I will not now shrink from it it may yet be, next to Heaven, my best friend."

"Take it, heroic girl but our danger may not be so great we may yet conquer! I feel, when I look on you, and reflect on your helpless state, the might of a host in my single arm. Ha! there is a gun. I must leave you for a

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while. Remain in your stateroom, and both you and your maid be careful to lie on the floor below the line of shot. God bless you, my child! Your presence alone should ensure the salvation of the ship."

He embraced her with almost parental affection, tenderly forced her to enter her stateroom, and closed the door. Then arming himself from his luggage with a brace of pistols, and buckling on his sword, he hurried to the deck as the report of a second gun came booming over the sea.

"She has fired, captain?" he said, as he joined the commander on the quarter-deck, who was looking to windward with his glass.

"A long shot to bring us to. It is plain he takes us for an unarmed vessel."

"This gives us an advantage, then," said the earl, turning his telescope in the direction of the stranger, who was plainly visible less than a mile distant, white with canvass, and fast gaining on the yacht, as she laboured slowly along under her diminished sail.

"A great one, if we can keep him in ignorance till he is close aboard," replied the captain. "By the rood! he comes down bravely. This it is, your lordship, to have sound spars, and plenty of canvass to hang on them," he added, looking moodily up, and surveying the bare poles of his own ship. "You are armed, I see, my lord. It is time I should be. Will your lordship be so good as to watch his motions. I will be on deck again in a moment."

He descended to his cabin as he spoke, and soon afterward returned armed with a cutlass, his head covered with a steel boarding cap, and with a couple of braces of pistols stuck in a leathern belt buckled round his waist. He caused his lieutenant and Mark to arm themselves in a similar manner. Every seaman, also, had a serviceable blade girded to his side, and one or more pistols in his belt; and harquebusses and cutlasses were placed on the companion and capstan, ready for indiscriminate use. Throughout the vessel, every preparation that the time and circumstances would admit of, or consummate skill on the part of its master could effect, was made; and every man stood at his post, silently and sullenly awaiting the approach of the pirate for such it was now plain to every one was the character of the advancing stranger.

"There is a flash!" said the earl, who was intently watching the bucanier.

"No, it is a battle-lantern passed along the decks. He will not fire again seeing we do not heave to, but run us aboard, and carry us, if he can, cutlass in hand this is the mode of fighting with these devils."

"They must not board us, Kenard!" said the earl, with calm determination in the tone of his voice.

"We will give him a touch of our quality before he comes to close quarters. An introduction before an intimate acquaintance, is my maxim, my lord."

"If you give him a broadside, I would suggest, sir, that the battery I command be added to the guns on the weather side," said Mark, who, while waiting the attack, had been pacing athwart ships near the cabin door, as if the presence of Grace in the cabin had something to do with the choice of his walk.

The captain stared at him a moment; but the respectful tones of the young man's voice, and the deference of his manner, left no room for reproof if he had designed to check the boldness of his new lieutenant.

"Born for a seaman, by the rood!" he exclaimed. "Shift the starboard guns to the weather side, Mr. Edwards. We shall only have a chance of one full broadside, and it is best to let him have all we can give him. If you want to be generous, give all you've got, is my maxim, my lord."

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By the time the change in the battery was effected, the pirate was within three cables' length, or a third of a mile of the yacht, and, by the light of the moon, the decks could be discovered with the naked eye to be full of men, while her dimensions and rig were distinctly visible. She was one of that small class of three-masted luggers called frigatoons, common at the period, with very broad beam and round bows. She came along with the wind on her starboard quarter, noisily ploughing the waves before her with her blunt bows, under three huge lugger sails, covering each mast from deck to truck, a jib, and triangular mizzen sail not unlike a ship's spanker. The moon shone white on all, while its rays were reflected in quick flashes here and there, as if from steel, from amid the dark mass on her decks.

"A fine shot in that dense crowd, Edwards," said the captain. "Give every man a musket after the broadside is discharged, and let him pick a red cap for himself."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the lieutenant, preparing to obey the order.

Silently and steadily, as if no man was in her, the dark hull continued to approach.

"She is full near for a shot, Kenard," said the nobleman; "I can see the very faces of the men."

"A man should know the colour of his enemy's eyes before he fights with him, is my maxim, my lord," he said, coolly levelling his glass. "Let me single out their captain. Ah, there he stands beside the helmsman, a grisly old dog, and the moonlight on his weather-beaten features makes them appear bronzed. There is a youth standing beside him with a glass at his eye, whom he is speaking to. Ha! the old bucanier is giving orders to prepare for boarding, I see, by the wave of his cutlass and the motion of his lips. Now is our time," he added, energetically.

As he spoke he threw down his glass, drew his cutlass, and sprung upon the companion-way.

"Stand by for a broadside," he shouted, in a voice that reached the pirate.

"All ready!" answered the two lieutenants, in the same breath.

"Helm a starboard!"

"Starboard 'tis!"

"Steady now!"

"Steady."

"Let them have it!" he shouted, in a clear voice that rung like a trumpet.

Terrible cries of men taken by surprise, of men wounded and in pain, followed close the deepmouthed roar of the guns: the volumes of smoke, that shot half way towards the pirate, then rolled swiftly back upon the yacht, and were blown to leeward, leaving a full view of the enemy. His foremast was hanging over the side; a glaring gash along the hull showed where a shot had told between wind and water; and a breach in the forward bulwarks, near the catheads, and the groans of the wounded, indicated the passage of a raking shot through the mass on deck; instead, also, of presenting her starboard bow to the range of the broadside as at first, she had yawed wide of her course, and was shivering helplessly in the wind.

"Neatly done! We have thrown them into confusion. If we can only keep her at this distance, we can riddle her like the top of a pepperbox, and have the pleasure afterward of seeing her go down to Davy's locker, bodily, before our faces. See your enemy buried handsomely, after you have done for him, is my maxim, my lord. There

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it comes," he shouted, suddenly. "Fall to the deck, all!"

He had hardly spoken, when, amid a loud yell from the pirates, who had recovered from the surprise of their rough salutation where, apparently, they had calculated on slight resistance, a heavy broadside was discharged: the balls came singing through the air, knocking against the sides of the yacht, and splintering and crashing the upper works, tearing the decks, wounding the spars, and creating terrible ruin and confusion, while shrieks of the wounded rose appalling from every part of the ill-fated vessel. The captain glanced hastily at the poor fellows that lay bleeding on the decks, then looked up anxiously at his masts, and leaned over the bulwarks and run his eye along the side of his vessel to see what injury she had sustained in the hull for, in his eye, the wounds of the ship were of infinitely more importance than the wounds of the men.

"No damage to her timbers; but two poor fellows dead as they ever will be," he said to the earl, who stood beside him. "Five six seven wounded. Handle that man carefully, you lubbers, or you will do his business for him before you can get him to the doctor. See that the wounded are taken at once, and with care, to the cockpit, Mr. Edwards. Lively, there, at the battery; charge to the muzzle! Now watch the weather-roll. Fire!"

Again the sides of the yacht belched forth fire and smoke, shaking the little vessel through every oaken joint.

"Fire away as you load," again shouted the captain. "Let each gun fight for itself. Take sight at his poles, and bring his huge mainsails down without giving him the trouble to let go his halyards. Give your foe a lift when you can, is my maxim, my lord. There, he returns it," he cried, as a flash illuminated the open decks of the pirate. "Down all!"

The hurricane of iron passed high above their heads, cutting the rigging and splintering long, slender pieces from the spars. The smoke from the guns, at the same time, rolled sullenly towards the yacht, hid the pirate from them, and enveloped the brig in an impenetrable cloud of sulphurous smoke.

"Stand by, boarders, to repel boarders!" shouted the captain, in a loud, quick tone. "He will be down upon us in his smoke before we know it. I thought there was more powder than iron in those guns, my lord, and suspected there was an object in it. Boarders, all!"

"Boarders!" answered the lieutenant.

"Keep good look-out through the smoke. There it lifts. By the rood! see, he is close upon us! Put a shot into his fore foot. Lame him, or he'll be thrusting his snub nose between our ribs."

As the captain spoke, Mark sprang towards the after gun, and levelled it against the bows of the pirate, who, having made sail under cover of his smoke towards the yacht, was now within twenty fathoms of her. He applied the flaming linstock and fired the piece. The shot, taking a slightly ascending course, struck beneath the bowsprit, tore it from its bed with its jib, and lodged in the mainmast ten feet from the deck, nearly severing it in two. Deprived of her jib, the lugger broached to, and once more presented her broadside to the yacht.

"Give it to him, my lads, before he brings his guns to bear!" shouted the captain. "Pour in your iron! That's my hearties! You knocked her a foot out of the water that shot, boys! Quit your guns now; there is no time to reload! Take to your cutlasses and pistols. We have the rest of it, lads, at close quarters. We'll show them what it is to board a king's ship. If your muskets are in the way in the fight, throw 'em aside and use your English fists! We'll whip them yet! If we believe we can do a thing, we can do it; that's my maxim, my lord. Your lordship will now have the pleasure of cutting a score or two of these murderer's throats, with the advantage of exercise to the muscles. Pleasure with business is my maxim. Stand ready all! When I give the word, each of you bring down one of those red devils that are crowding about her bows."

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The men replied with loud cheers, and prepared resolutely to receive the attack.

The pirate, after the loss of his jib, being no longer able to hold a direct course, drifted towards the yacht, which, being at leeward and disabled both by the storm and action, was in no situation to choose her own position, and had, therefore, no other alternative than to lie passive as she was, and repel as she best could the expected attack.

The bucanier had now ceased firing, not being able to bring any of his side guns to bear, and converted all his crew into boarders, who crowded about the forepart of the lugger, ready to leap cutlass in hand on the deck of the yacht when they should have drifted near enough. The brig had also ceased her fire, her opponent having skilfully worked out of the range of her guns, by coming down, as well as his crippled condition would let him, upon her quarter.

The deck of the pirate was crowded with men, numbering eighty or ninety, apparently, in all, while the crew of the yacht, exclusive of the wounded, consisted of less than forty-five. But cool courage and confidence in the right, opposed to fierce and sanguinary passions in an evil cause, count to the righteous side in a battle for twice the number of opponents. The earl trembled for the issue. But the brave Kenard, with his knowledge of the spirit of his men, and his confidence in their English courage and in their contempt for pirates, whom he gave them the credit of despising as cordially as he himself did, gave not an anxious thought about the result, assured that, if each man did his duty, victory would side with the honest and brave. During the exchange of broadsides, he had kept his place on the quarter-deck, encouraging his men by his cheering voice: the earl was also beside him, scarcely less energetic in inspiring the crew with his own spirit. The first lieutenant was actively engaged, sword in hand, in directing the fire of the battery; while Mark, who was in a new element, flamed with the fierce fire of war, and seemed, amid the smoke and roar of battle, to have been suddenly endued with a new and sublime character. He was everywhere where his presence was most needed, encouraging and cheering on the men both by his voice and example; but, notwithstanding his animation and fire, was as cool and collected in the sagacious orders he gave as the oldest veteran.

But, with all his devotion to the fight, he forgot not that the cabin contained a lovely creature, helpless as she was beautiful, whose life depended on the issue of that night's conflict. Though his heart may have been proof against her charms, being shielded with the proof-plate of another's love, yet he felt an interest akin to love in her fate. She was the cousin of Kate! She had expressed an interest in him that he could never forget! He had saved her life! It was a second time endangered! These were all motives to sympathy; and, properly nurtured, the germes were there from which might spring a tenderer and deeper feeling. But he had no room in his breast for a second love. There was but one polar star to the eye of his affections; and steadily he steered the bark of his hopes towards it, although, like the north star of the mariner, the farther and nearer he sailed in its direction, it would higher and higher ascend the skies, mocking his aspiring ambition. Nevertheless, he resolved to steer steadily onward, even if he should perish at last amid the icebergs of her cold and wintry affections. But whatever a lover, in the warmth of his affections, may sincerely feel and solemnly vow love unrequited, like the Persian flower, that withers when the sun is hidden by a passing cloud, without the warmth of its sun will speedily die. Time, in the present instance, will test the truth of this proposition.

The vessels were now within twenty feet of each other, the pirate rising heavily on each wave, and surging nearer and nearer at every heave of the sea. Silence was broken only at intervals by a groan from a wounded bucanier, and terrible expectation hung over the two vessels. The moon at length broke from a cloud and lighted up the scene. There were beauty and peace floating on her silvery beams; but the passions of men reigned, and their souls were closed to everything bright and lovely. Yet they hailed her light with a shout, for by it foe was able to see foe nearly with the distinctness of noonday.

"Now pour in your fire!" shouted the cool Kenard to his crew; "aim wherever you can see the glitter of an eye!"

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The bows of the pirate vessel were within an oar's length of the yacht's larboard and weather quarter as this order was given, and a dozen halfnaked, savage-looking men were just in the act of leaping into the main rigging. The simultaneous discharge of pistols, muskets, and blunderbusses was like the explosion of a volcano, and but one third of the bucaniers succeeded in springing alive into the chains: the remainder plunged, dead ere they struck the surface, into the sea. The fire was answered by a loud yell from the pirates, and a few straggling shots only from pistols; for these demons seemed to trust more to their dangerous cutlasses in their wild conflicts than to firearms. They now pressed forward over the bows in dark swarms. From every part of her that offered any prospect of reaching the yacht, they leaped without waiting for the vessels to come together, with cries and execrations most appalling, into the main chains, or sprang for the bulwarks, catching recklessly by their hands at whatever offered. Many fell short into the sea, or were hurled into it by those who met them; some leaped overboard, swam to the side, and drew themselves up by the rigging that hung over the water, but fell back with curses and cries of pain, leaving their hands, severed at the wrists and dripping with gore, clinging to the rope. Grappling-irons were thrown on deck, but were cast overboard by the crew before they could be entangled; and wherever a pirate struck the side of the yacht with his foot, he was opposed by one of its defenders.

Three times the Earl of Bellamont sheathed his sword in the breasts of as many of these ferocious beings and cast them backward dead into the sea, and as a fourth, who had thrown himself bodily upon the quarter-deck, made a tremendous stroke at him with his yataghan, he blew out his brains with a pistol. Everywhere, in their first daring attempt to board them, were they encountered with equal resolution and success, and of the twenty pirates that by some means or other succeeded in reaching the brig, not one retained a foothold on her decks every individual of them being either slain outright, or hurled maimed into the water, where several swam about amid dark spots of blood, lifting their handless limbs, and in vain calling to their comrades to take them on board. The fate of these checked for a moment the ardour of the remainder, and they waited till the vessels should come together before making a second attempt.

The pirate, who had some time before dropped his lugsails, to prevent his shooting past the yacht, towards which the waves were slowly urging him, was now lifted and dashed with great violence against it, striking her on her quarter, carrying away her bulwarks, and opening her planks in several places.

"Throw yourselves into her now," shouted the pirate chief, leaping forward and waving his cutlass. "Flesh your blades in their carcasses! Give no quarter to beards but spare bright eyes! Board! board! clamber over each other's backs press on, press on! Follow your young leader. He will shame the best of ye!"

Like a crew of demons, yelling and shouting menaces of death, mingled with horrible execrations and oaths of vengeance for their slaughtered comrades, they obeyed the energetic and sanguinary orders of their chief. They were headed by the pirate's first lieutenant and a youth with long fair hair, which, in the light of the moon, shone like silver, who, with strange recklessness of life, cast himself from the bows as they approached the side of the yacht, and fell feet foremost into the midst of a grove of sharp steel, amid a shower of balls, that, while they told in the bodies of his followers, seemed to pass him as if he carried a charmed life. The old pirate captain himself headed another party near the stern of his vessel, which was slowly swinging round towards the yacht's bows, apparently for the purpose, when it should come in contact, of boarding on the fore-castle. Here stood Edwards the lieutenant, with a force of fifteen men to oppose him; while midships, and near the companion-way, Mark was stationed at the head of a third of the yacht's crew, and, acting as a reserve, was prepared to throw in the weight of his numbers as should be required, either on the fore-castle or the quarter-deck, at which latter point, at the head of an equal number, stood the captain, supported by the earl's good blade, ready to repel the attempt to board from the bows of the pirate.

More like devils incarnate than human beings, the pirates followed their young leader, and cast themselves from the bows, some running over the heads of their comrades and leaping on board; some, more active, flinging somersets through the air into the mêlée; and all rushing, crowding, and falling upon the deck in every possible attitude, seemingly indifferent, so that the yacht's decks received them, whether they landed head foremost or

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upright on their feet. Such a torrent of desperate men was irresistible. The defenders of the quarter-deck were borne down by the mere weight of the assailants' bodies, or their cutlasses were turned aside like feathers as they were levelled to meet this novel and terrible human storm. Immediately in advance of himself and the earl, the captain had placed half a dozen men with pikes, the bristly points of which served to protect, in some measure, their position by turning to one side the current of boarders.

The conflict now became most terrible and sanguinary. The crew, that had been borne down by the first shock, had recovered their feet, and nearly every man was instantly struggling with a bucanier. Kenard fought like a lion, thrice clearing a space around him in which he could sweep his cutlass. The earl, at length, seeing some of the pirates rushing to the companion-way and attempting to force it, placed his back against it, and met their fierce lunges with well-directed thrusts, turning aside their descending strokes aimed at his head, with the skill of a swordsman and the coolness of a soldier. He fought not only on the defensive, but his eye was quick to see where any of his own party within his reach were being worsted, and his blade was instant in its service of relieving them from their mortal peril. Every sweep of his blade was fatal, for he fought for one dear to his heart whose life and honour were at stake.

For some time the battle was waged with doubtful success. At one moment the pirates, who, after the first wild charge, had formed into a body, would be driven over the side, and at another they would press the defending party towards the stern. Their youthful leader, who was everywhere present, cheering them on with animating cries as often as they were beaten back towards their own vessel, was at length opposed to Kenard face to face.

"I would not slay a youth like thee if I could help it," he said, parrying his attack, and endeavouring to close with him, and wrest the cutlass from his grasp.

"Thou shalt have no space left for compunction if thou shouldst," said the other, avoiding his grasp, and making a lunge at his neck, which he grazed with his blade.

"Have at thee, then, if such be thy play! give as you get, is my maxim, my lord!" he added, looking round as usual when he gave utterance to a maxim, to catch the earl's attention.

But his lordship was too busily defending himself and the companion-way against a gigantic and active Frenchman to acknowledge the usual appeal. The turning of his head gave the youthful pirate an advantage, of which he availed himself. With great dexterity, he twisted with his cutlass the weapon out of his grasp, and sent it flying through the air into the sea. He was about to follow up his advantage by sheathing his blade in his breast, when it was struck up by an intervening one, and turning round, the young pirate found himself confronted with the Earl of Bellamont, who, having that instant freed himself from his assailants, was looking round to see where his sword would be of most service, when he discovered the peril of the captain. His presence had an electric effect on the youthful bucanier. He started back with an exclamation of surprise, and half repeated the name of the nobleman. But instantly he checked himself, and successfully parried the pass he made at him, retreating at the same time, and acting wholly on the defensive. The earl wondered at his exclamation and at the sound of his voice, which reminded him of a familiar one. This sudden change in the tactics of one who hitherto seemed to know only how to advance and attack, also surprised him; and, although he surveyed him closely, as the drifting clouds across the moon let it shine brightly at intervals, his features were so shaded by a drooping bonnet, and so black and begrimed by the blood and smoke of battle, that his scrutiny was defeated.

"Nevertheless," thought he to himself, "have I heard that voice and seen that form before!"

Inspired as much by curiosity to ascertain who it was that revived such indefinable associations, as by a desire to put an end to a dangerous foe, he pressed him hard. With all the youthful bucanier's coolness and skill, he had been wellnigh worsted, never returning back a blow for those the earl gave him so freely, when a loud shout from the fore-castle caused every combatant on the quarter-deck to suspend his descending stroke, withhold his deadly

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thrust, or leave, half-sheathed, his sword in the body of his antagonist. As the earl paused to look for the cause of this fresh outcry, he saw that the lugger's stern had at length come in contact with the bows of the yacht, and that the pirates, headed by their old chief, were pouring across the bulwarks and leaping upon the deck, wild with fury and thirsting for blood. Hitherto chafing with inaction, and roused to a fearful pitch of excitement by the spectacle and uproar of the combat from which they were withheld, like tigers chained in an arena panting to mingle in the fierce conflict of their species, terrific and overpowering in proportion to the length and impatience of their restraint, was their first onset. The little band under Edwards, who had reserved their energies for this moment, drew back to the opposite side of the vessel to escape the tumultuous fall of their almost flying bodies on the deck, and poured in upon them a fatal fire of pistols and harquebusses.

"Now at them, my brave fellows, with your cutlasses," he cried; "throw away your pistols, and grapple while they are crowded together! Set upon the rascals, and give a good account of them!"

With a shout, they charged in a body, and a terrific and sanguinary contest ensued. Mark, with his division, hitherto had not been idle. He saw that the fate of the yacht would depend on the reception given to the last boarding-party, headed by the old pirate chief himself, and wished therefore to husband the strength of his men until this crisis. Nevertheless, while he was anxiously watching the lugger as its stern drifted round, he was present with two or three of his best men, to turn the tide of the combat on the quarter-deck, as it went now against the earl, now against the captain; and several times he received, in the hottest of the fight, the warm acknowledgments of both for the promptness in which he effected diversions in their favour. It now came to his turn to enter more closely into the combat.

No sooner did the boarders find themselves in a mass on the forecastle of the brig, than they separated into two bodies, one of which received the charge of, and entered into fierce fight with, the division under Edwards; while the other, consisting of twenty men, headed by the pirate in person, made a rush aft to carry the quarter-deck. Here a few of their comrades were fighting at a disadvantage under their youthful leader, who, taking the advantage of the earl's pause at the shout of the fresh boarders, had again mingled among his few remaining men, who were defending themselves on the opposite side of the deck against a much larger number of their antagonists.

Mark had anticipated the charge, and had formed his men in a firm phalanx to meet it. The first line consisted of five men, who just filled up the passage between the launch and the forward larboard gun, along which the pirates were advancing. Besides their cutlasses, they were armed with boarding-pikes, which protruded three feet in advance. A second and third line were armed with cutlasses and pistols. Their young leader himself sprung upon the gun as the rush was made, and in a cool, steady tone of voice, said,

"Stand firm, pikemen. Never mind their cutlasses; your comrades behind will take care of your heads. Now they come! Give them your pistols!" he exclaimed, as the bucaniers came upon them like a wedge, as if they would cleave bodily through their centre. They were checked by the advanced pikes, and thrown into confusion by the discharge of a dozen pistols, which they instantly returned with scarcely half as many, without material effect.

"Cut them down. Let not a handful of cowards put ye back. No quarter! Down with them! Strike off the poles of their pikes! Close with them," shouted the old pirate chief.

A second rush was made with better success. The old bucanier shivered with his cutlass, as if they had been pipe-stems, two of the pike-staffs, and the front line of men gave back.

"Drop your pikes and take your blades!" shouted Mark, at the same time discharging his pistols at the pirate chief and wounding him in the shoulder.

The combat was now waged with terrible ferocity.

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"Fight hard, or we shall be routed!" cried Mark, with energy. "Stand steady, men! Keep your ground, or you will be cut to pieces. Stand! fly not, on your lives! One good blow All is lost!" he suddenly cried, as he saw the men give back before the obstinate attack of the pirates.

Leaping from the gun into the midst, he dealt blows as if he had the strength of a Hercules, and essayed to stop, with his single arm and the intervention of his body, their onward and victorious course. But the impetus was already given, and they bore him forward with his men in a dense mass, so crowded together that no man could use his weapon. They were driven aft and upon the quarter deck, where the captain came to his aid and succeeded in rallying them for the defence of this important post. At the same instant the youthful pirate, seeing the success of his party, called his followers from their unequal contest, and leaped down with them among his crew, leaving half his men dead behind him.

On the forecastle Edwards fought for a while with success, and had nearly beaten the pirates back to their vessel, when the victorious shouts of the conquering party gave them renewed spirit, and filled the minds of the crew with sudden panic. The bucaniers, taking advantage of their hesitation, in their turn became the assailants; and the men, completely routed, fled towards the quarterdeck, cutting their way with the desperation of fear through the party that besieged it, and, with the loss of a third of their number, succeeded in reaching it.

The whole of that portion of the yacht forward of the quarter-deck was now in possession of the pirates, a portion of whom began to force open the hatches; while the majority, under the direction of the chief and his youthful lieutenant, prepared to carry this last post, which was elevated four feet above the main deck, by forming their men into two divisions, and attacking it on both sides of the companion-way at the same time.

The earl, Mark, and the captain, though all three were wounded more or less severely, the latter supporting his left arm in a sling, assembled their force, now diminished to twenty men, to meet the escalade. The pirates, with yells of vengeance for their slaughtered comrades, began to bring to the assault loose spars, sails, and whatever they could lay hands on, which they heaped against the wall the deck presented. The harness-casks were rolled up, made firm, and covered with rolls of canvass; and the hatches, which some of them had torn off for the purpose of descending to plunder the hold, were laid against it, to aid them in constructing a glacis.

"Bring along those carcasses! pile them up here!" shouted the old chief, ferociously. "We will yet make a fair run of it."

The bodies of the dead, both of pirates and the crew of the yacht, were eagerly dragged forward and thrown on the pile, and it was soon raised so that the quarter-deck could be gained erect and sword in hand without the danger to which they would be exposed in climbing a barrier so well guarded.

"Now, men, make a run for it and sweep the deck!" he shouted.

The pirates retreated a few steps in two parties, headed by the old chief and his young lieutenant, and, with a yell, rushed forward and up the human glacis to the quarter-deck. But they were met with a resolution that matched their own ferocity, and several of them fell back dead, adding their own bodies to the pile they had the moment before assisted in constructing. A few battled for a few seconds, giving and receiving wounds, but were finally pressed back to the main deck. In the assault, Mark and the young pirate leader had once crossed weapons; but, ere they could exchange passes, the latter was forced back by the retreat of his own party.

"Let them maintain the deck if they will," said the chief to his young lieutenant; "we have the command of the cabin and hold. Keep them busy while I force the companion-way, and see what kind of a prize she will prove. I little thought we had engaged with a king's ship, but we must now make the most of it. I have lost men enough for one night's work, and don't care to make a capture of the yacht if I can get anything of value out of her. So keep them employed on the quarter-deck till I take a cruise through the cabins."

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As he spoke he gave orders for his men to force a spar from the doors of the companion-way which the earl had braced against it.

"Hold there, fiends!" cried the nobleman, as he saw these demonstrations of the pirate's intentions.

He sprung forward as he spoke, and with a blow of his cutlass clove the scull of a bucanier, who was wrenching the lock with a pike-head, so that it fell in two parts over either shoulder. He aimed a second blow at the pirate chief so suddenly that the point of the blade laid open his cheek, and an active movement to one side only saved his head from flying from his shoulders: at the same instant, a pistol-ball, fired by the chief, struck the earl near the knee, and he fell over into the arms of Mark.

The doors at once were forced open, and the old leader, accompanied by two or three of his men, descended to the cabin.

"To the rescue! To the rescue!" shouted Mark, on seeing them disappear, letting the earl down gently upon the deck.

"Protect or slay her, young man, and I will bless thee!" cried the earl, faintly.

He made no reply to the earl's words; and, heedless whether he was followed or not, leaped, cutlass in hand, through the top of the companionway, and lighted on his feet at the bottom of the stairs.

The doors of the first cabin were open, and a glance showed him two of the pirates rifling the baggage of the earl, and the chief in the act of forcing the inner door leading to the stateroom occupied by Grace.

Poor maiden! how had she been occupied during the fearful conflict above and around her? How had she borne the terrific sounds of battle? From the first moment of the fight she had been kneeling in silent prayer bearing on her heart's orisons the names of her uncle, and of one, though of lowly origin, not less dear to her. Of herself she scarcely thought: but at every report of cannon, every discharge of musketry, she shuddered for those who were exposed to the dreadful horrors of the fight. Her maid had become insensible through overpowering terror. Terror, too, was acutely felt by herself, but it was modified and subdued by the bright hopes of religion. She feared not death. "The sting of death is sin." She knew no sin! For her it could have no terrors. Nature, indeed, shrunk at contemplating its violent dissolution; but the glorious certainties of a new life beyond this reconciled her to put this away for that better one. She expected to die within the hour perhaps *by her own hand!* The dagger her uncle had given her was hidden in her bosom, and, as she knelt, her grasp was firmly laid upon its hilt. Long, long and terrible had been the conflict to her ears more terrible, perhaps, than if she had witnessed it. Its sanguinary horrors were indeed hidden from her sight; but her imagination, with its hundred eyes, aided by the horrid sounds that reached her, reflected the scene upon her dizzy brain in colours, if it could be possible, more dreadful than the reality. Who can imagine the effect upon her of the loud roar of the cannon vibrating through every oaken nerve of the vessel, and filling its hollow decks with a noise more awful than the thunder that explodes at her feet. Who can conceive the fearful shrinking of the heart at the rush of the balls the sound of the crashing decks the wild and unearthly shrieks of the wounded the moans of the dying the fierce yells of the combatants and all the thousand and terrific sounds that assimilate war to the hellish pastime of accursed spirits. Who is there that, not participating in its mad excitement, calmly witnesses a battle, that will not turn away in disgust and horror, be ready to deny his humanity, and to believe men neither more nor less than demons incarnate?

When the cabin doors burst open, she hurriedly committed her soul to Heaven, and, rising from her knees, held the friendly dagger above her virgin bosom, and stood facing the closed doors of her cabin, feeling that the crisis of her fate was approaching its consummation.

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The entrance of Mark into the forward cabin was not perceived by the pirates nor their chief. With a blow of his cutlass he nearly severed the head of one that was leaning over a chest, and, before the other could rise, the ball of his pistol had laid him across the body of his comrade. The next instant he was opposed to the terrible pirate leader himself.

"Ha, my young fledging!" cried he, his cutlass descending with tremendous force, and with a fatal accuracy of aim, that would have cleft him to the chine had it taken effect; but, with youthful activity, he avoided the stroke which he could not avert, and the point of the pirate's weapon buried itself so deep in the floor of the cabin that he was unable to extricate it. Mark instantly availed himself of this singular advantage, and, quicker than lightning, sheathed his blade in his heart.

"Oh! villain, you have done for me!" he cried, pressing his hand on his side, through which the crimson tide rushed in an irresistible torrent.

He staggered as he spoke, and a lurch of the vessel at the same moment sent him headlong, breaking his sword off close to the floor as he fell with it in his grasp, upon the bodies of his men.

"Courage! my lady!" said Mark, bounding to the door, and speaking in the triumphant tones of success. "Their leader is slain! we shall soon clear the vessel of his base herd! Courage!"

"Bless you for these words of hope! You are safe! and my uncle! how fares my dear uncle?"

Before he could reply the companion-stairway was filled with pirates.

"A female voice!" shouted one, as he entered the cabin.

"Love and ransom," cried another, with a sensual laugh.

"We will draw lots for her, Hans."

"The captain has saved us that trouble," growled a third. "Ho! who have we here?" he cried, seeing Mark, with his dripping cutlass in his hand, standing resolutely with his back against the door of the stateroom.

"Our captain is slain!" cried another, fiercely, now for the first time seeing the body of his chief lying in its gore.

The pirates for a moment forgot Mark, and gathered around their fallen leader. They raised him up, and his head fell back helpless upon his shoulder, and his eyes glared with the fixed stare of death.

"He is dead! His sword is broken. Let us avenge the old man!" they cried, with one voice. "Ha! here is the point of his weapon, that ne'er failed him before, sticking in the deck, and he hath been taken at vantage ere he could draw it out."

"He who hath done this for thee, old man, shall die by my hand!" said one of them, letting him fall again.

With one accord, their glances rested on Mark, and he was fiercely attacked by the one who had last spoken and another, while the remainder commenced breaking open chests in search of treasure. For a few seconds he defended himself with great skill and courage. But, being hard pressed, and twice severely wounded by his fierce opponents, he became faint with loss of blood; his head swam; his eyes became dim; he grew bewildered, and struck at random. His assailants saw their advantage, and one of them made a final lunge at his breast to transfix him. But, ere the blow could take effect, he sunk sideways to the floor, and falling behind the hangings, the blade buried itself within the door of the cabin.

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"Curses light on the foul steel! Finish him, Renard."

"He is done for," said the other, sheathing his blade through the curtain.

"Now for the woman! His mistress, I dare say, he fought so like a lion. I will try and console her for his loss," he added, with a laugh.

The fall of its brave defender left the way undisputed to the inner cabin. With united efforts, they forced open the slightly-secured leaves of the door. Grace stood before them in an attitude of sublime self-sacrificing, her eyes raised heavenward full of hope and faith, while the uplifted dagger was in the act of descending into her bosom. The foremost pirate instantly comprehended her purpose. Quick as lightning, he leaped forward, and, with his cutlass, struck the weapon from her grasp as it was entering her bosom.

"By the Virgin! that was skilfully done, Renard!" said the other. "You have won her fairly."

"And he who would have her must win her from me," he continued, with dogged resolution, catching her as, with a shriek of hopeless despair and wretchedness unspeakable, she was falling to the deck.

"A sweet voice, but somewhat loud!" said the other, with a laugh. "Ho! what have we here? Another prize," he exclaimed, descriing the helpless maid. "Smaller game! but not the less welcome. Dead, for a guilder! No, she breathes! We are lucky, Renard. It will cost us some hard knocks to keep possession of our prizes."

"We have no captain now, and each man is for himself."

"Not quite. Our new fighting lieutenant will command us now; and suppose he should, as he is like to do, take a fancy to your bit of womankind?"

"He will first have to fancy me!" said the other, menacingly. "Nor shall he command me while men older than he are in the lugger."

"He will have a word to say on that score, and here he comes to speak for himself."

He had scarcely spoken ere the young pirate made his appearance in the cabin. The shriek of Grace had drawn him from the deck, where he had been defending the entrance to the companion-way against the whole force of the yacht, under the captain and the earl the danger menacing his niece having suddenly restored the latter to almost supernatural strength, and a fierceness of spirit that rose superior to physical suffering. With his wound hastily bound up, he had once more joined in the fight, and was foremost in battling with those who opposed his passage to the cabin. Repeatedly his life was exposed, but saved by the voice of the young leader, forbidding his men to harm him; and even in the heat, and noise, and fury of battle, their wild spirits involuntarily yielded obedience to a voice that seemed formed to command and to be obeyed.

With flashing eyes he entered the stateroom, and his glance rested on the lifeless form of Grace, clasped in the arms of the pirate Renard.

"I am right! It is she!" he cried. "Release your prize, villain!"

"You say well, boy; she is my prize," he answered, with a menacing look.

"Ha!" shouted the youth.

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Quicker than thought he sprang upon him, got within his sword arm, seized him by the throat, closed with him, and buried his sabre to its hilt in his chest.

"So have I washed out the pollution of thy touch on this fair creature," he said, attempting to disengage Grace from his hold as he fell backward.

But his arm so firmly encircled her, that he was forced to sever the tendons of it with his cutlass before he could release her from this horrible embrace of lust and death.

"Oh God!" he said, involuntarily, "that I should be an actor in such a scene as this. Yet my presence here has been her preservation. I will save her and protect her now, even with the life of the captain!"

"His life is already ended," said the bucanier, who, on witnessing the fate of his comrade, had quietly dropped the lifeless form of the maid where he had found her.

He pointed as he spoke to his body.

"Dead!" exclaimed the youth. "Then am I chief here. I will save, for her sake, all that are left alive. But she shall not know me! She shall ever be ignorant to whom she is indebted. Yet methinks I would like to send by her a message to the haughty daughter of the house of Bellamont." This was spoken with bitter irony. "But I must try to restore her."

He poured a vase of water over her forehead, and moistened her lips, and she revived.

"Where am I? What has transpired? Who how where "

She glanced wildly around, and everything that had passed flashed upon her mind. She bounded from him with a deplorable cry, and covered her face with her hands. "Mercy, oh God! mercy!"

"Grace!" he said, in a gentle tone.

"Who speaks? who?"

Grace!"

"Thou art no enemy! Bless thee for the sound of thy voice. Tell me what has happened? Where is my uncle? Oh, speak as if life hung on thy words."

"The Earl of Bellamont is living."

"Heaven, I thank thee! And this dead body?"

"I have protected thee from a fate worse than death, with the life of this man."

"Who who art thou? I should know that voice," she exclaimed, with returning confidence and hope, gazing upon his now swarthy and disfigured features which defeated her scrutiny, deeply shaded, too, as they were by his bonnet, which he pulled farther over his brows.

"An outcast, unworthy a thought from innocence and purity like thee."

"Yet you are my friend. How came you here?"

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"To save thee!"

"I am confused, puzzled, perplexed! your voice, your air! I know not what to think or say. A pirate boarded us, and you you are not a pirate. Oh, my uncle! my dear uncle! Heaven be thanked, you are safe!" she cried, darting forward and flinging herself into his arms as he entered the cabin, literally covered with blood, while behind him crowded a dark mass of pirates, through whom he had cut his way.

"How fares it with thee, my child?" he cried, with anxiety, pressing her to his breast.

"Safe from all but terror!"

"God bless thee! we will die together; there is no hope. Come on, ye fiends, now," he cried, turning upon his foes with one arm entwined about her, and brandishing his cutlass in the calm defiance of despair.

They rushed upon him with a shout.

"Back!" cried the clear, commanding voice of their young leader, in a tone that arrested every advancing foot and suspended every cutlass mid-air. "Look! there lies your late captain in his blood! Your first lieutenant is slain. I am now your leader. Obey me. Stand back, all of ye!" The men sullenly dropped their weapons and retreated to the foot of the stairs. "Earl of Bellamont! you and your niece are, from this moment, safe. Your yacht shall be instantly cleared of every man but its own crew, and you shall be at liberty to sail on your course. Call upon your captain for a cessation of hostilities on deck, while I draw off my men."

The astonished earl immediately obeyed.

"Who are you, mysterious young man?" he asked, turning to him after communicating his request to the captain. "Your voice and air are familiar."

"It matters not, my lord. I have saved thy niece from violence, and would, had I the power, earlier have put an end to this scene of bloodshed. Bid your captain call his crew to the quarter-deck, while I pass to my own vessel with my men."

The order, with the object of it, was repeated to the captain.

"Ay, ay!" he replied from the deck. "Let them go, with a left-handed blessing. But what has changed the devils about so? Have they had fighting enough?"

"We have mistaken the character of your vessel," said the young leader, evasively.

"Ha! you are there, my lion's cub, and can speak like a Christian, too. A little fighting always makes a man feel more civilized, is my maxim, my lord," he said, looking down upon them through the skylight.

"To your own vessel, men!" said the youth, sternly. "Throw down that casket! Take not with you the value of a groat. Go as you came, with only your arms in your hands."

The men looked at each other, and surveyed their athletic young chief, who stood like a youthful Mars, with the look and bearing of resolute command. His eye rested for an instant on each man, as he saw their hesitation, with a searching and terrible glance, and, as each one encountered it, he turned his eyes away and silently obeyed. As the last man left the cabin, he said,

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"Some of you return, and bear your captain's body to the decks of your own vessel. Lay him decently along the quarter-deck."

Four of the pirates came back, and raised it without a word, while he stood quietly by, leaning on his sabre.

"Michael," he said, to one who seemed to take the lead of the rest, "I make you, for the present, second in command. Have the wounded conveyed to the lugger, and the dead thrown into the sea. Be ready to cut clear of the yacht at a moment's warning; and, with what time you have, repair damages and get sail on. Work will keep the men from thinking of mischief. Go! and see that I am obeyed. I shall instantly follow you."

The bucanier departed with ready obedience to the will of the lofty spirit that had at once assumed such irresistible power over his mind. The earl and Grace listened with surprise to the stern authority with which he governed such fierce men, and witnessed with wonder the entire control he seemed to possess over their wills. The former gazed on him for a few seconds as he stood beneath the swinging lamp, his features thrown into the deepest shadow by the falling brim of his bonnet and his drooping plume, and then spoke:

"Mysterious and wonderful young man, whoever you are, we owe you much. This life of crime and horror is not your sphere. There is humanity about you. Tell me," he added, with irresistible curiosity, "who are you?"

"A *bastard!*"

It is impossible to convey the manner and emphasis with which this word was articulated. It expressed volumes to both uncle and niece. It told a dark history of shame, scorn, and disgrace; explained why, being so above them by nature, he herded with the basest. A painful tale of moral wrong and suffering it unfolded to their imaginations, save that they knew not his name or family. They read from his brief confession all that could have been told them. The earl sighed, shook his head, and was silent. Grace looked upon him with pity.

He contemplated for a moment the effect of this disclosure, and then, turning haughtily away, said,

"The service I have done you is cancelled by your discovery of the baseness of the instrument. There is debt on neither side. Adieu, my lord adieu, Lady Grace Fitzgerald."

"How know you my name and rank?"

"And *mine!*" simultaneously exclaimed both.

"It matters not. Thou wilt learn full soon enough to scorn as well as pity me."

With these words he departed. The yacht was cleared of its piratical horde, and the two vessels separated, and soon were steering on opposite courses.

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II. THE EFFECT.

"'Twas in the third King William's time,
When many a pirate bold
Committed on the seas the crime
Of shedding blood for gold."
"My name is Captain Kyd,
As I sailed, as I sailed:
My name is Captain Kyd,

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And so wickedly I did,
God's laws I did forbid
When I sailed."

Old Ballad.

CHAPTER I.

"All in the olden time."

"Our ancestors smoked long pipes, wore breeches and buckles, spoke in a strange tongue, and were called Dutchmen; for what saith the chronicle?"

"Dutchmen lived in those days in Nieuwe-Amsterdam."

Five years have elapsed since the events narrated in the last book transpired. In the interim, the seed then sown has had time to ripen to the germe; the germe to bud, and blossom, and bear fruit: youth has advanced to manhood; the characters then forming, formed; and the effects of the various causes then in operation fully wrought, and apparent to every eye. The scene, as well as the time of the story, is now changed, and, with its actors, transformed from the Old to the New World.

In the year 1695, William the Third appointed Richard, Earl of Bellamont, governor of the province of New-York. He did not, however, receive his commission until eighteen months afterward, nor arrive in his government until April, 1698. At this period the American coast, from New-England to the Capes of Virginia, were infested by a daring bucanier, who not only swept the seas with his fast-sailing vessel, but frequently run boldly, in open day, into the harbours of New-York, Boston, and New-port. To such an extent did his deprivations reach, so fearful became the terrible name of "Kyd," that at length the fisherman feared to launch his boat, the mariner to spread his sail, and citizens trembled for their safety within the very centre of their fortified towns.

Such being the state of things, Lord Bellamont, on assuming the administration of colonial affairs, was especially instructed by the English government to make use of all the means placed at his command to remedy an evil so alarming, and fraught with consequences so fatal to the growth and prosperity of the colonies. For this purpose, immediately after his arrival at New-York, he had despatched the light-armed vessel which had brought him over from England in pursuit of the pirate.

She had been absent some time, and her arrival in the bay was hourly and anxiously looked for by the honest Dutch citizens. As the time for her return drew nigh, it was the custom of certain of these worthies, after the humble occupations of the day were over, to assemble at eventide about the stoope of *frau* Jost Stoll's tavern by the water side, and with their long pipes supported in their mouths with one hand, and a mug of double beer or mum held in the other, steadfastly to gaze down the bay, in expectation of the return of the crusier, the while gravely discussing their doubts of the bold bucanier's captivation by mortal ship; and by times relieving their discourse with dark tales of his marvellous and bloody exploits on the high seas.

Before entering further upon this division of the story, it perhaps may be necessary, for the proper understanding of it, to describe New-York as it was at this period. On the north side of the present Wall-street there extended from East River, then called Salt River, to the North River, a palisade ten feet high, constructed of piles firmly driven into the earth, strengthened and sustained by crosspieces of timber. The interstices were filled with earth and stone, and it was in every part ball-proof. South of this palisade lay all that then was New-York. Beyond were forests, and a vast tract called "King's Farms," now embraced between Canal and Liberty streets. This wall was perforated midway between the two rivers by a gateway, through which passed the road to Albany: this avenue is now called Broadway. At the eastern extremity of the wall, at the foot of Wall-street, and facing the water, was a half-moon fort, called a Rondeel: another was at Coenties-slip, or "Countess-slip," so called in

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honour of the fair Lady of Bellamont; and a third, equidistant from it, on the site of what is now the corner of State-street and the Battery. From Broadway, west, there was a sloping shore to the beach, there being neither wharf nor landing on this side of the town; and on the south, the tides came up nearly to the iron gate of the Battery that at present opens into Broadway the site of the present "Marine Park" being at low tide a sandy beach strewn with vast fragments of rock, and called "The Ledge," where fishermen spread their nets and dried their fish.

At the foot of Broad-street, then called "Here Graft," and at that time the principal street of New-Amsterdam, were two great docks, called "West" or "East Dock," as they chanced to be on the east or west side of Broad-street. Through this street nearly to Wall-street also run a creek, widened into a canal, and spanned by bridges wherever it was intersected by streets. Near the head of this canal was the abode of the city ferryman, who conveyed passengers in a wherry either to the Island or Jersey shore. The houses of the better class stood principally on William and Pearl streets, the latter being open to the water, with dwellings only on the west side facing it. Maiden-lane was then a green lane with a fine spring at its head where the Dutch maidens were accustomed to bleach the linen they wove. Fronting the river stood the Stadt Huys (the ancient City Hall), a massive stone structure two stories high, with battlements rising above the gable ends. The lower story was used as the colonial prison. Opposite the Stadt Huys stood the fish-market. In the Bowling Green, then an oblong square, surrounded by locust-trees, was the City Market, which was held three times a week, and opened and shut by the ringing of a bell. The gate of the city was formed of a pair of massive leaves of oak, strengthened with bars of iron: they were shut at night on the setting of the watch, and opened at sunrise by ringing of bells. The citizens took watch by turns or were fined. They were to be "good men and true, and free from cursing and swearing." It was their duty to watch by the gate and the bridges, and thrice during the night to take the rounds of the city, particularly to see that neither Indians nor negroes were abroad, or lying about in the market-places. In cases of emergency or alarm, they were commanded to call on the nearest citizen for aid; each householder being required to keep always in his house a "goode fire-locke," and at least six rounds of balls thereto. Gutters run through the centre of all the streets, which were unpaved; and in the middle of Broadway, near Wall, and also in Pearl-street, were public wells and pumps. The houses were built mostly in the Dutch style, with gable-ends to the street, and stoopes.

The "Rondeel," or crescent before mentioned, that defended the south side of the town at the foot of Broadway, was erected on the top of a large mound, fourteen feet high, with a green sloping glacis on every side. The wall of the fort was still twenty feet above the glacis, strongly constructed of stone, with two square wings, the centre being in the shape of a half-moon. On the north side stood a few apple-trees and an aged linden that over-topped the walls, from the parapet of which was a near view of the market, of the fields about the "Bowline Greene," the hay-scales, and the north gate of the city. In the centre of this fort stood a small stone chapel, the first Dutch church erected in New-York. Four cannon were mounted on the water side, and a heavy gun, of vast calibre, planted on the north side of the wall, commanded the gate of the palisades. East of the fort was a forest of several acres, in which were kept the governor's deer. Nearly hid among its old trees, yet open to the bay, stood, within a stone's throw of the gate of the fort, the gubernatorial mansion of the earl, a stately Dutch edifice of stone, painted white and ornate with scalloped gables, turret-like chimneys, a cupola, latticed galleries, and "stoopes." The ground before it sloped in a smooth lawn to the glittering beach; and from its door the eye embraced the whole of the far-extended bay, with its green and wooded islands, and a distant glimpse of the sea. On the east of this mansion, which, from its white exterior and imposing appearance, was named by the admiring burghers "Der Vite Sals," or White Hall, a name the site has retained to this day, commenced Pearl, then called Dock street. It was on the corner of this and Broad-street, and within one hundred yards of the White Hall, that the publichouse of frau Jost Stoll was situated.

This ancient, well-frequented, and popular inn, the humble progenitor of the numerous costly and palatial *hotels* that now adorn the modern city, was one story high, and extended far back on both streets, showing a front on each. Its roof was tiled with glazed Dutch tiles, and ascended almost perpendicularly to a great height, where it met a second or super-roof, which was clapped over it like an extinguisher. In its descent towards the ground,

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however, it took a horizontal curve outward, and projected full seven feet from the walls across the sidewalk, supported along its eaves by a row of rude columns. The gable-ends rose ambitiously above the roof, from which be it said projected sundry dormant windows, which were cut into steps or half-embrasures, giving the building a sort of castellated aspect. Its windows, and they were many of divers shapes, square, circular, oval, and diamond, were placed in all possible positions, as the fancy of the architect dictated. On each street was a broad door, with a narrow carved canopy above it, and beneath a stoop with seats on either side. To these, for the accommodation of her numerous customers, the bustling Dutch hostess had of late placed four long benches, two on each side of the house, against the wall and just beneath a row of windows with little three-cornered panes of glass set in leaden sashes. The advantage of two fronts to the inn is apparent, and was a very great convenience to the worthy citizens. In the summer mornings they were wont to sit on the south and shady side, which looked down the bay; and in the afternoon on the east and now shady side, which commanded not only a side view of the harbour, but a full view of the muddy dock, alive with ducks, at their feet, and the clumsy stone bridge that crossed it. But, since they had begun to watch for the reappearance of the "Ger-Falcon," the name of the vessel which was despatched in pursuit of the pirate, the south front, notwithstanding it was in the month of June, and the level sun lighted up the little windows of the inn like an illumination, had become the most frequented and popular; and, on the evening of the day in question, the east side was deserted by all save a tawny slave, a recumbent Indian, and one or two sleepy dogs. On the south front, therefore, at the time of the opening of the second part of this story, were gathered, towards sunset, beneath the shade of the projecting roof, a motley group, composed of some of the best burghers of New-Amsterdam, and, what is more, the choicest customers of *frau* Stoll. They were seated on benches on either side of the stoop, the two seats of which were occupied by a little, short, fat member of the corporation, and a tall, thin, long-nosed churchwarden, the chiefest dignitaries of the church and state. Besides these worthies, there were several artisans, and other worthy citizens of the ancient town.

"Dere vill be moche fear dat de tamt pucanier hash got de king's ship, and no te king's ship haav got te pucanier," said one of the worthy burghers, sagely shaking his head after a long look down the bay; and taking his pipe from his mouth and emitting a generous cloud of smoke, he looked round to see how his opinion was received.

"'Tis quite time, Mynheer Vandersplocken, that the ship should be back; but whether she brings a prize or no is another thing," said the warden, blowing through his pipe to ignite the tobacco therein.

"I'll ventur' to say you are right dere, Mynheer Varder," said an antiquated Dutch skipper, blowing forth with his words a volume of smoke that for a time rendered his round, rubicund visage and portly paunch invisible; "dis skipper Kyd ish not to pe taken sho easily. Schnaps and tunder! he would plow up his yocht to de tyfil first. Ay! he vill never haav te hemp cravat, te plack rogue."

"Is he black?" asked the warden, eagerly.

"Ay ish't plack he ish, schipper Schenk?" repeated the burgher.

"Goot! schipper Schenk, den hash seen him! how doesh dou know dat he ish plack?" asked a third, who, from his greasy apparel, was the tallow-chandler of the town, laying his pipe across his oily knee and looking him in the face with the air of a man who expected to hear something marvellous.

"'Tish not plack in te face I mean, put in te heart," said the skipper. "I have seen him, as you say, Mynheer Schnops; and his hair vas white as te lint, and his eye plue as te sky, and his skin fair as te lantlaty's taughter here. A fair young man he vas to look upon."

"And cruel as fair," said the warden. "Tell us, worthy skipper Schenk, o' the time you saw this bold rover; doubtless it will be a tale to listen to."

"Ay, good schipper!" "Yaw, schipper Schenk, gif us te story," cried several voices.

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Ashes were knocked from some of the pipes, and others were refilled; the more distant listeners moved nearer to the skipper, who, looking round with the patronising and superior air of a man who hath seen more danger than his fellows, settled himself into the attitude of a story-teller, and took a long-drawn whiff at his meerschaum:

"It vas in te Long Island Sount," he began, "just after the last line gale. I vas in mine little yocht, te Half Moon, and, haaving carried away my powsprit, put into a creek unter Sachem's Heat to cut another from te treesh dere. I left te men to vork hewing te spar, and valks about on te shore, looking round, and tinking vat a nice place it vas te Sachem's Heat for a city, if te lant vas lower, so tat a tyke might be made all rount it."

"A tyke, sure; vat is te citee mitout te tyke? vera goot," were the approving ejaculations of his listeners.

"Ton't interrupt me, or tish tyfil a pit more you get o' mine shtory. Now vere vas I? Vell, as I vas saying, I vas valking by mineself ven I comes to te oder side of te heatlant, ant tere lay anoder vessel mitout a mast, ant more tan fifty men at vork putting new spars into her. Vell, I vas vondering vat craft it vas, for she vas carry many kuns, vhen somepoty vas lay a hant on mine shoulter, ant I looked rount ant vas see a tall, hantsome, ant fair young man, mit plue eyes ant light locks, mit pistols at belt ant swort py his side.

"`Goot tay, Mynheer Schipper,' says he, in a free ant easy vay. `Ish tat your craft pelow in te creek?'

"`It ish, mynheer,' says I. `Dis gale has put us poth into von bipe, if tat ish your craft pelow dere.'

"`It ish, schipper; vill you go on boart?'

"`Ish must get my repairs tone ant pe off,' I sait.

"`I haav a flasche of goot Scheitam, mynheer,' sait he.

"`So I vent aboart, ant ve hat a merry time mit te Scheitam ant te bipe.

"`Tis ish te real shuniper from Deutch-lant, captain,' says I, pouring te last trop out of te flasche.

"`It's made from the Italian shuniper, schipper,' says he.

"`Deutch or Italian,' says I, `it's te oil ov life; ant never pefore tid I trink such shin.'

"`I am glat you like it,' says he; ant he mate a negro, in golt ant green jacket ant brocken, put on anoder flasche.

"`By-ant-py, says I, `Vat's te name o' your craft, captain,' tinking it a ship in te king's navy.

"`Te Silfer Arrow,' says he.

"`Te Silfer Arrow. I haav not hear tis name in te navy.'

"`Nor ever vill,' sait he. `Fill your glass, schipper, I vill give you a toast.'

"So I filled to te top, ant, rising up, swore I't trink it on mine legs, if he gave te tyfil himself, for te Scheitam vas in me. So I helt on to te taplecorner, ant he sait,

"`I give te healt of Kyt.'

"`Nefer,' sait I; ant smashed my glass on te taple in a tousant atoms. `I vill trink to te tyfil, put not to Kyt,' says I.

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"His eyes flashed like coals ov vire, ant he put his hant on a pistol; put ten he laughed ant sait,

"`Drink to my healt, ten, good schipper.'

"`I'll trink your healt, captain, from te neck ov te flasche, till tere pe not von trop left pehint.'

"`Pledge me, den,' sait he.

"So ve filled, ant I trank a bumper to his goot healt.

"`Very vell, schipper. You haav done as I wished,' he sait, smiling. `Who, tink you, is your entertainer?'

"`Te'il care I,' sait I; `I know te Scheitam, tat is enough for schipper Schenk to know.'

"`Did you ever hear of te Adventure Galley?' says he.

"`It's Kyt's vessel,' sait I, `tat he scours te sea mit.'

"`Look here, schipper, ant reat,' said he, shoving asite a sliting panel above te transum.

"I looked, ant reat, in large letters,

"`The Adventure Galley.'

"`Vat te tyfil!' sait I, laying a hant on my cutlass, `tish is not te '

"`Te Adventure Galley, ant I am Captain Kyt,' says he.

"So I drew my cutlass ant mate a lunge at him, supposing I vas in for a death; but he wrested it vrom me, ant mate me sit down ant vinish te pottle, ant we soon got right vell acquainted.

"`Vhen do you leave te creek, schipper Schenk?' says he.

"`It vill take me two tays yet, mit my three men, to set te bowsprit. It's a pad pusiness, dish delay; ant I vish I vas vell out of dis place' for I pegan to fear for my throat, notmitstanding ve drank Scheitam togedder. But Captain Kyt vas de shentleman. He sent his men to help mine, ant in four hours I vas ready for sea again, sount as ever. He came to see me off, sent two flasches ov de Scheitam, ant shook hants mit me, mit many pleashant vords, ant gave me dis arrow, saying, `Tese are my passports for my frients. If you ever are in any tanger from my peoplesh, it vill pe your safeguart.' Ant he spoke true; for it hash twice saven my cargoesh."

As the skipper concluded, he held up to view a small silver arrow the length of his fore-finger, on which the warden discovered, as it was passed round from one to the other, the words:

"*Respect the sign.* Kyd."

"Strange it ish vonderful vera goot!" exclaimed severally those to whom it was handed.

"He is not so wicked after all, then, schipper Schenk," said the warden.

The skipper shook his head, and replied mysteriously, "I vish I may always gif him a goot vide berth, datsh all, Mynheer Vorden, notmitstanding te Schietam."

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"I can tell you a tale that will give you a different opinion, Master Warden," said an English mate, who formed one of the party of listeners.

"By all means let us hear it," said the warden, knocking the ashes from his pipe against his shoe, and refilling the bowl from a leathern pouch by his side wherein he was accustomed to carry a pound of loose Turkish cut.

"Ve vill lishten; tell it, skipper Jack," all cried, directing their eyes first down the bay to see if they could discover an approaching sail, and then turning and fixing them upon the face of the seaman.

"Well, shipmates," said the sailor, dropping from his mouth carefully into the palm of his hand a huge quid of tobacco, and sprinkling a shower of saliva over the pavement; "you see as how it was in the West Indies. Captain Kyd had captured a trader bound from Newport to Barbadoes, and, having taken out all the valuables, set fire to her, with every soul on board save a young gentleman and young lady one being sweetheart to the other, you must know. These he took on board his vessel, the 'Ventur' Galley, and told the young lady, who was very rich, that if she would pay forty thousand dollars for her ransom, she should go free. So she went into the cabin with him, and wrote the order for the money. 'Now,' says she to him, 'I will not give it to you unless you promise to give me what I love best on earth.' 'Now,' says he to her, 'fair lady, what do you love best on earth?'

"'My betrothed husband,' said she.

"'Would you have his heart rather than all else in the world?' asked he.

"'Yes.'

"'I comply with your demand but first you must dine with me,' said he.

"So a great dinner was served up, and only Kyd and the lady sat down to it for he treated her with great respect all the time, and more like a gentleman than a bucanier. After they had dined, she said, 'Now grant me my wish, and let me have what I love best on earth.'

"'You have had it,' said he.

"'Where what?' she asked, trembling all over at his fearful looks, and hardly knowing what to dread.

"'Your lover's heart.'

"'Where?' she asked.

"'You have just dined off of it,'" said he.

"What became of the lady?" asked the warden, after the exclamations of horror and surprise had subsided.

"She became a maniac, and in three days was buried in the sea," replied the narrator, replacing his quid and taking a hearty draught at a can of ale handed him by Frau Stoll herself.

"Donder ant blixen! I don't believe it tish not true, I would shwear," said the skipper. "He ish pad enough, put not so pad ash dat tish one of te itle shtories tat peoplesh frighten von oder mit."

"'Tis said he always gets devil's luck, before he sails, from them as has dealings with the Evil One, and always burns a Bible on his capstan every time he weighs anchor," said the sailor, without regarding the incredulous skipper.

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"The last time he was here, when he walked our streets so boldly, with a score of armed bucaniers at his back, before he set sail I heard how he got evil charms from the witch at Hell Gate," observed the warden, in a low, cautious tone.

"I can give ye a wrinkle on that point, I guess," said a lank, half-farmer, half-sailor looking being, who commanded a trader between the Rhode Island plantations and New-York one of the first of the species now so numerous. "I anchored once, waiting for the flood tide to take me through the gate, close alongside the rock her hut is on. Feeling kind o' neighbourly, and not knowin' then who lived there, I got into my yawl, and pulled ashore to scrape acquaintance and talk a bit. As I came up to the hut I heard a strange noise, and smelt a brimstonish smell, and so thought I'd reconnoitre afore goin' in. Looking through the window, I see the old Witch of Endor and Captain Kyd, as I learned a'terward it was, goin' through the awfullest hellifications ever hearn tell on. She hanged a piece o' yarn round his neck, and then said as how he had a charmed life. Gracious! and the way it lightened and thundered jist then was a sin to death! Blue blazes an' brimstone great guns and little guns big devils and little devils, mixed up with owls and hobgoblins, snakes and catamounts, with a sprinkling o' hell-cats and flying sarpents, touched off with the tarnellest yells, 'nough to lift a feller right off his feet by the hair of his head. I thought creation was comin' to an eend, and dropped down on my marrow-bones and prayed away like a disciple. Soon as I could get on my legs, I showed 'um some purty tall walkin' till I got to my yawl again, I tell ye! I expected nothin'd be left o' me when I got there but my eyebrows and shirt risbands."

"She is a fearful woman," said the warden; "and little thanks do we owe them for sending her among us. 'Tis said, before she was transported to the colony from Ireland, that she had spirited away by her foul charms the son of some noble house. Ill has fared the colony the three years she has been in't."

"She shoul't pe purned for von vitch vooman," said the skipper; "I would pe te first to make te fagot plaze."

"I'll be there to help you a bit, I guess, too," said the Rhode Islander. "I han't been to Salemtown in New-England for nothin', I guess. The way they do with the critters there is a little the cutest. If they want to tell for sartin if an old woman's a real witch, they throw her into a pond. If she's drowned she's no witch; but if she swims, its gospel proof she is coz what old woman could swim if she warn't a nat'ral witch. They then tie her to a stake and set fire to her."

"Mit your leave, goot peoplesh, I vill shay vat dey doesh mit vitches in mine coundree," said the Dutch burgher, deliberately taking the pipe from his mouth. "Virst, dey tries her py veighing her in te scales mit von Piple; if she be heavier nor te Piple, she ish prove von olt vitch voomans. Dis ish vera goot! Secont, dey tries to shoot her mit silver pulletsh, ant den dey tiesh her heelsh ant het bot' togedder, and drops her into te deep vater. Dat is also more vera goot!"

"What are ye gathered here for, ye idle knaves and fat burghers, ye masses of smoked flesh sponges steeped in ale and paunches like your own pint-pots, frightening each other's cowardly ears with tales of fear. Who is it ye would kill with your silver bullet, Master Von Schmidt?"

The company started at the harsh, stern voice that addressed them so unexpectedly, and uttered, as they looked up, divers exclamations and interjections of surprise, not unmingled with apprehension. The warden rose from his wooden bench, and, hurrying away, disappeared quickly round the corner of the inn; the tallow-chandler upset his can of ale in his over-eagerness to gain the taproom; the burgher broke the long stem of his pipe by striking it against the door-sill as he crowded in on the tallow-chandler's heels; and on each countenance and in every gesture of those who remained was depicted consternation and anxiety.

The personage who had caused this sudden movement was a female of low stature, deformed and hideous in person, with a stern aspect, and a wild, restless eye indeed, none other than Elpsy the sorceress. Suspected of having made way with the young Lester the illegitimate Lester she had been arrested by the countess and thrown

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into prison. But confessing nothing on trial, and the circumstances not being sufficient in themselves to convict her, after remaining in prison two years, she was sent, with other criminals and dangerous persons, to the colonies. Forbidden by the worthy burghers to harbour in the town, she had selected, as more in unison with her wild and wandering life, and the mysterious character she claimed, a lonely abode, once a fisherman's lodge, on the rocky islet on the right of the outlet of Hurl Gate, still known as the Witch's Rock. Here she performed her unholy rites, and far and wide her fame spread as a sorceress. Seamen, as they shot through the dangerous pass, propitiated her; and those who would have fair winds sought them of her in full faith. The good came to her for good, and the evil for evil. The tender Dutch maiden would do pilgrimage there to ask after the fate of an absent lover, or seek assurances of his happy and speedy return. There were tales, too, that she favoured the bucaniers who swarmed the coasts, and that their success was owing to the heavy bribes of gold they gave her for prosperous cruises. Occasionally she visited the town, to the consternation of its worthy citizens, who never failed to presage evil to "scot and lot" from her presence.

"What is it ye fear, Master Warden what is it leads ye to leave your bench, schipper is't your own shadows ye fear?" she now cried, fixing her eyes darkly and angrily upon each countenance.

"It ish out ov reshpect, Frau Elpshy," replied the half-tipsy schipper, mustering his physical to the aid of his moral courage, and speaking in a deprecatory tone. "We knowsh your power, ant make reverensh to it by getting up, ash you say."

"Ye are a hypocritical and fear-stricken set, all of ye ever gulping ale, ye have only ale courage. Jost Stoll, woman, give me a can of thy best Island spirits. I have walked far, and am athirst and weary."

The strong potation was given her by the reluctant hostess, who dared not refuse her demand, lest, in the evil that she would visit upon her hearth-stone and roof-tree, she might lose far more than the value of a goblet. The weird woman quaffed the beverage at a draught, and, placing the cup on the bench with an emphasis, turned and looked down the bay with a steady gaze. Every eye followed hers. The sun had just touched the hills of Jersey with his lower edge, and the evening haze lifting from the water gave a dimness to distant objects. For some seconds she continued to gaze, and then suddenly cried,

"He comes!"

"Sail ho!" instantly shouted the Rhode Islander. At the same moment, a universal exclamation from the observers upon the stoope showed that all eyes had discovered the object that had attracted the attention and caused the sudden outcry of the woman.

Far down the bay, near its junction with the sea, diminished to a mere speck by the distance, and appearing not bigger than a snow-flake floating above the water, or a white gull riding on the waves, a vessel was seen entering the Narrows and standing towards the town. Instantly all was excitement. The noise and rumour of its approach flew from the Rondeel on the south even to the wall on the north. The worthy citizens, attended by their fraus and their little folk, maids and matrons, old and young, black and white, slaves and Indians, and everything that had life in New-Amsterdam, assembled in front of Jost Stoll's inn, with their eyes directed down the bay. With a steady, onward course, the vessel came gallantly up the channel, and such was the way she made that she promised to drop anchor off against the fort ere the twilight should be deepened into night. Gradually, as she approached, her form and size began to grow more distinct to the eye, and her proportions to stand out clearer.

"She is a brig but not the Ger-Falcon, I am thinking," said the warden, who had again taken his place among the crowd, his curiosity overcoming his superstitious fears albeit, he gave the sorceress a wide berth. Nor indeed was he alone in his aversion to her society; for every one present seemed instinctively to avoid her neighbourhood: so that she stood alone in an open space before the inn, intently watching, without heeding those around her, the advancing sail.

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"Vat oder prig can it pe, put te Sher-Falcon," said the skipper. "Dere ish none expected here till next Shaint Andrew's tay. De Barbadoesh packet vash just sail de Glasgow merchantman ish not due till Christmash, and tere ish put one oder prig dat trade here, vich is gone to te Golt Coast for negroesh. 'Tis te Ger-Falcon, or te pucanier Kyt himself."

"Got forbid!" was the exclamation from every tongue.

"She should carry her colours boldly aloft if she were an honest trader," said the warden. "'Tis suspicious."

"The Ger-Falcon, neighbour, was a square-rigger, I guess," said the Rhode Islander, making a focus of his closed hands, and looking long and scrutinizingly at the stranger; "if I know a mainsail from a spanker, that craft is a 'morfydite, with a reg'lar straight stem for a mainmast."

"It ish true; tish not te king's vesshel," said the schipper, looking eagerly at her. "She ish not square-rigged; nor ish she von 'morfridyte neider. She ish polacca-rigged, and has von cut-vater like a pike's nose. Dat craft ish here for no goot."

As the skipper spoke he felt in his pouch anxiously, and, drawing forth his little arrow, looked at it between doubt and confidence, and, shaking his head bodingly, walked into the taproom to comfort his spirits with a fresh can of "mum."

The oracular shake of the skipper's head seemed to have affected all present. Glances of apprehension and words of trembling inquiry were interchanged; and, fluctuating between hope and fear, they continued anxiously to watch the approaching stranger, at times turning their glances towards the witch, to see if, on her dark features, they could read a confirmation of the fears the skipper's words and mysterious manner had awakened. As the vessel came nearer, it was clearly apparent to the most unpractised eye that she was not the vessel sent out in search of the bucanier, and for which they had so long been on the watch. There was something, too, in the shape and air of the stranger, that roused their suspicions of his pacific character, and the dreaded monosyllable "Kyd" was whispered under breath from one to the other. Many an anxious eye was turned towards the Rondeel, to see if the vigilance of the town's defenders was roused, and, to the confirmation of their fears, they saw that the little garrison was on the alert; that armed men were on the walls; that the tompions were taken from the guns; and that its captain stood with his glass on the outer bastion watching the vessel, while ever and anon an order, hastening the warlike preparations, reached their ears.

The stranger, a long, sharp, polacca-rigged brigantine, came swiftly on, boldly passed Red Hook, disappeared a few moments behind the wooded swell of Governor's Island, and reappeared on the east side, within gunshot of the town. Just as the more timid citizens began to think of withdrawing to the protection of the fort or the covert of their stout stone houses, and just as a warning gun was fired from the Rondeel, she rounded to, her canvass shivered in the wind, her after sails descended to the deck by the run, and her fore sails one after the other rapidly disappeared: a moment afterward, with everything furled, she dropped her anchor, and, swinging slowly round to it, remained, dimly seen through the thickening twilight, as stationary as the island off which she was anchored. After commenting upon her appearance and character, and giving vent to their doubts and suspicions, one by one the worthy citizens retired to their well-defended mansions, trusting to the governor to keep and hold the city should it be placed in peril before the coming dawn. Elpsy was left alone where she had stood all the while, watching the vessel's approach: the red light of the western sky lighted up her dusky features with a baleful glare, and her features worked with some deep, inward emotion. She would one moment strain her eyes towards the reposing vessel, and the next, with an exclamation of disappointment, stride, with an impatient step, to and fro the narrow strand before the alehouse.

"'Tis he," she said, looking fixedly in the direction of the vessel. "'Tis the day he said he should return, and he has not deceived me. Now will I bring about that I have laboured five long years to accomplish. He shall obey me; he

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shall do it; he shall do what I command fulfil it to the letter, or he shall die. No boat yet!" she said, pausing and looking over the water. "He waits for night. He will scarce think to meet me here; but he shall not come and go again without seeing me. He escapes me no more. Let me lay my hand on his heart and get his promise to see me, and I will go back to my rock; for I know then he will come to me there."

The stars at length came out, and night took the place of the glowing twilight. The customers of Jost Stoll had returned to their homes, or were seated within, under protection of the massive shutters and bars, which, earlier than at her accustomed time, the fore-guarding landlady had placed over her windows. All was still throughout the town save the tread of the sentinel on the parapet of the Rondeel, the tramp of the night-guard going with quicker and more determined tread than usual to their posts, the regular dash of the waves on the beach, and occasionally the low, deep voice of the weird woman soliloquizing. At length, after many an earnest look and impatient word, the distant dip of oars in the direction of the brigantine reached her ears, and in a few minutes afterward, faintly visible through the darkness, a boat was seen approaching the entrance of the canal below the inn. With a glad exclamation she hastened forward to meet it.

CHAPTER II.

"The stain of crime the stain of crime
 Glows in immortal colours there!
Not e'en the coursing flood of time
 Can make that foulest plague-spot fair.
My love was thine; it would have stood
 The test of years, or falsehood even;
But thine own hand, imbued in blood,
 Hath shut to thee both earth and heaven.
Away, away! there flows 'tween thee and me
The deep, dark ocean of eternity."

The worthy burghers assembled before the inn of *frau* Jost Stoll had not been alone in their anxiety for the return of the Ger-Falcon, nor in their curiosity about the strange vessel which had sailed so boldly into their harbour.

Between the Rondeel and the alehouse, amid a park of majestic trees with a lawn before it sloping to the water, stood, as has been before described, the ancient White Hall, the gubernatorial residence of the Earl of Bellamont. It was an antiquated, rambling edifice, with divers bastion-like projections, chimneys terminating in turrets, lofty-peaked gables, and long, low wings. Running along the whole front was a balcony, upon which the windows of the second story opened, converting it into an airy and elevated promenade for the occupants of the suite of rooms connecting with it. At the eastern extremity of this terrace, which here wound round an octagonal-shaped tower obtruding from the angle, was a deep curtained window, which led into a boudoir. The slanting rays of the setting sun fell in rich tints through it upon the carpet, and, reflected from its crimson curtains, diffused a roseate light throughout the chamber. Near the centre of this apartment, which was furnished with the most costly articles of luxury, stood a superb harp, with its music lying open upon a stand beside it, as if just deserted. Paintings, of subjects tastefully appropriate for such a scene, from the pencils of the old masters, hung upon the walls, and shelves of gilded books filled the sides of a niche, in which, on a pedestal of black marble, stood a snowy statue of Calliope. In an opposite recess answering to it was a Clio; and in a third, fronting the window, was a Madonna and child, by Guido, before which, on a tall tripod of silver and ivory exquisitely carved, was placed a crucifix of gold, set with precious stones, and several books of prayer and of pious reading.

By the open window which faced the south sat a female, in the white and flowing evening costume of the times. Her face lay in the palm of her right hand, which rested on a slab supported by bronze lions that stood beneath a lofty mirror half hidden in tapestry. A guitar lay unheeded upon her lap, on the silent strings of which her fingers unconsciously lingered, while her eyes were turned towards the sea, whither, it was plain, her thoughts had also flown. At her feet was a silken flag, on which was embroidered the crest of Bellamont a boar's head and

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beneath, in Gothic characters, the letters R. F., the latter unfinished, with the needle left in it. She was exceedingly lovely, beautiful as the houris that awake the glowing lyre of the Persian bard. Her beauty was oriental too soft, languishing, dreamy, and most dangerous to look upon. The amorous sun lingered and still lingered on her olive brow, rioting on its beauty, and, to the last, entwined his golden rays among her glorious hair. And such hair! It was dark as the midnight cloud. Evenly parted on her forehead, it was turned back from her blue veined temples to the top of the head, and braided to resemble the crest of a helmet; but several flowing waves of the luxuriant braid had burst the bondage of the fillet, and now sported about her superb neck in the gentle evening wind.

Five years had passed, and Kate Bellamont had become the lovely woman she now appeared. She had grown taller, being now a little above the common height, and her ripened figure was moulded in the most finished model of feminine grace. Nothing could be more fascinatingly perfect than the undulating outline of her person; and from the rounded arm and elegant hand, to the symmetrical foot just peeping from beneath her robe, resting its tip on an ottoman, all was grace and harmony. Her features, too, were in keeping with the enhanced beauty of her person. The expression of her face was something loftier and more decided, but blending, nevertheless, much sweetness with that peculiar and graceful dignity becoming a very beautiful woman. Her dark, floating eyes were fuller of passion and thought, and far more fatal to the beholder were their animated glances. The budding loveliness of her ruby, laughing lip had changed to a sweeter and more quiet character; yet love, now a practised archer, lay hidden there still, nestled amid smiles and dimples; perhaps, too, they bore a stronger impress of pride of birth and firmness of character than heretofore. Indeed, all that the youthful maiden had promised was fulfilled in the more matured woman, and the unfolding bud had burst into glorious flower.

As she gazed forth from the window, and looked long and anxiously down the bay, which stretched before her reflecting all the hues of the gorgeously painted sky, a pensive shadow would at times steal across her features, and a sigh escape her bosom; then, with a conscious blush, she would drop her eyes, thrum a nervous note or two on the guitar, and again bend her searching, wishful gaze over the water.

At length, just as the sun was setting, a vessel appeared afar off in the entrance of the harbour, and with an exclamation of joy she bounded to the balcony, and watched, with no less interest than the skipper and his companions had done, its approach towards the town. As it came nearer, a look of disappointment clouded her features, and anxiety and suspicion began to take the place of hope.

"No, it is not he; such was not the fashion of his sails; nor does the flag of England fly from her mast as it is wont to do. Heaven forbid that accident should have befallen him. Oh, that he would return and relieve my anxious watching. Yet perhaps this stranger may bring me news of him."

As this thought occurred to her, she watched the motions of the vessel with renewed interest, until she dropped anchor within gunshot of the town. The gun from the Rondeel, and the confused murmur of voices from the inn below, increased her curiosity; and the deepening twilight still found her at the window, with her eyes fixed on the scarcely visible hull, as if, although it might not contain him she looked for, it was yet in some way connected with her destinies.

Elsy, it will be remembered, after her appearance at the inn of Jost Stoll, waited until nightfall, and then, hearing the approach of a boat from the strange vessel, hastened to meet it. It pulled in close by a large rock; and as the person it bore stepped to the beach, she at once knew him by his bearing to be him she sought. He gave a few brief orders to his men, warning them to be guarded against surprise, and then, wrapping his mantle about him, first loosening his sword in its scabbard and bringing his pistols round to be ready for use, he moved across the beach towards the silent inn. She permitted him to pass her unseen, and followed him till he reached the open space in front of the alehouse, when, seeing him pause as if to reconnoitre, she approached him from behind and lightly touched his arm.

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Quick as lightning, his hand was upon her throat, and a pistol was held to her heart. But as quickly the hand was released and the weapon put up.

"Is it thou, Elpsy? Thou shouldst come less stealthily upon a man who is accustomed to the use of steel. Had I not recognised thy accursed shape, not to be mistaken even in this faint star-light, thou wouldst have caused me to shed thy blood. What wouldst thou?"

"The fulfilment of thy promise."

"Have they come?"

"All. 'Tis five weeks since the ship that bore them from the old country anchored in the harbour."

"All?"

"All, even thy that is, even to the Lady Lester!"

"Ah, the poor lady! Does she live?"

"Scarcely. For years she shut herself in her castle; but the Earl of Bellamont, pitying her loneliness and her sorrows, a year since did prevail on her to take up her abode at Castle Cor."

"And so, when he was appointed governor, she came hither with him? I would see her, Elpsy."

"Nay, thou hadst better not. There is one who alone will demand all thy time and thought! Hast thou the will to perform? will no faint-heartedness come over thee?"

"None, I love her still. Time only increases my passion. Five years has given me worldly lessons. I am ready to fulfil the vow I made to thee when in port a few months ago, in expectation of her arrival, and now assert my claim to the rank and title of Lester, for I have been taught that kings have been bastards, and bastards kings."

"And to this title seek to annex that of the house of Bellamont?"

"But will she hear me still? I fear even thy art, aided by thy subtlest filters, could not make her love if love has once died in her heart."

"It will depend on thee as it chance that thou love her or her title more."

"I care not for her title so I be once more her accepted wooer. Elpsy," he said, with animation, "I have loved this maiden well; never, save when sleeping nor even then, for my dreams were of her alone have I ceased to think of her. There is none, save thyself, that know I am not the true Lester?"

"None. Even Lady Lester still mourns thee as her son, and would be first to hail thee."

"The Mark Meredith?"

"Is lost at sea, and so thou art the only claimant."

"Canst prove it?"

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"His name appeared, 'tis said, in every print, as one lost in a king's ship, that went down at sea, in a storm off Calais four years ago."

"'Tis better than I thought. Yet he was a brave lad! Does Lady Lester know of thy presence here?"

"She lives secluded in the White Hall, and knows naught that passeth in the world. But did she, am I not beyond the reach of justice, should she seek my death on suspicion of slaying thee? Was I not tried and nothing found against me as how should there be? I am an exile and under sentence. Ha, ha, law cannot reach me; and man, unaided by it, dare not. I reign here; I rule all minds. It is they who fear, not I. They are the slaves of superstition, and I make them obedient to my will. Even thou, proud man, dost acknowledge my power."

"I do, Elpsy."

"Therefore shalt thou have its aid in thy wooing."

"Nay, first let me try my fortunes on the footing of our former love."

"If she will not listen to thee?"

"She will."

"Wilt thou resign her if she will not?"

He was silent for a moment, and then said,

"What would you have me do?"

"Take her with thee to thy vessel once there, thy will must be her will. I shall give thee neither rest nor peace, on sea or land, till thou art the acknowledged Earl of Lester, and, by marriage, Lord of Bellamont. Go. Where you see the light burning in yonder window is her chamber. I saw her there as the sun went down. Go, and when thou hast spoken with her, come to my hut and tell me how thou art received. See thou lag not, for I have prepared the rites thou hast sought of me and if thou wouldst have thy buried treasures hid from mortal eyes, and prosper in what thou undertakest, see thou art with me before the midnight hour."

"Stay, Elpsy; should she discover that Kyd and Lester are the same?"

"Then," said the woman, in a sneering and malicious tone of voice, "thou wilt have to woo the rougher, and 'twill be more to thy credit if thou carry her off. Would it humble thy pride to have her know it?"

"By Heaven, did I believe she did, I would not go near her."

The witch laughed in such a way that he half suspected her of betraying him. He laid his hand on her shoulder, and said quickly,

"Woman, thou hast told her, to gratify thy malicious soul."

"Think you I would crush the seed, when, by a little patience, I can pluck the fruit of the full-grown tree? Go, boy!"

As she spoke she pointed towards the White Hall. He left her without replying, and walked in the direction of the mansion, which stood silent and majestic amid its noble grove of oaks.

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As the night advanced, lights were brought into the boudoir of Kate Bellamont. Turning away from the window with a sigh of disappointment, she struck a few sad notes on her guitar, and then, throwing it aside, took up the flag she was embroidering, and began mechanically to ply the needle, occasionally pausing in her graceful toil, with her head inclined towards the open window, as if she fancied she heard sounds from the water. Suddenly she started and sprung to the balcony. The regular dip of oars now struck distinctly upon her ears, each instant approaching nearer and nearer, and a dim object soon advanced from the distant gloom; and, as it came swiftly on, she could distinguish the bodies of men and the outline of a boat boldly relieved against the glassy flood. In a few seconds it was hidden by an oak and a clump of shrubbery, but she could hear it still as it made its way towards the entrance of the canal in front of the "Boat and Anchor," as the inn of Jost Stoll was designated. After listening a while longer, and hearing nothing to confirm her hopes that it bore a message to the White Hall, she re-entered her boudoir and once more resumed her embroidery. This in a little while she restlessly cast aside, and, approaching her harp, struck its golden chords, and, accompanying it by her voice, sung, in a wild and thrilling strain, a popular Irish air. Now slow and solemn sounded the deep, majestic notes; now light and free; now soft, and touching, and most melancholy, even to sadness, they wailed beneath the magic touch of her fingers her voice, or deep as an angel's trumpet, or soft as a guitar, or clear as a flute, or wild and high like a clarion, following in faultless harmony through the rangeless fields of melody.

"Like an emerald gem on the breast of the sea, Dear Erin, my home! is thy vision to me; As the sun to the day as the moon to the night, Is thy thought to my soul 'tis its warmth and its light. "Sweet clime of my kindred loved land of my birth! The fairest, the dearest, the brightest on earth; Oh! where'er I may roam howe'er bless'd I may be, My spirit all lonely returns unto thee. "There first budded passion there burst into bloom The flower of young hope though it droop'd to the tomb! But that brief life of love! though whole ages may roll O'er my heart in despondence 'tis fresh in my soul. "Let the winds wildly blow let the waves madly rise, Till the storm sprite's libation is flung in the skies; Still my spirit will seek, o'er the ocean's bright foam, For my home in dear Erin my own native home!" [1]

The last notes of the music were trembling on the chords, and the maiden stood as if entranced by her own strains, when a noise like the flitting of a humming-bird in the chamber caused her to start, and, at the same instant, something glittered past her eyes and fell at her feet. She stooped to lift it from the carpet with an exclamation between fear and surprise.

"A silver arrow! What can it mean? Ha! surely I have seen it before no, no, it cannot be! I will examine it! what strange recollections what long buried memories start up! I will see if my suspicions are true!"

She held it to the light with a trembling hand, and with undisguised astonishment read: "Field of Archery, Castle For, May, MDCXCIV."

"Merciful Heaven!" she almost shrieked, "it is *it is the same!* Who can have done this? Whence came it? 'Tis Lester!"

"It is Lester!" repeated a deep, rich voice.

She turned with a half cry and startled look towards the window, and, to her terror, beheld standing just without on the balcony, in the shadow of the curtain, a tall dark figure enveloped in a cloak, his features shaded by sable plumes drooping over his brow from a Spanish hat looped boldly up in front.

She would have shrieked, but her surprise and alarm for a moment denied her utterance. She leaned on her harp for support, and gazed on the intruder without the power to move. He advanced a step and stood within the window. The movement restored her presence of mind, and with a degree of self-possession that surprised herself, and in the tone and manner of one who feels herself insulted by intrusion rather than intimidated by the presence of the intruder, she cried,

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"Stand, sir, whoever thou art! Approach no nearer, or I alarm the Hall."

As she spoke she extended her hand towards a silver bell that stood on a table near her. Quicker than thought, the stranger's hand was upon hers, and he was kneeling, without cloak or bonnet, at her feet. Surprise, rather than fear, rooted her to the spot. She gazed on him with astonishment; and, as she gazed, her features worked with extraordinary emotion. The light shone full upon his face, and exhibited the features of a fair, handsome man, scarce twenty-five, with light flowing hair, an eye like a hawk's, and a figure of the most noble and manly proportions. He wore a short Flemish cloak of green cloth, richly embroidered, and a short Spanish sword, with a jewelled hilt, hung at his side. His face was lifted to hers with eloquent pleading. She met his gaze with a wild, alarmed look clasped her hands on her forehead as if she would recall the past, and steadfastly fixed her eyes upon him as if tracing in his features a resemblance that startled her.

"Kate."

Soft were the tones of his deep, rich voice as he spoke, and full of tenderness were his eyes as he lifted them to hers.

"Robert of Lester!" she cried, starting back as if memory had vividly returned at the sound of his voice.

"I am he," was the reply of the stranger, bending his head lowly, as if deprecating her displeasure.

"Leave me, sir," she said, haughtily, though returning love was evidently struggling for the mastery over her sense of right. As she spoke she drew herself up commandingly, though her bosom heaved with emotion, and her averted eyes contra-dicted her words.

"Dearest Kate!"

"Robert of Lester, I bid you leave me. Your presence is an intrusion, sir."

"Lady," he said, with tenderness, "do you not remember when, five years since, you placed, with your own fair hands, the arrow you now hold in them, in my bonnet."

"Nay, bring not up the past; 'tis buried long forgotten," she cried, nervously, and in a voice tremulous with feeling. "Would to God you had not appeared to revive it."

"Lady," he continued, in a soft, subdued tone, that touched her heart, "does not love's early dream "

"That dream is o'er. Oh, that you would cease to recall what will only render me miserable!" she added, with feeling, burying her face in her hands.

"Is there no room for pardon none for forgiveness? Hear me, Kate! dearest Kate! You who were my playmate in childhood who in youth first awakened love in this bosom. Dash not the cup of hope for ever to the ground! I have sought thee, and now kneel to thee, to tell thee how fondly, how madly I love "

"Cease, sir. This is no language for me to hear. Once but, no matter 'tis past. If you have aught to say touching matters foreign to this, speak, and I can listen; then, prithee depart. Oh, that thou hadst kept away from me for ever! The sight of thee has torn my heart!"

"Then there is hope?"

"None."

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"Hast forgotten," he said, with passionate tenderness, "how often we have sailed together on the little mere by Castle More; how together we have pursued the stag through the forests of Castle Cor; how oft we have rambled by the shores of its bay by moonlight, entwined in each other's arms as we walked; how we loved one another, and did pledge in the sight of Heaven undying love "

"Robert, Robert " she cried, moved by the touching images he had recalled.

"Have you forgotten," he continued, in the same tone, rising and advancing a step nearer to her, while she leaned against the harp, nor thought to retreat from him, "oh, have you quite forgotten all this? Can you recall it and bid me leave thee? Will you spurn him you have loved and still love "

"Hold, hold! I love thee not! no, no, I love thee not. You presume too much, sir," she added, starting from her attitude, and with difficulty assuming a haughty bearing. "A maiden may once love, and, finding she has loved unworthily, hate!"

"Dearest Kate," he said, in a tone that reminded her of the days when they were lovers, gently taking her hand.

"Nay, stand back, sir!" she cried, troubled and with difficulty governing the tones of her voice, which returning love fain would have fashioned in its own sweet way.

"Nay, dearest Kate, you love me still! Wherefore this shrinking form and averted eye this wild look of alarm this struggle to reprove when your heart gushes with returning love? Why do you gaze on me with looks of horror! At one moment terror is depicted on your face, at another tenderness takes its place. It could not be thus if you scorned me!"

"Robert, I cannot listen to you 'tis dangerous fatal. If I did love you still, thy crimes "

"Ha! do you know me!"

"As `the Kyd.' "

"Who told thee this?" he asked, fiercely.

"Elsy."

"When?"

"Yesterday!"

"The foul fiend!" he cried, pacing the floor. He then muttered, "So this plan is defeated. I can no longer rewoo her as Lester! Ten minutes since, this false witch told me that none save herself knew that the bastard Lester and Kyd were one! I would have made her believe I had returned from five years of honourable exile, to which her anger had banished me, and penitent, wooed her as Lester, as I have promised the sorceress for I can do now what then I could not do: five years of crime makes a wonderful difference in a man's feelings! Yet I will deny all. She should believe me before this witch."

Such were the thoughts that run rapidly through his mind as he walked the room. Turning round to her, he said, in the tone of voice that innocence would assume,

"Alas, dearest Kate! has this baleful sorceress, with envenomed breath, instilled her poison in a flower so fair. Alas, and were I `the Kyd,' would you, with the taproom gossips of the babbling town, believe me such as

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Rumour with her hundred tongues would make me? Shall I to *her* refer this altered air this cold look this hand that's neither given nor withdrawn? Dost remember when first we parted after our plighted vows beneath the linden by the southern tower of Castle Cor ('twas the third day before thy birthday, I remember it well); thy heart against mine beat wildly thy head lay upon my breast my arm encircled thy waist my lips were pressed to thine and this 'kerchief, bearing thy initials wrought by thine own fingers, and which I have kept sacred as the pious monk a relic of the cross, was saturate with tears *thy* tears, Kate. And thus, though five long years have separated us, do we meet now!"

"Fore Heaven, sir! hast thou not given cause?" she exclaimed, recovering herself after a brief but terrible struggle with her feelings, for she was fast melting at his words. "Dost remember how thou didst leave me, and to what end? Hast forgotten thy crimes? I am mad to talk with thee. Thou art no longer Lester. In thee alone I see the freebooter, the bucanier, the terrible Kyd! Shame that a noble, for a light word spoken by a spirited maiden in anger, should thus have cast himself away!"

"I had other cause thou dost yet believe me to be Lester but "

"I will hear no palliation thou hast thrown thyself away when, if thou hadst really loved me, thou wouldst have come back and sought to heal the breach."

"I would have done it but "

"Thou didst not. Therefore are we no longer aught to each other!"

"Thy words tell me what I have scarce dared to hope that thou wouldst have received and pardoned me! But there was an impassable barrier "

"Which was thy pride. Fatal, fatal has it been to thee."

"Nay, but a dark stain "

"Enough, Robert of Lester! I will hear no more in extenuation or plea. Let this interview cease."

She turned from him as she spoke, though it evidently cost her an effort to do so, and made a step towards the door communicating with the main body of the mansion.

"Lady! Kate dear Kate," he cried, passionately, approaching her and kneeling before her, "you have said you would have received me had I then returned. If thy love was true love, five years should not kill it, but increase it rather. Behold me returned; forget the long lapse of time; see me only at thy feet to atone the deep offence given on thy birthday, which has so long separated us; receive me as if but a day, and not years, had intervened; take me once more to the throne of thy affections; let me again be the Lester of thy early years the Lester whom thou hast loved *thy* Lester thy "

"Nay, Robert," she cried, with softness, yet turning her head away as she spoke, as if fearing to trust herself to meet his glance; "nay, it may not be. I pity you; but love! love? no, no, it lives no longer. Then art thou not guilty?" she cried, with sudden energy, recoiling from him. "Thou didst make me for the moment forget Kyd in Lester. Go, thou art not the Lester I have known. I no longer love thee, Robert; and if I did, crime on thy part has placed between us a wall high as heaven!"

"I am not so guilty as you believe, lady; but, if I have sinned against thee, thus here at thy feet I do atone my deep offence."

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"Rise, sir. I accuse you not; with Heaven lies the knowledge of your guilt. But, if conscience goad thee not to it, why thus a suppliant?"

"Conscience useth neither spur nor exhortation. If I am proved innocent, yet is the homage of my knee still due to thee as the divinity that my soul for years has worshipped."

"Enough, sir! I tremble to hear thee link my name with such gross impiety. Detain me no longer."

"Dear Lady Kate!" he pleaded, entreatingly.

"Release my hand! and remember," she added, with a suddenness characteristic of this *capricieuse création*, "when you fashion your speech, that you address Lady Catharine of Bellamont!"

She drew back haughtily as she spoke, and the guilty lover bent his head low before the reproof, while resentment and grief were mingled in the expression of his countenance.

"Lady," he said, without looking up, and speaking in a voice apparently modulated by injured feelings, "do you believe the tales of crime men charge me with?"

"How else," she replied, pausing and turning back, losing, in her just resentment, the lover in the pirate, and speaking in tones of virtuous dignity, "How else? 'Tis rife on every tongue. Thy deeds are the undying theme of fireside wonder and village gossip. Nay, mothers use the dreaded name of Kyd to scare rude children to obedience!"

"By the cross!" he cried, starting up and speaking with fierce vehemence, "'tis all a foul invention; an idle tale and lying calumny; the escaped bile of some long-festering sore, nourished and fattened in the breast of scandal. Nay, dear Kate," he continued, changing his manner and voice, and speaking as if he made light of it all, "'tis not worth a passing thought! 'Tis an old-wives' tale only; and for such inventions thou hast too much good sense to crush the hopes of years; thou hast," he added, tenderly, "too deep remembrance of our former love to tear a heart that, like the rootless mistletoe which borrows life from that it clings to, lives only by its hold on thine!"

"Robert," she said, moved by the solemn and impassioned tones of his voice, his pleading look, his face upturned to hers, all eloquent with love and bringing him, as in happier days, before her memory, "Robert, I once loved you how truly, Heaven and my own heart were witnesses. Thou wert virtuous then, and helmeted with truth, and thy heart was girt about with honour, like plate of proof. Thy look was noble, and thy port such as became the nobleness within. I was proud of thee. Absent, I treasured thee in my heart of hearts, and lived only was happy only, in thy presence! When Rumour came trumpeting your misdeeds, *I* was the *last* to believe them true."

"Kate dearest Kate "

"Nay, speak not. Your tongue and eyes are not yet drilled to play their parts together."

"Kate I entreat "

"True love for a noble maiden should have been to thee a shield and buckler, Robert, and kept thee from this sad fall."

"Lady, you do me wrong. My hand, but not my heart, has erred "

"I have not yet done. From one source, that mingles not with the noisy torrent Rumour has let loose throughout the world, I've gathered most certain proof that you are guilty both in heart and hand. Ay, men do not, for very

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fear, tell the half of what thou hast done."

"This source the witch?"

"No. Long had I heard of Kyd the outlaw; long had crime and guilt, in shapes most dreadful and appalling, come to my shrinking ears coupled with his name. Night and day, as we crossed the sea, was double watch set, lest he should come upon us unawares. Everywhere did I hear of him and his deeds of blood, till I did believe him to be a demon human only in shape, let on earth for its punishment. 'Twas from one who had been thy prisoner I heard the sanguinary tale. 'Twas told me ere I knew thee other than the world knew thee for 'twas only yesterday Elpsy told me, what before had crossed my mind as the mere shadow of a suspicion, banished as soon as it came, that thou wert Lester, and that revenge against me had driven thee to piracy. This I believe not; Heaven keep me from answering for thy guilt rather attribute it to thy own evil passions, and, I fear, an innate love for rapine; for how else wouldst thou have torn thy noble mother's heart (I speak not of hers to whom thy troth was plighted), and foregone thy rank and title among men?"

"If thou didst know all, lady, thou wouldst not judge me thus "

"Thou canst say nothing I will believe. He who told me is, as once thou wert, the soul of truth and honour!"

"Who is this Daniel come to judgment?" asked the bucanier, with irony.

"A naval officer, who was taken prisoner in the Indian Seas by a rover, and afterward made his escape by stratagem."

"This rover?"

"Thyself."

"There is but one of rank above a common sailor who was my captive and escaped," he muttered, turning away as if recalling the past; "Fitzroy I think was his name; it may be he; if so, I will no longer urge my innocence, but woo her under my proper colours. Pray," he said, abruptly addressing her in a voice in which awakened jealousy was mingled with sarcasm, "hast thou ever chanced to know a youthful officer called Fitzroy?"

"Fitzroy!" she repeated, with embarrassment, while the blood mounted to her cheek in a way in which it never does in a maiden's save when a lover is suddenly named.

"Ay, I said Fitzroy. Is there aught in the name to call up the rich blood to the face? Fitzroy's the name—Rupert Fitzroy, I think!"

In her agitation her eyes involuntarily turned to the spot where she had dropped the colours she was working, and, to her increased confusion, the letters she had just completed met her eye. His glance followed hers, and instantly he exclaimed, with an eye sparkling with jealousy and surprise,

"By the rood! lady, there are the very initials! So this pretty bit of bunting can tell tales! Now, by the cross, I see it all," he said, walking the room with anger and speaking in an under tone; "behind this tale of my deeds she let slip so glibly, and under cover of believing it, she fain would conceal her transferred love. Woman," he cried, sternly addressing her, "know you this Rupert Fitzroy well?"

"You hold no right to question me," she firmly replied, "and I refuse to answer."

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"So, I have a rival! 'Tis love for another, and not hatred of the crimes you lay to my charge, that leads you to scorn me thus. The arms of thy house above his name! Ha! 'tis a well-ripened love! I'll find it out; and if he who stands between me and thee be on the sea or wide earth, I will cross blades with him. A proper youth, that thou art ashamed to own him perhaps the young fisher's lad has taken my place I have heard he took to the seas."

"Even he, if honourable, were worthier than thou, with the nobility which thou hast dishonoured. But he no longer lives. Lest you give wrong motives to my silence, I will confess to thee that I do know a Captain Fitzroy Rupert Fitzroy once your captive by most foul-handed treachery now as far removed above you as the eagle, that looks unblenching on the sun, above the tortoise."

"You love him?"

"I do."

"Then, by the holy Heaven! thou shalt repent thy love and he, crossing my path ere the sun, that shall rise to-morrow, be a month older."

As he spoke he turned from her and disappeared through the window, leaving her overwhelmed with surprise, wonder, and alarm. She heard him strike the ground as he sprung from the low balcony, and listened with trembling to his departing footsteps as they rapidly crossed the lawn towards the seaside. For a few moments she remained standing as he had left her, as if endeavouring to realize what had passed, her eyes strained, her hands clasped across her forehead, her lips parted.

"Oh God, that this had been spared me!" she cried, with the bitterness of a soul surcharged with intense grief. "Have I seen him? Was it he? His voice his air oh, it was Lester's self! he whom I have never ceased to love whom but these are dangerous thoughts I must think of him no more. Oh crime, crime! what a deep and impassable gulf hast thou placed between us! Yet I have seen him, spoken with him! His hand has pressed mine in gentleness as it was wont. Oh how the past came back! time seemed obliterated, and I could at one moment have given myself up to him but crime, crime! No, no, I must think no more of him; yet I am not sorry I have beheld him once more. Strange that, after so many years, and years of crime, have elapsed, he should still be dear to me! No, no, he is not dear to me not *he* as he is it is Lester of my youth it is he that I love he I alone think of, whose memory I can never cease to cherish; but this guilty being I know not! Yet he is Lester! My poor, poor head my poor heart how they strive with one another. Oh that my love could wash out his crimes! But whither do my thoughts wander? The sight of him has made me forget that I am no longer a wild girl at Castle Cor. I must root out this young love, and try no longer to identify myself now with myself then. I am now the betrothed of another of another who has won me by his sympathy and gentleness, by his nobleness and his honour, by his manly virtues, and the deep devotion of his pure and elevated love. Rupert, I will not be false to thee; the trial is over. Henceforward I will fill my heart with thee alone, though I did tell thee, when thou didst woo me on the sea, that I would not give it all up to thee; that in one part was sacredly embalmed the sad memory of a first, yet unworthy love!"

Such were the conflicting thoughts that were passing through the mind of the troubled maiden, when she was startled by a low tap at the door. It was a second time repeated before she could command her voice to bid the applicant enter. The door slowly opened, and the family confessor of the Earl of Bellamont entered the boudoir. He was a man of commanding figure, with light flowing hair, and a peaked, auburn beard reaching to his breast, giving the appearance of the usual pictorial representations of the Saviour. He was about fifty years of age, and in the full prime and vigour of life. His forehead was white and high, his features noble, and his face eminently handsome, with a gay and youthful expression, while a light smile played constantly about his fine mouth. The under lip had a slight voluptuous fulness, with which the soft expression of his sparkling blue eyes harmonized, while both gave intimation of a liberality in morals by no means in strict conformity with the letter of his order.

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Though holding the station of confessor in Lord Bellamont's family, Father Nanfan had not come with him from England. Twenty years before, a hermit had taken up his abode in a cave among the cliffs of Hoboken; his country, name, or order no one knew. He soon acquired great reputation for sanctity, and his fame spread far and wide. At length Governor Fletcher, hearing of him, visited him, and, for some cause which has not transpired, prevailed upon him to live with him as his private secretary. Subsequently, Father Nanfan won the confidence and esteem of the first Robert Livingston and other leaders of the time, and, through his talents, knowledge, and ambition, exercised great influence in the government. He moved the wires of the famous Leslierian rebellion, and, though unacknowledged, was the real leader of the faction. When Bellamont succeeded Fletcher, he had sufficient influence with the party to induce them to adhere to the new governor, who rewarded him by appointing him his private secretary and family confessor. He had been an inmate of the White Hall but a few days, when, concealed beneath his religious guise, Kate Bellamont thought she detected a dangerous and bad man. It might have been imagination, for she confessed that neither by word nor look had he given ground for such suspicion; yet, from the first, she had felt a dislike towards him, and experienced a fear in being alone in his presence, which she could neither define, nor, on any reasonable grounds, defend.

He paused an instant, with his hand upon the half-closed door, as he saw the embarrassment of her manner, and fixed upon her inquiringly his large penetrating eyes, and then said, in a voice the words of which alone conveyed a reproof, for the gentle tone in which they were addressed to her were calculated to alarm from their tenderness rather than from their severity,

"Thou wert not present at vespers, maiden; and, at the bidding of thy noble mother, I have sought thee to learn why of late thy thoughts are more given to earthly than to heavenly things. If thou wilt kneel, I will now confess thee here."

"Nay, father, I will meet thee at matins and there confess. Beshrew me, sir, thou art full bold, and art disposed to carry thy priestly privileges to their full compass, that you intrude upon a lady in her private chamber. Hast heard me, sir? I would be alone; or, if thou wilt remain, thou art at liberty to do so, if first thou wilt move from the door and permit me to pass out."

"Nay, daughter, thou art troubled; the quick flush the startled eye the timid aspect thou dost need to disburden thy heart!"

"I bid thee leave me," she cried, with mingled alarm and aversion.

"Calm your spirits, lady," he said, closing the door, and taking her hand ere she could prevent him, though she instantly withdrew it with a quick impulsive action, and retreated towards the window.

"Lady, I see you know me; you have read aright the admiring expression of my eyes when first I met thee the devoted deference of my manner the impassioned tones of my voice. Yes, sweet Lady Catharine, thy charms have fired me thy image has taken the place of that of the Virgin Mother in my heart; for one smile, one look from thee, I am ready to sacrifice even my hopes of Heaven!"

He kneeled at her feet as he spoke, and his noble features, noble even through the guilt that shadowed them, were animated with passionate ardour.

"Hoary blasphemer, silence! Thank Heaven that gave me secret and instinctive warning of thy black character! Leave me, sir, or I shall call on my father!"

"He is not within hearing," he said, rising and taking both her hands; "and, if thou shouldst rouse his vengeance against me, his life, not mine, would be the sacrifice. So, if thou lovest him, beware!"

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"Release me, then, sir. Coward false priest unhand me."

"One kiss from those voluptuous lips," he said, throwing his arm about her waist, "for full long have I fasted from beauty's favours."

"Ho, within there!" she shrieked.

Instantly he released her hand, but said, in a hoarse whisper, while his eyes flashed with resentment,

"If thou alarm the house, or give the least shadow of a hint of what has passed, and evil to me do come of it, the lives of all dear to thee shall be the sacrifice. If you will not love me, you shall fear me. Beware!" The next moment, changing his manner, he said, "Lady, it was but a momentary passion; it is passed; thy matchless beauty maddened me; fear me no longer. Forever keep silence, and thou wilt hear no more of my illmatched love. Wilt thou forgive me, lady?"

"Seek it first of Heaven, dreadful man, if heavenward thou hast the boldness to lift thine eyes."

"Can I now hope to confess thee, maiden?"

"*Thou*, hypocrite! If it be that thou canst thus deceive thyself, and mingle holiness with sin, I am not to be part with thee in thy sacrilege! No, sir; rather would I ask absolution at the hands of the arch fiend than at thine. I know thee!"

"And of thy knowledge shalt thou one day reap the bitter fruit," he said, in a voice and with a changed manner that intimated a threat.

"I do not fear thee, trusting in a power stronger than thou!"

"Thou wouldst have made a sublime priestess! Indignation but adds dignity to thy beauty, and excitement gives richness to thy cheek, brilliancy to thine eyes, and the haughty curl of thy lip is but the more tempting with its ripe fulness unrolled. By Heaven, I will not be thwarted; I am no mewly boy, to be frightened at a woman's frown. I will clasp thee in my arms, and ravish a kiss from that mouth, which even scorn cannot make less lovely, in punishment for thy pride!"

As he spoke he approached, and was about to clasp her in his embrace, when he received a blow from a mace which felled him to the floor, and the next instant the sorceress was standing above him, with one foot upon his chest.

"Ha, ha, ha! we are well met, Father Nanfan. 'Tis thus thou dost assoilzie the souls of maidens, by first teaching them to sin! Oh, thou hypocrite. But there will be a time! Nay, thou canst not get up," she added, pressing the end of her mace hard upon his forehead as he struggled to rise. "Maiden, I have saved thy lips from pollution! and thou, monster, do I not know thee? Oh, ho! Get thee up and go!"

As she spoke she stepped aside from his body, and he rose to his feet, his countenance black with mingled fury and shame.

"Foul witch, I will have thy life and thou, haughty lady, shalt not escape me!"

He was passing swiftly, with gestures of vengeance, from the room, when the sorceress laid her hand upon him.

"Beware, I bid thee! Me thou canst not injure! her thou shalt not!"

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"Who shall hinder me, woman? I will have thee, ere to-morrow's sun, burned at the stake!"

"And I will have thee hung higher than ever Haman was, if thou move a step towards it. I know thee, and thy life is in my hands!"

"Ha! you speak mysteriously!"

"Do I? But there is no mystery about thee that Elpsy cannot unravel."

"Speak, woman!"

"Thou darest not harm me, nor do injury to any one I would protect; for I have the key to thy secret, and, therefore, to thy life."

"Thou! Who am I, then? What secret?" he hoarsely demanded.

She approached him, and whispered low in his ear.

He started back as if he had been struck with a dagger, and, staring upon her with wild surprise, in which intense alarm was mingled, cried,

"Who art thou, in Heaven's name?"

"Elpsy the sorceress!"

"But beside?"

"No matter."

"Wonderful woman! Thy unholy arts could alone have given thee this secret. Thou art indeed to be feared."

"Obey me, then, and secret it shall ever be."

"Speak; what would you?"

"Swear never to harbour revenge against this maiden, or any one of the house of Bellamont; of myself I speak not, for I do not fear thee! Dost thou swear?"

"By the sacred cross, I do."

"Thou art safe, then, so long as thou shalt keep thine oath. Go!"

The priest slowly left the chamber, and, as he closed the door behind him, the sorceress darted from the window upon the balcony, and disappeared in the darkness as suddenly as she had appeared, leaving the maiden overwhelmed with shame, anger, and wonder at the scenes and events in which she had borne so singular a part.

CHAPTER III.

"Lo! now in yonder deep and gloomy cave
Th' unholy hags their spells of mischief weave
Raise the infernal chant; while at the sound

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Dread spirits seem to dance the caldron round,
And fiends of awful shape from earth and hell
With direful portents aid the magic spell."

C. Donald M'Leod.

When Robert Lester, now Kyd the pirate, left the presence of Kate Bellamont, without seeking the stone steps that descended to the lawn, he leaped from the low balcony to the ground, and strode, at a pace made quick and firm by the strength of his feelings, towards a gate that opened into the lane in which the inn of Jost Stoll was situated. Avoiding the narrow street, though it was silent and deserted, he turned his footsteps aside towards the beach, and, winding round a ledge of rocks wildly piled together, with a few shrubs and a dwarf cedar or two clinging in the clefts, he came to the mouth of the canal, where his boat lay half hidden in the shadow of a huge overhanging rock.

"Who comes," challenged one of several men that were standing around.

He was too much wrapped in his own dark thoughts to hear or give reply, and was only roused to a consciousness of his position by the cocking of pistols and the repetition of the challenge in a sharper tone.

"The Silver Arrow!" he answered, briefly.

"The captain! Advance!" was the reply.

"Ho, Lawrence, you are alert. Yet it should be so, for we are surrounded by enemies. You must learn, nevertheless, to challenge lower under the guns of a fort. By the moving of lights and show of bustle on the ramparts, we have already drawn the attention of the honest Dutch warriors whom our English governors have seen fit to retain to man their works."

"It's to save linstocks, by making them touch off the pieces with their pipes," said Lawrence; "their powder always smells more of tobacco than sulphur."

"A truce to this. Man your oars and put off," said Kyd, in a stern tone.

The men knew by the change in his voice that their chief was in a humour that was not to be disregarded; and scarcely had the orders passed from his lips, before every man was in his seat, with his oars elevated in the air. The coxswain, Lawrence, at the same time took his place at the helm, and in a low tone said,

"All's ready."

"Shove off and let fall," cried Kyd, in the same suppressed tone, springing into the stern-sheets.

"What course, captain?"

"Hell Gate," was the deep response, as he seated himself in the stern and wrapped his cloak about him.

"Give way, lads," followed this information, from the coxswain, and swiftly the barge shot out from the mouth of the canal; doubling the south point of the town, it moved rapidly up the narrow sound between Long and Manhattan Islands, now called East River, and was soon lost in the gloom.

When Kyd parted from Elpsy before the inn, she had remained standing in the place in which he had left her until his form was lost beneath the trees surrounding the White Hall; then, turning towards the street that led by a

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devious route in the direction of the north gate of the city, she walked a few moments rapidly along in the deep shade cast by the far-projecting roofs of the low Dutch mansions. Suddenly she stopped.

"He may have a faint heart," she muttered, as if her thoughts run upon the interview between the pirate and noble maiden. "She will not now accept him as Lester after I have told her who Lester has become. Oh, I did it to make him use force in his wooing. I would not have him, after all that has passed in the last five years, win her with honour to herself. I would have her humbled. I would have her become Lady Lester against her own will. And if he has remaining in his memory a tittle of her former scorn of him, he will love to repay her thus. Yet I doubt. I will go back and see that I am not thwarted. Never shall I rest, in grave or out, till he is Lord of Lester, and Kate Bellamont his wedded wife."

She turned as she spoke, and, retracing her steps towards the inn, continued on past it towards the wicket that opened into the park, and, gliding beneath the trees, stole towards the window of the maiden's chamber, directed by the light that shone through the foliage that climbed about it. Aided by her white staff, she was cautiously ascending a flight of steps that connected the extremity of the balcony with the lawn, when she heard Kyd's angry words at parting, saw him rush forth, leap to the ground, and take his swift way towards his boat. Her first impulse was to call him back; but, suppressing it, she softly approached the window for the purpose of using her own fearful power over the minds of all with whom she came in contact, in giving a turn more favourable to her design to the alarmed maiden's mind. She was arrested by the entrance of the priest as she was in the act of entering the chamber, and drew instantly back into the shadow. But she gradually moved forward into the light of the lamp, and, as her eyes rested on his features, they grew bloodshot with the intensity of her gaze. Her face was thrust forward almost into the room, her long scragged neck was stretched to its full length, and her whole person advanced with the utmost eagerness. It could not have been the words of the priest or his manner that caused an excitement so sudden and extraordinary. She evidently discovered in him a resemblance that surprised her, while it filled her soul with a savage and vengeful joy.

"It is he!" she gasped. "Ever before have I met him cowed! He, he alone! I would know him in hell! Ha, I have lived for something! Oh, this knowledge is worth to me mines of gold! I would have sold my soul for it! The same brow, still almost as fair; the same mouth, the same rich light in the eyes, and, save his beard, almost as young as when last we met. Ha! 'tis he. We have met to some purpose now. Ho, ho! am I not getting work to do? This is a new matter on my hands. I will plot upon it. Ha, dares he? The hoary lecher! Nay, she has flung him back! 'Tis a proper maiden!" she added, as she saw the priest foiled in his attempt to sully the purity of the noble girl's lips.

Thus run the current of the weird woman's thoughts. With fierce resentment, she listened to the interview between the confessor and his penitent; and when a second time she saw him approach her with unhallowed lip, she sprung upon him: but whether to save the honour of the maiden's cheek, or prompted by some feminine feeling known only to herself, will, if it is not already so, doubtless by-and-by be apparent.

After she had quitted the chamber she swiftly crossed the lawn towards the inn, turned up the narrow path that bordered the sluggish canal, and, following it to its termination near the wall, turned short round some low stone warehouses to the left, and ascended a narrow, steep street that run along close to the wall, and therefore had obtained the distinctive appellation of Wall-street. Getting close within its deep shadow, she glided along stealthily till she came to a double gate, over which hung a small lamp. Beneath the light, leaning against a guardhouse constructed on one side of the gate, she discovered a man with a firelock to his shoulder and a long pipe in his mouth. A few paces from him walked to and fro a second guard, who from time to time paused in his walk, and, in a listening attitude, looked down the broad, open street that led from the gate to the Rondeel, as if expecting the approach of some one.

"Sacrement Donner vetter! 'Tish aight ov de klock, Hanse," he said, stopping and addressing his comrade as Elpsy approached; "te relief shall 'ave peen here py dish time, heh?"

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"It vill pe te Schietam at frau Stoll's vat keeps dem," replied the other, with a grunt of assent.

"Hark, Hanse! dere ish von footshteps along te vall no heh?"

"Tish te pigs and te cattlesh. An' if it vas de peoplesh, vat matter so dey pe inside ov te valls? It ish against te rogue from te outside ov te vall vot ve keep te guart here for."

"Goot, Hanse. Ve lets nopoty in, to pe shure nor lets nopoty out neider, heh? Pots gevitter! Vot vas te passvoord, Hanse? I vas licht mein bipe mid te paper te captain left mid us."

"Yorck."

"Yorck. Petween ourshelves, Hanse, Ich don't like dis new name ov our old city ov Nieuve Amstertam. Dese Anclish names pe hart to shpeak. 'Twas a wrong ding, Hanse, to put away te olt name, heh?"

"It vash, mein comrate, no vera koot."

"Pfui Teufel! Ich am klad I vas shmoke it in mein bipe. It vas patriotic, heh, Hanse? Let ush av te olt name pack again, Hanse."

"Vera koot, mein comrate, Ich vill."

"Ich too. Now if the peoplesh shay Yorck, tey shall pe put in de guarthouse for traitor. If tey shay Nieuve Amstertam, den tey pe Kristian peoplesh and honest men."

"If she pe a voman, comrate?"

"Den she shall pe von honest voman, to pe shure."

At this juncture of the embryo conspiracy, hatching in his very stronghold and among his tried warriors, against the Earl of Bellamont's government, striking at its very roots, and teeming with seeds of a civil war, a low, dark figure appeared from behind the guardhouse and suddenly confronted them.

"Himmel tausand! Te vitch te tyfil!" they both exclaimed in one breath as she stood before them, plainly visible by the light of the lamp that illuminated her wild features, and threw into strong contrasts of light and shadow the prominent angles of her hideous person.

"Let me forth," she said, in a commanding tone, laying her hand with a determined gesture on the heavy bar that was placed against the gates.

The men drew back in alarm, and uttered exorcisms expressive of superstitious fear.

"Will ye not unbar? Brave men are ye to keep watch and guard over a city's gates. Unbolt!"

"Vat, Hanse, heh?" asked one of the men of his comrade, whose arm he had grasped; "sall ve lets her go?"

"It vill pe pest to hav' her on te outside, comrate."

"So it vill pe, Hanse. Ve had petter let her out. I vill see if she knows te voord. Vitch vomans, vat ish te password, heh?"

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"I give neither password nor countersign. I go and come as I list, and no man can hinder me. Stand aside."

As she spoke she placed her hands on the heavy bar, lifted it from its bed, and threw it at their feet. Then, turning the massive key that remained in the lock, the wide leaves flew open.

"Ve must not let it pe, Hanse, mitout te voord."

"Nor mitout leave, neider, comrate," cried one after the other, both being inspired with sudden energy.

"Ve shall pe shot."

"Ant hung too."

With one impulse they rushed forward to secure the gate, when she closed it fast in their faces, and they heard the key turn in the lock on the outside with a scornful laugh.

"Himmel! It ish lockt insite ve pe, Hanse, heh?"

"Ant she tid not shay Yorck, comrate."

"Nor Nieuve Amstertam neider. If she vas say only Nieuve Amstertam now."

"Tere ish no more need to keep guart, comrate. Nopody can get in."

"Tunder! no more dey can, Hanse, heh? 'Tish after aight o'clock, and te relief ish not been come. Dere ish no more use to keep guart, Hanse, heh?"

"Tyfil, no. Ve vill go ant get some Schietams."

"So ve vill, Hanse, ant a fresh bipe too."

Thus determining, the stalwort guard of the city gates of ancient Amsterdam shouldered their firelocks, and, confident in the security of the city, descended the street together in the direction of the alehouse of *frau* Jost Stoll, while Elpsy kept on her course through the suburbs. Directly after leaving the gate she turned from the road which, bordered by forests, small farms, and here and there a lonely dwelling, run from the gates in a northerly direction. The path she took was a green lane, famous for lover's rambles, that led towards the East River. She traversed it at a swift running pace, now winding round some vast tree that grew in its centre, now ascending, now descending, as the path accommodated itself to the irregularities of the ground. In a few minutes she came to a romantic spring, open to the sky for many yards around, with greenest verdure covering the earth. She recognised it as a favourite resort for the industrious maidens of the town, who there were accustomed to bleach the linen they wove and skilful weavers too were the rosy and merry Dutch maidens of that homely day! At evening they would go out to gather their bleaching; and, ere they left the spring on their return, the youths of the town would make their appearance, and, each singling out his sweetheart, take her burden under one arm, while, with the blushing girl hanging on the other, slowly they walked through the shady lane towards the town. Happy times! Gentle customs! Unsophisticated age! Oh, Maiden-lane, busy, shopping Maiden-lane! thy days of romance are passed! Who can identify thee with this green lane! But this is no place to eulogize thee; yet who may travel over the olden-time scenes of New Amsterdam, and not pause to pay them the tribute of a thought!

After leaving the spring, her way faintly lighted by the stars, the sorceress struck into a path that led northeasterly; and, after a rapid walk of nearly a mile, came to the shore of East River at a point that could not have been reached by water without going over nearly twice the distance she had come by the forest. Descending the steep

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shore, she stopped at the head of a small creek that made a few yards into the land, and drew from beneath the shelter of a thickly-netted grapevine a light Indian birch canoe of the frailest structure. Stepping lightly into it, giving her weight accurately to the centre, she seated herself on the crossbar that constituted both the seat and strengthening brace of the bark: striking the water lightly with a slender paddle, she shot rapidly out of the creek. The moon had just risen, and flecked a trembling path of silvery light along the water. Plying the magic instrument, first on one side and then on the other alternately, she darted along the surface of the water with inconceivable velocity. Her course was northwardly in a line with the shore, close to which she kept. Every few minutes she would cease her toil and bend her ear close to the water, listening for sounds; and then, with a smile of gratification, renew her swift course. At length, as she rounded an elevated point, the distant fall of oars reached her ears in the direction of the town.

"He comes! He has gained on me! I must be there to prepare for him! Hey, my little bark, let us fly now!"

She stood up in the skiff as she spoke, the moonlight streaming on her dark face, flung her cloak from her shoulders, and, tossing back her long red hair, seized the paddle with a firmer grasp, and away like a mad thing flew witch and boat. Soon she turned a headland, and the waves began to be violently agitated, tossing and bubbling round her, while a roar of breaking surges was heard in the direction towards which she was driving. Far and wide the solemn moan of agitated waters filled the air. She shouted with the dash of the waves, and hissed as they bubbled and foamed in her track. Momently the commotion grew wilder and more appalling. The waters seethed like a boiling caldron. Whirlpools turned her skiff round and round like a feather, and yawning gulfs threatened each moment to engulf her. Yet on she flew, standing upright in the boat, her hair streaming in the wind, her garments flying, and sending the boat irresistibly through the terrible commotion. The passage now became narrow, and on every side frowned black rocks, threatening destruction to the bark that should be dashed against their sides. Suddenly, when it appeared the boat could not survive an instant longer, by a dexterous application of her paddle she forced it from the boiling seas into a placid pool, sheltered by a low ledge, that formed the southern spur of a small islet a few rods square that stood at the mouth of "Hell Gate" on the north side.

"Ha, is it not a proper place for a witch, amid the mad waves and gloomy rocks! Oh, 'tis a home I love! The noise of the water is merry music! when it is lashed by a storm, the birds go sweeping and shrieking by like mad, and then it is music sweeter than the harp to Elpsy. So, I have well done my errand, and found him as he landed, and he is now on his way to me. And *who* besides Robert have I seen? Ah have I not made a good night's work of it! Well, it shall go ill with me if I reap not the fruit of what I have learned. Ho, Cusha, slave!"

As she called thus in a harsh, stern tone, she drove her skiff into a crevice in the rocks, where it became firmly fixed, and, stepping from it, she bounded lightly up the precipitous shore to the summit. The top of the rock, which was but a few feet from the water, so far as could be seen by the light of the moon, was a grassy surface, dotted with a few stunted trees and one large oak, that with its broad arms nearly shadowed the entire islet. Between the columns of the trees all around the sky and water were visible. But in one place it was broken by the outline of a large rock and the roof of a low hut placed against it, directly beneath the oak. It was a rude, rough structure, wild and desolate in its appearance. On one side it overhung the foaming waters, that leaped so high beneath it as to fling the spray upon its roof. In every part of it were crevices, from which, as the sorceress looked towards it on arriving on a level with it, streamed rays of light as if from a bright flame within; while a volume of thick, dark smoke, of an exceedingly fetid and sulphurous smell, curled upward against the sides of the rock, and rolled heavily away among the foliage of the oak.

"The slave is prepared," she said, approaching the hut.

She had taken but a single step towards it when the deep voice of a bloodhound from within broke the silence that reigned.

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"The hound is alert! Ho, Sceva!"

At the sound of her voice the alarm bark of the dog was changed into a cry of delight; and, springing against the door, he would have burst it through had she not spoken, and, at the same time, opened it. Instantly the animal sprung upon her and licked her face with his huge tongue, and growled a savage sound of welcome. He was a brute of vast size, and with long, coarse gray hair, stiff, uncouth ears, and immense head; around which, and along his spine to his fore shoulders, the hair grew long and bristly like a boar's mane. His eyes were red and fierce in their expression; and huge tusks, protruding glaringly over either side of his hanging chops, gave him an aspect still more repulsive and savage.

"Down, Sceva, down!" she said, sternly, as he caught his huge paws in the tangled masses of her hair in his rough caresses; "down, I say!" The animal slunk from her and crouched upon a pile of fern in a corner of the hut.

The abode of the sorceress was rude and wild in the extreme. It was a slight frame of branchless firs, constructed against a bare rock, which constituted the east side, or wall of it. The interstices between the upright stakes were filled in with loose limbs of trees, and planks from wrecked fisher's boats; the roof in many places was open to the sky, and in its centre was a large aperture that served for an outlet to the smoke that rose from a fire smouldering beneath a caldron placed underneath. By the fitful glare it sent round, the interior of the hut, with its furniture, was distinctly visible. Entwined about an upright pole that sustained the roof were dead serpents of enormous size, and of brilliant colours, their glittering fangs hideously shining in the firelight. Festoons of toads, lizards, and other revolting reptiles hung from the ceiling, while round the wall were placed human bones arranged in fantastic figures, and ghastly skulls glared on the sight on every side, while all that could affect the imagination was conspicuous to the eyes of the observer. In the caldron in the centre of the hut was seething a dark liquid that emitted a fetid odour, and threw up volumes of smoke, which, unable to escape freely through the roof, hung heavily to within a few feet of the ground floor. Over the caldron bent the figure of an African, who was stirring the liquid with a human thigh bone, and occasionally, with a child's skull, dipping a portion from it and pouring it on the fire beneath, which instantly flamed up fiercely, casting a blue, baleful light throughout the hut. The firelight shone bright upon his person, bringing into relief every feature of his hideous countenance. His head was of huge proportions, and deformed, being perfectly flat on the top, and obtruding in front into a round forehead like an infant's newly born. It was, save a thick fringe of hair that hung shaggy and grisly above his eyes, wholly bald. His eyes were large, and projected red and wild from their beds, while his nose and lips were of enormous dimensions, which, with the total absence of anything like a chin, gave the lower part of his face a brutelike look. Yet there was an extraordinary human intelligence in the expression of his eye, in which dwelt the light of no common intellect.

He rose as the witch entered, and displayed a skeleton-like figure of great height, the low roof compelling him to bend half his length. His neck was long and scraggy; his shoulders bony; his arms and legs lank and attenuated; while his fingers, with the hard skin that clave to them and their long oval nails, resembled, as he himself did altogether, save his huge fleshy head, a dried anatomical preparation. A kilt reaching half way to his knees, and a sort of cape covering his shoulders made of the feathers of owls intermingled with the brilliant dies of snakes' skins, were his only clothing. He wore about his neck as ornaments a string of newts' eyes and serpents' fangs, and on his wrists and ankles were massive bracelets of silver.

"Thy slave welcomes thee," he said, in a voice that corresponded with the hideousness of his appearance.

He lifted his hands to his forehead as he spoke, and made an oriental obeisance nearly to the earth.

"Thou hast obeyed me, Cush! 'Tis well! See that all be ready for the rites. He comes a second time to secure our aid against the rock and the shoal, the waves and the wind, the hand of man and the bolt of Heaven!"

"Comes he in the right spirit?"

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"He fears and obeys."

"'Tis enough."

"Let nothing be wanting to retain our power over the minds of mortals; let our art lose no tith of its honour. I will now make ready to receive him. He leaves me not till he has done my bidding, and through him my ends are answered. Now let us prepare the rites!"

In the mean while the superstitious victim of the unholy rites in preparation was on his way towards the "Witch's Isle." For nearly an hour the crew had pulled steadily along, and, save now and then a cheering cry from the coxswain, urging them to renewed exertion, not a word was spoken. Silent and thoughtful, revenge and disappointed love mingled with shame the while agitating his breast, he sat by himself in the stern of his boat, and took a retrospect of his past life.

His sense of honour was now blunted, and the experience of a reckless life had made him weigh less nicely his acts, and pay less deference to the opinions of men. He now laughed at and cursed what he called his folly in sacrificing, for a mere boyish notion of honour, his earldom. From the time he had thrown himself on board the *Dane* at the tower of Hurltel of the Red Hand, up to the moment that found him on his way to the abode of the sorceress, he had been scouring the seas, a bold, reckless, and sanguinary bucanier. Under the name of 'the Kyd,' or al Kyd, the sea-king which had been given him by the Algerine corsairs, among whom he spread terror whenever he cruised up the Mediterranean he had filled the world with tales of bloodshed and predatory conflict unparalleled in the annals of piracy. He seemed, from the first moment he placed his feet on the deck of the *Dane*, to have made a shipwreck of principle; to have buried, as he had said on taking leave of Lady Lester, all human feeling with the filial kiss he placed on her unconscious forehead. Yet it has been seen, in his fight with the yacht which contained the Earl of Bellamont and Grace Fitzgerald, that he had not wholly lost sight of every social tie that bound him to those with whom he had once associated. But this was the last instance of his sympathy with others. Henceforward he seemed to war with mankind as if he would avenge on his species the wrongs of his birth. The instance here given may be thought an exaggerated estimate of the rapid growth of vice. But the daily annals of crime show that it is but a step from virtue to vice, from innocence to crime. And, let the cause be strong enough, there is never an intermediate step.

Had Lester altogether forgotten Kate Bellamont while running this career? No. His thoughts reverted to her daily. Sometimes with the gentle character of his former young love, but oftener taking colour from his present altered character, and then they were resentful. Twice he had resolved to visit Castle Cor, and obtain an interview with her, and, if not by fair, by foul means, make her his bride. But he had been pursued and driven from the coast by cruisers, and his intentions had been foiled. That he loved her still was evident; and if he could have been rewarded with her hand by doing so, he would have deserted his present career for her sake. But these hopes were dissipated from the fear that she might have discovered that Kyd and he were one. This suspicion did at times alone prevent his seeking her out more resolutely and casting himself at her feet.

At length, a few months previous to the arrival of Lord Bellamont to assume the government of New-York, he, with large treasures, came into Long Island Sound; and, after burying them on Gardiner's Island, beneath a certain triangular rock which, it is said, seventy of his men rolled upon the spot, he came through Hell Gate into East River, where he anchored. As he sailed past her rock the witch recognised him, though she had not seen him since they separated at Hurltel's Tower, and at midnight paid him a visit in her skiff. She recovered her former influence over him, crime, as it ever does, having made him superstitious. From her he learned that the Earl of Bellamont was to succeed Governor Fletcher, and that his daughter would probably accompany him to America. Probing his feelings in relation to her, she discovered that he was still attached to her; and to her joy she found, on feeling his moral pulse, that she had less to fear than on a former occasion. From the moment Lester had cast away his title and fled the country, she had given her whole mind to one single object, if she should ever again meet him: viz., to bring about his restoration to his title and estates. She rightly calculated that time and the lawless school in

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which he had placed himself would lead to a revolution in his feelings. She now found him ripe for her purpose. Learning from him that he was bound on a cruise to intercept a fleet from Barbadoes, and was to sail the following day, by his return she expected, as it turned out, that the Earl of Bellamont would have reached his new government. Therefore, before she left his cabin, she drew from him a promise that he would visit her at her hut the ensuing night; and there, amid the solemnities of her art, take the oath to lay claim to the title of Lester, and woo for the hand of the heiress of Bellamont: in fine, resume the position, notwithstanding all that had passed in the long interim, that he had held before the fatal field of archery at Castle Cor. Ere the next night, however, two frigates from Newport, learning his presence in the waters of Long Island, appeared in sight sailing up the Sound, when, weighing anchor, he sailed down the East River, passed boldly between Brooklyn and the town, exchanged shots with the Rondeel, and, steering down the bay, put to sea. His second appearance, and the events that followed it up to the time when he is approaching the Witch's Island, have already been narrated.

"Give way, men pull for your lives!" shouted the coxswain, as at length they entered the boiling waters of Hell Gate.

With great exertion and skill, the tide now setting strongly through the gut, they avoided the dangers that beset them on every side, and at length reached the island. Giving orders for his men to remain in the boat and preserve silence, Kyd stepped on shore in a secluded cove at the western extremity of the island most remote from the abode of the sorceress. He passed through a dark ravine, that led with many a rugged step to the top, and, looking round as he reached it, at length discovered the hut he sought. It was calculated, combined with the roar of the sea and the lateness of the hour, and a knowledge of the fearful character of the occupant and of his own evil purposes in seeking it, to affect his mind with gloom and superstitious fears. He cautiously, and not without superstitious awe, approached the door and struck it with the hilt of his sword.

He was answered by the deep growl of the bloodhound, and the moment afterward the sorceress chanted, in a wild, supernatural strain, an Irish weird hymn, the only part of which he could comprehend were the last two lines: "Enter, mortal, if thou bear Priest nor Bible, cross nor prayer!"

With his drawn sword held firmly in his grasp, he opened the door. Instantly the place was filled with a blue flame, by the light of which the various supernatural paraphernalia of the sorceress's abode were made visible with the most appalling distinctness, while sounds infernal and terrific assailed his ears. He stood a moment filled with alarm, and overpowered by what he saw and heard. The sorceress, clothed in a garment apparently of flame, covered with strange and unearthly figures, her features wrought up to a supernatural degree of excitement and wild enthusiasm, stood before the caldron in a commanding attitude, her hair dishevelled, her long white wand held towards the intruder, and every sinew of her arms and neck distinctly brought into light. A serpent was bound about her temples, and one was entwined around each of her naked arms, while a fourth encircled her waist. Beside her stood a spindle, with a crimson thread upon it. She fixed her eyes on his with an unearthly expression as she extended her wand towards him, and, in a voice that became a priestess of rites so unholy as she performed, addressed him:

"Welcome, mortal! I have waited for thee. Kneel."

"Wherefore?" he asked, as if addressing a supernatural being, his imagination affected by the circumstances and situation in which he was placed, and scarcely recognising, in the fearful appearance and aspect of the sorceress, her whom he had seen and conversed with but a few hours before. "Wherefore should I kneel?"

"To swear."

"The oath?"

"To assume the title of Lester and wed the heiress of Bellamont."

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"I have sworn it without thy aid. I have seen her."

"And she has scorned thee."

"She has. Foul witch, thou didst betray me to her!"

"Ha, ha! Thou hast learned this of her." She laughed maliciously. "I told her who thou wert, that she might scorn thee."

"Fiends! Dost thou not wish me to marry her?"

"Yes; but only against her will."

"Otherwise she will never. And, by the cross! I will not bear the haughty scorn with which she has received me. Witch, I am ready to take the oath; but, if I take it, thou shalt give me thy aid in avenging myself."

"On her!"

"Yes, but through her lover."

"Has she a lover?" asked the sorceress, with surprise.

"Did not thy art teach thee this?"

"Who?" she demanded, without replying to his question.

"A certain Captain Fitzroy."

"He who commanded the ship that brought them hither. Where were my wits I did not suspect as much?" she added to herself.

"Dost know him?"

"I have seen him on his deck as I passed in my skiff. He sailed instantly in pursuit of you, or I should have discovered something of this new love. She confessed it?"

"Without hesitation. I have sworn to seek him and cross blades with him."

"First repeat the oath thou hast come hither to take."

"If thou wilt exert all thy skill and art to give me success in my revenge, I will take it."

"Swear."

"Nay. I am told thou hast, as do all of thy unholy craft, an amulet which, worn on the bosom, will give him who for the time wears it a charmed life, and cause him to prosper in all that he undertakes. This amulet I ask of thee."

"First lay thy right hand upon the head of the serpent that binds my waist, and thy left hand upon thy heart, and, kneeling, swear to obey me in resuming thy earldom and thy wooing of Catharine of Bellamont, and it shall be thine."

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He knelt, and with solemnity took the oath, repeating each word after her in an audible tone.

"This you promise to do or your soul forfeit."

"This I promise to do or my soul forfeit."

"*Or thy soul forfeit!*" repeated, from some unknown quarter, a sepulchral voice, that made him start to his feet with mingled surprise and alarm.

"Woman, what hast thou caused me to do?" he asked, with superstitious dread.

"No evil, so thou break not thy oath."

"*So thou break not thy oath!*" repeated the same voice, close to his ears.

"Sorceress, I will not break my oath," he said, after the surprise at this second interruption had subsided; "but until I have first crossed weapons with this rival lover, I approach her no more. He has gone to seek me, therefore should I meet him. But that he should dare to love where Robert Lester has loved, is ample reason why we should meet. Till I find him, be he above the sea, I neither assume the name of Lester nor see the haughty heiress of Bellamont. So give me success in this, and, after, thy wishes shall be fulfilled to the letter."

"Darest thou delay?" she said, striding up to him and taking him by the breast, while her eyes flashed vindictive fire.

"Thou hast not the whole control over my will, Elpsy. I fear and respect thy power, but I obey it and thee only so far as it chimes with my own ends. I have yielded to thee: now yield to me! Thy wishes, whatever may have prompted them, shall soon enough be realized. If thou wilt give me the amulet, and put thy arts to work and send me prosperous winds, I will, ere the month end, hold this Fitzroy my prisoner; and then, by the cross! in my very cabin shall he be spectator of my bridal. If in a month I do not meet him, I will then do thy pleasure."

The sorceress gradually released her grasp as he continued, and, when he had ended, said,

"'Tis well. Go."

"The amulet?"

"Nay. Thou shalt not have it," she said, firmly.

"By the rood! if thou give it not to me, I will wring thy shrivelled neck for thee," he cried, with sudden impetuosity.

"Lay but the tip o' your least finger upon me, Robert Kyd, that moment shall thy arm be palsied to its shoulder, and thy strength leave thy body, till the infant an hour old shall master thee!"

She stepped back as she spoke, and extended her wand towards him with a menacing gesture.

"Nay, nay, fearful woman," he cried, betraying some alarm at her words and threatening attitude, "I meant not to anger thee. Wilt give the amulet? I cannot go forth on this mission of revenge without it. I know its mysterious and wonderful power, and must avail myself of it on this occasion. Thou shalt have it after."

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The sorceress looked troubled at his eager anxiety to possess the mystic seal, and at length said, in a solemn tone of voice, and with a manner calculated to have its effect on an imagination the least tinged with superstition,

"Mortal, thou knowest not what thou seekest! If he who wears this on his breast fail in his last trial of its mystic power, he shall become the slayer of the mother who bore him!"

"What is this to me? I have no mother, sorceress."

"Ha! well, no, no! thou hast not!" she said, with a singular expression. "Yet such is the doom of him in whose hands it fails. *Thou* shalt not wear it!"

"I will. If I tear it from thee by violence!"

"'Twill then do thee no good. It must be placed around thy neck with solemn rites. Thou shalt have it," she said, suddenly, after a moment's thought, "for thy success is my success. The risk shall be run by me! Hast thou the nerve to go through the initiating rites?"

"I will stop at nothing. Give it me, with every hellish charm thou canst invent. Once my revenge accomplished, take it back."

"But *He*'ll not give thee back the price thou payest for it."

"Ha! Well, be it so! I will not ask it. My soul is as well in the devil's keeping as in my own. The world beyond has for me neither hopes nor fears. My present aims accomplished, I care not for the bugbear future! In the name of the master whom thou servest, give me the amulet!"

"I obey," she said, with wild solemnity. "Slave, appear!"

She cast, as she spoke, a powder upon the flame, which shot up to the roof and filled the place with so dazzling a brilliancy that for an instant he was deprived of sight. The light sunk as suddenly as it had risen, and he saw before him a tall, skeleton-like figure, over whose face played an unearthly glare from the smouldering flame beneath the caldron. It was the slave Cusha. The pirate chief gazed on the hideous being with horror; his sword dropped from his grasp, and an exclamation in the shape of an exorcism escaped his lips. The sorceress witnessed his alarm with a triumphant smile; she then touched and turned her spindle, while the slave, obedient to her nod, kneeled and began to kindle the flame and stir the seething caldron.

The bucanier witnessed these preparations with curiosity not unmingled with dread, yet nevertheless determined to abide by the issue. All at once she began to chant: now in a low, deep voice, now in a high, shrill key, as her words required, the slave at intervals chiming in in a tone so deep and sepulchral that the startled bucanier could not believe that it was human, especially when his eyes rested on the hideous being from whom it proceeded, who grovelled on the earth at his feet,

Witch (*to the wizard*). "Kindle, kindle!" Both. "To our tasks!"

Witch (*whirling the spindle*). "Turn the spindle! Mortal asks A web of proof From charmed woof!" Wizard. "The pledge, the pledge?" Witch. "Body and soul To *his* control, The pledge, the pledge!" Wizard. "The seal, the seal?" Witch. "A bleeding lock Of the victim's hair Given to earth, sea, Sky, and air, The seal, the seal!"

As the sorceress chanted this she broke from the thread what she had wound off, and, approaching him, chanted, "Kneel, mortal, kneel! And let me sever The pledge that makes thee *His* for ever!"

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He kneeled before her with the obedient submission of a child. She then entwined her fingers in a long lock that grew above the left temple, and, drawing from her bosom a dagger, held it above his head and chanted, "Dost thou believe, Robert Kyd, Robert Kyd, Nor earth nor air, water nor fire, Ball nor steel, nor mortal ire, My potent charm Have power to harm Till it fulfil its destiny?"

"I do."

"Dost thou believe, Robert Kyd, Robert Kyd, That within, without, body and soul, This amulet shall keep thee whole From ball and steel, And mortal ill, Till thou fulfil thy destiny?"

"I do."

"Thus I take the seal and pledge, That, soul and body, thou engage, When thy master calls for thee, Ready, ready thou wilt be."

She severed the lock of hair from his temples as she ceased, and commenced dividing it into four equal parts. When she had done so she stepped backward, and, standing in the attitude of a priestess about to perform an idolatrous sacrifice, cast a lock into the air, chanting in the same wild manner, "Prince of Air! take the pledge!"

As she ceased a gust of wind swept over the islet, as if, so it appeared to the imagination of the excited victim of the rites, acknowledging the sacrifice. She then cast a lock upon the ground and chanted, "Prince of Earth! take the pledge!"

Instantly the ground on which he stood seemed to tremble; he heard a deep rumbling as if in caverns beneath; and the little island appeared to shake as if an earthquake had answered the appeal.

"Prince of Sea! take the pledge!"

She cast a third lock into the caldron as she repeated the line: the water boiled and hissed with a great noise, and the waves from the sea at the same time seemed to dash with a louder roar against the rocks below, and flung their spray with a heavy dash upon the roof. A fourth lock she cast into the flames, chanting, "Prince of Fire! take the pledge!"

Instantly the place was illuminated as if with the most brilliant flashes of lightning, while the loudest thunder seemed to explode at his feet.

He started upright at this, for hitherto he had continued to kneel, overcome by what he was both a witness of and a trembling participator in, and with every sign of mortal wonder and dread, cried,

"Sorceress! avaunt! I will no more of this!"

"Peace, mortal, peace! Cease, mortal, cease! See no word by thee be spoken Lest our magic charm be broken!"

As she chanted this reproof, she turned to the slave and continued in the same strain, "Hast thou the murderous lead From the grave of the dead?"

"'Tis here," he said, prostrating himself, and giving to her, with divers mysterious ceremonies, a leaden bullet.

"Sought you the grave at midnight deep Dug you down where dead men sleep Search'd you found you this charm'd ball Did you this in silence all?"

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"I did," answered the monster, prostrating himself.

"Slave, 'tis well. From fire and air We now prepare Our mystic spell!"

She commenced walking around the caldron, drawing mystic figures on the ground and in the air. At the end of the first circuit she chanted, with slow and solemn gestures and growing energy, "A brother's hand must have shaped the lead" at the end of the second, with more spirit, she sung,

"From a brother's hand the ball have sped."

The third time she chanted, in a still more excited manner, while she danced about the caldron,

"And a brother's heart the ball have bled."

As she ended her third sibylline circuit around the fire, she turned to the slave and said, "Is such this lead? Swear by thy head!"

"It is," he responded, crossing his clasped hands across his forehead, and prostrating himself to the ground.

"'Tis well.

"Fire and water, perform thy task, A charmed life a mortal asks."

She now poured the water from the caldron, and, casting the lead into it, continued to dance round it, her gestures gradually increasing in wildness and energy, while in a low, monotonous tone she chanted unintelligibly certain mystic words, derived from the ancient Irish incantations. With folded arms the bucanier watched her aloof. At length she poured the melted lead into a shallow vessel containing water, when with a hissing noise it spread itself out into a shape resembling a human heart. Instantly the hut was darkened; loud unearthly noises filled the place; blue flames shot upward from the head of the sorceress and wizard slave, and, to the astonished bucanier, the apartment seemed to be filled with demoniac forms, flitting and gibbering about him.

Aghast and horror-struck, he cried aloud,

"Merciful Heaven, protect me!"

No sooner had the words gone from his mouth than the whole hellish confusion and uproar ceased, while, with an expression of fierce wrath, she cried,

"By that word thou hast taken from the charm one half its power. It will protect thee from ball, but not from steel; from earth and fire, but not from water and air; else, with this amulet against thy heart, thou wouldst bear a charmed life."

"'Tis nothing lost," he answered, recklessly. "If ball can harm me not, a strong arm, quick eye, and faithful cutlass shall protect me against steel. Thou hast ensured me victory in love and revenge?"

"I have."

"More I ask not. Water can scarce drown one whose home is on the sea. Air I fear not!"

"Take heed, lest one day thou die not in it!"

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"Ha! what mean you?"

"Nothing. Kneel while I hang this amulet about thy neck."

Attaching to it a strand of her own long hair, she suspended it about his neck as he kneeled before her, chanting, "Mystic charm, Shield from harm! Winds and waves, Be his slaves! Mortal, naught can injure thee, Spread thy sail and sweep the sea! Vengeance now is in thy hand, Be thy foe on sea or land! If thy oath be kept not well, Ill befall thee with this spell!"

Instantly thunder seemed to shake the hut, which was filled with a sulphurous flame, while a repetition of the sounds he had before heard filled him with consternation; and, ere he could rise to his feet, he was struck to the earth by an unseen hand.

When he recovered himself the hut was deserted, and, save a ray of moonlight streaming through the roof, buried in total darkness. Confused, his senses overpowered, and his imagination excited by the scenes he had been so prominent and passive an actor in, he left the hut, the door of which was wide open, sought his boat, and roused his men, who, save Lawrence, had fallen asleep.

Giving his orders briefly, he put out from the Witch's Isle, and at midnight stood on the deck of his vessel. Shortly afterward he got under weigh, sailed down the Narrows and put out to sea. When the morning broke, great was the surprise and delight of the worthy people of New Amsterdam to find that the stranger had departed as silently and mysteriously as he had come; and many were the sage conjectures ventured the following evening by the worthies that gathered, as usual, about the stoop of the "Boat and Anchor," as to his character; and, sooth to say, they hit not far from the truth.

CHAPTER IV.

"She saw the noble in the peasant's garb,
And dared to love nay, more, she dared to brave
The world's dread frown, to follow him afar
Amid the danger of the stormy wave."
"He bore a charmed life. O'er earth and sea
No fiend so feared, no spirit dread as he."

An hour after sunrise the pirate vessel had gained an offing, and, under all her light canvass, wafted by a fresh wind from the northwest, was running the coast down, leaving the Highlands of Neversink on her starboard quarter. On her deck stood Kyd, with his glass in his hands, with which every few minutes he would sweep the horizon, and then turn and walk the deck. It was a bright, sunny morning; the crested waves leaped merrily about the prow and glanced in the sun as if tipped with gold.

The vessel was a low-built brigantine, with a flush deck, on either side of which was ranged a battery of six carronades in all twelve guns. Eighty men, half of whom were blacks, that composed her crew, were variously occupied forward and in the waist, though many of them were lying listlessly between the guns. They were a desperate band, with hard looks, and the aspects of men accustomed to crime and inured to danger. Every man was armed with pistols and cutlass, while racks of these weapons, with the addition of boarding pikes and arquebusses, were ranged about the masts and bulwarks. Order and discipline prevailed throughout the wild company, and, save the bucanier-like character and build of the vessel, it differed not materially in its internal arrangements from a king's ship. The bold spirit that kept these inferior and scarcely less fierce beings in subjection walked the deck with a determined tread, now bending his eyes in thought, now lifting them, flashing with excitement, towards the sea, and rapidly scanning its wide circle. He was dressed in the same picturesque costume that he wore when he first appeared in the presence of Kate Bellamont at the White Hall, though his sword lay upon the companion-way instead of being sheathed at his belt. After taking a longer survey than usual

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of the horizon, and turning away with an exclamation of disappointment, he was addressed by a short, square-built, swarthy man, with large mustaches and long, matted hair that hung low over his eyes and descended to his broad shoulders, who had hitherto been silently pacing the leeward side of the deck.

"What's in the wind, captain? You seem to steer as if in chase! You gave your orders so briefly to get under weigh, and have loved your own thoughts since so well as to forget to speak. I have not even asked our course."

"We are full three leagues from our anchorage, and, if you have no objections, suppose we open our sailing orders."

"You are right, Loff," said Kyd, smiling at the blunt address of his first mate. "Listen," he said, walking aft, followed by the mate, where they could speak without being overheard by the helmsman.

"Now learn my plans!"

"I have half guessed them."

"What?"

"Some Indiaman, ballasted with guilders, you have heard of in shore."

"Far better than a Spanish argosy. I pursue a rival. Thou art no stranger to an amour pursued by me some years ago with a fair and noble maid of Erin. Before I took the seas I was her only and accepted lover. She is now in the port we left this morning."

"And so you are running away from her."

"No. As some fiend would have it, rumours of my deeds, blown far and wide, at last reached her ears. She lends them to the tale. And when last eve I hastened to her arms, she meets me cold as an icicle; but soon gets warm, charges me with my misdeeds, and at length, taking fire with her own heat, breaks out in full blaze, dips her tongue inch deep in gall, and paints me blacker than the devil."

"Just like these sort o' craft," remarked Loff, dryly.

"This is not all. I found she had plugged the hole in her broken heart with another lover sound and hale."

"And who was this interloper?"

"No less a cavalier than that Fitzroy of the British navy whom we took by stratagem in the Mediterranean, slaying his crew; and who afterward escaped us by swimming a league to the shore."

"I remember him. A proper youth for a woman's eye."

"It shall ne'er look on him again," said Kyd, with fierceness. "He told the story of his escape, confirmed that which before was rumour "

"And so she put you out her heart and took him in."

"Even so."

"That's what I couldn't stand, captain."

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"I'll have revenge. Besides, I think I have an old quarrel to settle with him, if he be the same Fitzroy who escaped from us. Did I not tell thee then he reminded me of one whom I had known under peculiar circumstances in my boyish days?"

"You did," said the mate, after a moment's thought; "and that you said you would, in the morning, see if your suspicions were true."

"And in the morning the bird had flown. It is this suspicion that, from the first mention of his name last night, added to a new object I have in view (which, if he be the one I suspect he is, cannot be accomplished without his death), that sends me in pursuit of him. 'Tis rumoured that he whom I mean was lost at sea; but, if he escaped us by swimming a league, he may have escaped also at that time."

"Where does he hail from now?"

"He is master of the brig of war that brought the new governor to the province; and, hearing of us, with laudable ambition set sail, directly after his arrival, in pursuit of us. He is now on his return, as his leave of absence has expired. I learn by a skipper of a Carolina schooner I hailed in the harbour as I passed him in my boat, that a vessel answering his description was seen three days ago becalmed off the Capes of Delaware."

"Shiver my mizzen! we will soon fall in with him if he is steering back to port."

"If the `Silver Arrow' hang not like a sleuthhound on his track, there is no virtue in wind or canvass."

"What is the name of the chase?" demanded Loff, taking a deliberate survey of the horizon with a weather-beaten spyglass he held in his hand.

"The `Ger-Falcon,' I am told; and this name, for certain reasons, increases my suspicions that this Fitzroy is he I suspect. If so, I have an old score to balance with him. It is this that adds point to my revenge, and which has led me to seek aid of earth and hell to accomplish my desires."

The "Silver Arrow," bound on its mission of vengeance and crime, continued for the remainder of the day steadily to sail on its southerly course, keeping sufficiently far from land to command a scope of vision on either side nearly forty miles in breadth, so that any vessel following the shore northwardly, if within ten or twelve leagues of the land, could not escape observation.

Two hours before sunset of the same day, in the entrance of one of the numerous inlets that, like a chain of marine lakes, line the eastern shore of Jersey, lay a brig of war at anchor, her upper sails clewed down and her topsails furled. She was lying so close to the wooded shore, that the branches of the trees that grew on the verge of its high banks hung over and mingled with the rigging, while from the main yard it was easy to step on the rocks that towered above the water. On her decks lay several deer recently killed, while sailors were engaged in bringing on board, across a staging that extended from the ship to the shore, a noble stag, with antlers like a young tree. On the summit of a rock that overlooked the scene stood two young men habited as hunters, one leaning on a rifle, the other with a hunting-spear in his hand. Two noble stag-hounds lay panting at their feet. The scene that lay outspread around them was picturesque as it was boundless.

On the east, rolling its waves towards a silvery beach of sand that stretched north and south many leagues, spread the ocean, without a sail to relieve its majestic bosom, which, save here and there a gull with snowy wing skimming its breast, was as lonely and silent as on the day it was created. North, extended a vast forest of foliage, the surface of which, as the winds swept over it wave after wave, was not less restless than the sea. West, lay interminable woods; and nearer slept the lagoon, running northwardly and southwardly in a line with the coast on the outside, broken into many little lakes by green islands, on the sides of which browsed numerous deer.

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Immediately at their feet was the vessel of war, which, with its busy decks, gave life and variety to the scene.

The two who were enjoying the prospect strikingly contrasted in appearance. One of them was dark and strikingly handsome, with black, penetrating eyes, and a fine mouth characterized by much energy of expression. His hair was jetty black; and, parted on his forehead, fell in natural ringlets about his neck, descending even to his shapely shoulders. His figure was noble and commanding, and his air strikingly dignified. His age could not have been above twenty–three. There was a hue on his cheek, and a certain negligent ease in his air and manner, that showed that his profession was that of the sea. Yet his costume was by no means nautical. He leaned on a short rifle, with a black velvet hunter's bonnet in his hand, shaded by a sable plume. He wore a green embroidered frock, with buff leggins of dressed deerskin richly worked by some Indian maid, and on his feet were buskins of dressed doeskin. Around his waist was a black leathern belt containing a hunting–knife, with a drop or two of fresh blood still upon its blade, and a hunting–horn curiously carved and richly mounted.

His companion was less in height and of lighter make. His face was less browned, nay, scarcely tinged by the suns that had left their shadows upon the other's cheek. His forehead, though partly concealed beneath a hunting–cap of green cloth from which drooped a snow–white feather, was so fair and beautiful, that through the transparent skin of the temples were seen the azure veins tinting the surface with the most delicate lights of blue. The eyes were of a dark hazel, with a merry light dancing in them, which gave promise both of ready wit and good nature, and his cheeks had a bright, glowing colour, doubtless caused by the recent exercise of the chase. His mouth was extremely beautiful, with a winning smile playing about it like sunlight of the heart. The chin beneath was exquisitely rounded, neither too full nor too square, but of that faultless symmetry of which a sculptor would have made a model. About his neck and shoulders flowed glossy waves of auburn hair, while his upper lip was graced by a luxuriant mustache of the same, or, perhaps, of a little darker hue. He wore no cravat, and the collar of his green hunting–coat was turned back, displaying a throat and neck of dazzling whiteness and beauty. Through the bosom of the frock, which was folded back, appeared linen of the finest cambric, richly tamboured, as if done by the fair fingers of some tasteful maiden. The wristbands over his finely shaped and gloved hands were tamboured in the same beautiful manner, and fringed with lace of the most costly texture. Around his waist was bound a crimson sash for a hunting–belt, in which was stuck a *couteau du chasse*, with a hilt sparkling with jewels. Oriental trousers, ample in width and of snowy whiteness, fringed at the bottom with tassels depending from a hem of network, descended just below the calf of the leg, between which and the ankle appeared flesh–coloured silken hose of the finest texture and material. Boots of dressed doeskin, soft and smooth as a glove, nicely fitted the feet and ankles, and, divided at the top in two parts, were turned over like the buskins of his companion, but, unlike his, fringed with gold and ornamented with tassels. In his hand he carried a light hunting–spear, which he held with a spirited air, braced against the rock, his attitude being at the same time graceful and gallant. His age appeared to be less than seventeen. The two had gazed upon the noble and extended prospect spread out before them for some time in silence, when the elder, turning to his companion with a condescending yet courteous air, spoke.

"A fair scene, Edwin! I scarcely know which impresses me most, the majesty of the ocean or that of these boundless forests of the New World. Both are alike illimitable. Perhaps the sea has more of the sublime, for it is associated with the tempest in its terrible power, and its ever–heaving bosom seems to me the pulse of the earth."

"You give language to the thoughts which were passing in my own mind. The world seems to me a vast being ever its flowing rivers like veins and arteries in the human system its subterranean fires like the passions slumbering in our hearts its ocean heaving like a bosom lifted by a heart beneath it. See! the stag has leaped the bulwarks into the water!"

His companion turned and beheld the noble monarch of the wood, who had broke away from his captors at a bound, parting the flood with his broad breast, and swimming across the lagoon towards the opposite shore, tossing his branching antlers in the air as if in defiance, and rejoicing at obtaining his wild freedom. A dozen pistols and handguns were instantly levelled at him, when the taller of the two cried out from the cliff,

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"Hold! Fire not, on your lives! He has nobly won his freedom!"

Every weapon was lowered obedient to his voice, and proudly the enfranchised animal breasted his way towards a wooded isle a few hundred yards off.

"We have venison enough, and the princely creature shall escape," he added, turning to the other. "By the bow of Diana! we have well done for a four hours' hunt with but a brace of dogs though ye are noble brutes, both Chasseur and Di!" The dogs seemed to comprehend instinctively his words of praise, and, with a glad whine sliding along to his feet, at a sign of encouragement bounded upon him with joyful barks. "Hist! be still! Ye are over rude because I give ye a word and a nod."

"They must come in for a portion of our thanks from the earl when he gets his game."

"And a feast they shall have, for they have shown their true Irish blood."

"You speak of Ireland often, sir. You must love it."

"I do." He then said quickly, "You alone must he thank, Edwin, that he gets even a haunch instead of nearly a score of fat bucks such as strew our decks yonder. It was well thought of, as this bucanier had escaped us on this cruise, to put in at this famous deer island, and, by supplying the governor's table for the month to come, make him forget our failure. I would the stag had not escaped, nevertheless, for I would gladly have made a present of it to his fair daughter. You sigh, Edwin!"

"Did I?"

"By the bow of Dan Cupid, did you! You are full young to think of maiden's love."

"Am I?" said the youth, absently, and with an abstracted air.

"Truly thou must be in love, Edwin," said the other, with a kindly laugh, that became his manly and open features. "I marvel who it may be. You shake your head! Well," he added, laughing, "so long as it is not my noble Kate, I care not who it be. I knew a maiden once whom I would have loved so gentle, fair, and good, besides nobleborn and generous was she if I had not loved anoth "

"Who who this maiden?" he said, abruptly interrupting him, and laying his hand upon the arm of the speaker with surprising energy.

"Thou art over quick in thy speech," said the other, turning and speaking coldly.

"Nay, pardon me, sir, I did forget my station," said the other, bending his head and crossing his hands upon his bosom.

"Nay, Edwin, you go too far! I do not like this manner, and this, I know not what to call it, way you have of assuming an attitude, when reprov'd, becoming a bashful girl rather than the manhood thy mustache, if not thy years, challenges thee to assert. I will answer thy question. It was a fair and gentle creature, whom in my boyhood I knew only as the humble sailor knows the stars that burn nightly above him. I gazed on her afar off, and dared not approach her nearer, for she was noble, and, as thou knowest, I was lowly born. She was gentle, kind, and good; gratitude fills my heart when I speak of her, for I owe her much; she first awakened ambition in me, and pointed me the way to make myself noble. Her eloquence I shall never forget. Its effect upon me is indelible. I will some day tell thee how first I met her, and the interest she took in me."

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"Did you see her often?"

"No. But once we spoke together! But that once produced the seeds of the fruit of happiness I since have gathered."

"Strange that seeing her but once should have had such an effect upon thee."

"It was like sunlight first let in upon the man's vision who is born blind."

"If such the influence she held over you if thus you speak of her now, why did not her image take a deeper hold in your heart nay, why did you not love her, sir?"

"Because I loved another."

The youth sighed, and then said, "What motive induced her to take this interest in you?"

"Save that it was prompted by her own gentle and good spirit, I know not," he said with frankness.

"May it not have been love?" said the other, with hesitation.

The elder started, and turned and gazed on the speaker an instant with surprise before he replied:

"Love! How could she love a lowborn boy like me? 'Twas pity, rather."

"Nay, 'twas love."

"Nay, I will not have the vanity to think so, nor will I do her motives so much wrong."

"Said you she was fair?"

"As maiden ever was."

"Gentle?"

"As a seraph, if it should come to earth to habit in woman's form."

"Good?"

"As an angel."

"Fair, gentle, and good?"

"All three."

"And yet you loved her not?"

"I loved *another!* therefore, if she had been indeed an angel, I could not have loved, though I might have worshipped her."

The young man bent his head low till the snowy plume hid his face, and a deep sigh escaped his bosom. "Her thou wouldst have me love, then?" he asked, after a moment's silence, during which the eyes of the other were

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habitually scanning the horizon.

"I would."

"Wherefore?"

"Because I love thee!"

"Love me!" he cried, starting.

"As a brother do I. In truth this chase has fevered you, and you are not yourself, Edwin. Let us aboard!"

They were about to descend to the ship, when the elder, glancing once more around the horizon, suddenly fixed his eyes in a northwardly direction, and, after a moment's steady look, exclaimed,

"A sail!"

The younger arrested his descending footstep, and also turned his eyes in the same direction, and discerned a white dot on the extreme verge of water and sky, the stationary appearance of which, though neither form nor outline was distinguishable at the distance it was from them, indicated it to be a vessel.

"It may be a merchantman!" he said.

"It may be the bucanier! Craft of any sort are so scarce in these colonial seas at this season, that the chances are full three to one for the pirate. We must on board and make sail."

As he spoke they descended, followed by their dogs, the precipitous rock, and the next moment stood on the vessel's deck. A few brief orders were given by the elder of the two, who, it was apparent, was the commander of the brig; the anchor was weighed, the topsails loosened and set, and, catching a light breeze that blew through the mouth of the lagoon seaward, she soon left the wooded shores, and rode gallantly over the billows of the open sea in the direction of the sail they had seen from the cliff. What had first appeared a white speck on the rim of the sea now grew into shape and form, and, with the glass, the upper sails of a brigantine could be seen down to her courses, her hull still being beneath the horizon.

Swiftly the brig of war cut the blue waves, all her light and drawing sails set. Her armed deck, on each side of which bristled seven eighteen pounders, with their armament, presented an appearance of that order and propriety which, even on the eve of battle, characterizes the interior of a British ship of war. The weather-beaten tars, who had all been called to quarters, leaned over the forward bulwarks, and watched with interest the distant sail, but made their remarks in a subdued tone to each other. All was ready for action in case the stranger should prove to be an enemy. The helmsman, with his eyes now dropped on the compass, now directed ahead towards the sail, stood cool and collected at his post; the officer of the deck paced with a thoughtful brow fore and aft in the waist, every few seconds stopping to survey the chase, while the junior officers, each at his station, silently regarded the object, their eyes sparkling with excitement as each moment brought them nearer to it. In a magnificent upper cabin or poop, constructed on the quarter-deck, and gorgeous with curtains of crimson, sofas, ottomans, and rich Turkish rugs laid over the floor with latticed windows opening on every side to the water, were the two hunters. They had now changed their costume for one more appropriate to the sea and the quarter-deck of an armed vessel. The youthful captain wore the undress uniform of his rank and profession, his hunting-knife replaced by a small sword, and his bugle by a brace of pistols. He was standing by the window with his eyes upon the vessel ahead. The other had substituted a plain suit of black velvet for his former rich costume, and an elegant rapier hung at one side and a silver inkhorn at the other. He was seated at an ebony escritoir writing, and, from his pursuit and apparel, evidently held the rank of private secretary.

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"He is standing south by east, Edwin," said the youthful captain, turning from the lattice and addressing the youth with animation; "we shall intercept him by sunset if this wind holds. But methinks," he added with interest, fixing his eyes upon him as, with his rich hair drooping about his cheeks, he leaned, forgetful of his occupation, over the sheet, "that of late you are getting sad and absent. This station does not suit your ambition, perhaps. You would be an officer instead of a clerk."

"Nay, sir, I would be as I am; I am not discontent so that I can be near " here he checked himself, bent his head to his writing, and did not look up until he felt a hand gently laid upon his shoulder. He started, while the colour came and went in his cheek with confusion, and he shrunk instinctively away.

"Beshrew me, fair youth! I know not what to make of thee," said the young captain, taking a seat beside him, and resting one arm familiarly upon his shoulder. "Thou hast some deep, untold grief at thy heart. If it be a love secret a tale of love unrequited of cruel maids and broken promises," he said, gayly, "why, then, out with it; make me your confidant; I will tell you how to make her heart ache, and to wish thee back again. Come, Edwin, unburden thy thoughts. Unspoken, they will feed upon the cheek and eye, and the grave have thee ere thou hast attained manhood."

The youthful secretary was silent a few moments, and then said, with an attempt to smile,

"I have a tale of love, but not of mine."

"I will hear it, and then tell thee if I think it thine or no."

"There was once a noble maiden, the heiress of an earldom, who loved a peasant youth, handsome and brave, and the nobility he gat not by birth nature endowed him with. The maiden was proud and independent of spirit, and loved him for himself for title, wealth, and rank she thought not!"

"A generous creature. And this humble youth loved her in return?"

"No."

"No! then, by Heaven, he was ignoble indeed, and her love was ill placed, poor lady!"

"Nay he *loved another!*"

"Ha, was it so?" he said, with a peculiar smile; "then I must pardon him! But did she tell him of her love?"

"Never!"

"Who was this village maiden that supplanted her?"

"She was no lowly maid! but noble as herself."

"He was full ambitious! Did she love him in return?"

"Nay, not then," said he, hesitatingly.

"Edwin, you are giving my very history! You hang your head! What, is it I of whom you speak?" he exclaimed, with animated interest.

"I gave no name."

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"Nay," he said, blushing, "I will not think, though the tale tallies in some parts so well with my own, that a noble maiden e'er could have regarded me with sentiments beneath her station. Go on."

"Time went on, and her love grew. Unseen, unknown, she exerted her influence, and had him (for he took to the seas) elevated from rank to rank, though his own prowess won for him each grade ere he rose to it; at length he became a captain. Many years had elapsed in the interval, and she had not seen him; but, every few months, rumour trumpeted to her his gallant deeds, and in her secret heart she rejoiced with all the pride of love."

"And still she loved him?"

"Better and better. Absence only increased the intensity of her passion. At length she resolved to see him, and, unknown to him, see if she could not win his love; for she believed, silly girl, that time had caused him to forget his first passion for the noble maid who had disdained him for his low birth. At length an opportunity presented itself that held out to her the prospect of accomplishing her wish. A nobleman related to her was appointed governor of a distant province, and this youth was appointed to the command of the vessel that should convey him to his government. The noble was the father of the highborn maiden he loved. Love roused *her* fears. She resolved to go in the same ship, and be a check upon the renewal of his love."

"Your story interests me. Do not pause. Go on!"

"So she disguised herself as a page, and, under the pretence of going to Ireland, to spend a few weeks with a maiden aunt, came on board his vessel, and offered herself as his secretary!"

"Edwin, this is a wondrous tale!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet with surprise. "Yet no, it cannot be," he said, half aloud, after steadily looking at him a moment. "Proceed!"

"She was received and sailed with him. Love excuses much. Yet her friends were on board with her, and it was not as if she had thrown herself on this rash adventure alone. The maiden that he had loved in youth he wooed and won. She knew him not as the humble youth. He had taken another name with his better fortunes. In the noble-looking officer that commanded the ship, and whose gallant name had filled the world, she did not recognise the humble lad whom she had known in earlier years. The disguised girl witnessed the progress of their love with a breaking heart."

"Poor maiden! She should have made known her love, and it might have met return."

"No, no, she could not. Yet she could not leave him, even when she knew he cared not for her—knew not of her existence, or that he was loved by her with such enduring attachment."

"Had it been my case, I would have loved her, had she made herself known, for her very devotion. Love begets love, and so does gratitude. I could not but have loved her."

"Nay if you loved another?"

"Not while I loved that other. But if that love had met no return, or afterward were crushed and blighted by adverse circumstances, then my heart would have turned to this gentle, devoted, heroic maiden, whose love had been so strong as to lead her to idolize me, and follow me in disguise even over the sea."

"Wouldst thou have done this?"

"By my troth! would I. I half love the maiden now, of whose devotedness you speak so eloquently. If it were my case, Kate would have a dangerous rival. I never could resist so much womanly devotion. Not I, Edwin."

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"Would you not rather despise her?"

"No. True love is sacred and honourable ever."

"When it o'ersteps the bounds of maidenly propriety?"

"Yes, Edwin, in a case like this of which you speak."

At this instant the officer of the deck reported that the strange sail had suddenly changed her course from the southeast, and was standing towards them.

The captain seized his glass, and, examining her, said with animation,

"Her hull has lifted, and she shows a tier of ports. A red riband running around her bends! polacca rigged, and courses up, with a bow as sharp as a canoe! It is `the Kyd,'" he cried, with joyful surprise.

Instantly all was animation and intense excitement on board. The guns were double-shotted, the hammock nettings were stowed closer and firmer than usual, hand-grenades lined the decks, and every missile and weapon of offence or defence that could be pressed into service on so desperate an encounter as that anticipated, was brought forth and placed ready for use. All that skill and determination to conquer could devise was done; and, under a steady but light wind on her larboard quarter, she fast neared the stranger, who also was observed to shorten sail and make other demonstrations of a hostile character. They continued to approach each other until less space than a mile separated them, when the youthful captain, who, with his trumpet in his hand, had taken his place in the main rigging, shouted,

"Hoist the ensign, and pitch a shot from the weather-bow gun across his fore-foot."

The broad flag of England instantly ascended to the peak, and unfolded its united crosses displayed on its blood-red field. At the same time a column of flame shot from her sides, and the vessel shook with the loud report of the gun.

"It has dashed the spray into their faces," said the captain, who had followed the path of the ball with the glass at his eye. "Ha! by Heaven, there goes the black flag, with its silver arrow emblazoned on it. *It is Kyd*. He has fired!"

A puff of smoke at the instant curled up from the side of the pirate vessel, as it now proved to be beyond question, and the next moment a twelve pound shot, with a roaring noise, buried itself deep in the mainmast, twenty feet above the deck. The spar trembled from the shock, and even the vessel reeled to one side from the force of the iron projectile.

"This is an unlucky hit. It has weakened our best spar! We must have the weather-gauge of him, and run down and lay him by the board if he is so good a marksman at a long shot," said the captain.

No more shots were fired, and the vessels were now within hailing distance, when, cheering his crew by animated words as well as by his example, and irresistibly communicating to them a portion of his own spirit, the young captain stood by the helmsman, and directed him to steer so as to strike the advancing pirate with the larboard bow just forward of the fore-chains. He ordered the hand-grenades to be in readiness to be thrown on board as soon as they should come near enough, and the grappling-irons to be kept clear and cast at an instant's notice, while in two dense parties, commanded by the chief officers, the boarders were drawn up, prepared to leap on board cutlass in hand.

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Swiftly and with appalling stillness the two hostile barks approached each other, both close hauled on the wind, and moving at nearly equal speed. It was within half an hour of sunset, and the level rays of the sun suffused the sea with a flush of gold and crimson. The wooded shores, which were two miles distant, were touched with a brighter green, and the western sky was as bright and varied with gorgeous colours as if a rainbow had been dissipated over it. The hostile companies in the two vessels saw none of its beauties and thought only of the sun that gave glory to the scene, as a light that was to lend its aid to the approaching conflict. Nearer and nearer they came together, yet unable, from their direct advance upon each other, to bring their guns to bear. To fire their bow guns would have checked their speed: both, therefore, advanced in silence until each could see the features of his foe. Conspicuous on their decks stood the commanders of each brig, directing their several courses, and giving commands that were distinctly heard from one vessel to the other: Kyd, with his light flowing locks, his fair, noble brow and commanding figure, on the quarter-deck near the helmsman with a stern and hostile expression in his eyes and the attitude of one impatient to mingle in the conflict, which he seemed to anticipate with vengeful triumph: the young captain, calm, cool, and commanding, his features glowing with the excitement of the occasion, and animated, as it seemed, with an honest ambition to punish a lawless bucanier who had so long filled sea and land with the terror of his name.

"Stand by, hand-grenades!" he shouted, as the vessels were within a few feet of each other.

"All ready!"

"Cast!" he cried, with a voice of thunder.

Instantly a score of these missiles were flying through the air in the direction of the crowded decks of the pirate. But, ere they had left the hand, quicker than thought the pirate's helm had been put hard up, and every sheet and brace being at the same time let go, she fell off suddenly from the wind, and presented her broadside to the bows of the brig; all but one or two of the grenades fell short and plunged into the water, and those that struck her were thrown overboard ere they could do injury. At the same instant the bows of the brig struck her starboard side nearly midships, and such was the tremendous force of the shock that her slight timbers were stove in, four out of six of the guns that composed the battery dismounted, while, vibrating with the shock beyond its tensivity, the foremast, with its chain of connected yards, snapped off even with the deck, and fell with a terrible crash and dire confusion and ruin into the sea. Loud was the shout of success that rose from the crew of the brig, and, rushing forward, they prepared to leap upon the deck of the bucanier.

"Back, men! she is filling!" cried the young captain, who had gained the bowsprit of his vessel, where he stood sword in hand, and, like his crew, in the act of springing on board.

"We are going down!" was the universal cry that rose from the pirate's decks, and the rush of the waters into her hold was distinctly heard above the noise and confusion of the scene.

"Let her sink!" shouted Kyd, bounding amidships among his men. "Here is a-king's ship worth three of it!"

His appeal was answered by a demoniac yell from his pirate crew; and, inspired by their imminent peril as well as their natural ferocity, they sprung, as one man, upon the bows of the brig, and, by mere force of numbers and desperation, in an instant took possession of the forecastle, and drove its defenders aft. The last man had scarcely gained a footing upon it, when, with a plunge like the dying struggle of a wounded animal, the "Silver Arrow," so long the besom of the ocean, shot down into its unfathomable depths, finding a grave in the element upon which it had so long rode in triumph. The brig pitched and rolled from side to side fearfully as she was received into the vortex the sinking vessel had left, while she so far sunk down that the waves rolled a foot deep over her bows, and flowed in an irresistible torrent aft to the quarter-deck.

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

For a few seconds after the disappearance of the brigantine there was a deep hush over the human throng. Every soul was touched with the sublimity of the spectacle, and an impression, not unlike that with which a child looks on death, rested for an instant on all. But it was only for an instant: the situation in which the two parties were so suddenly and so singularly placed, in such relative positions to each other, flashed upon their minds, and every eye lighted up with the fire of conflict.

"Farewell to the brave galley!" said Kyd, as he saw the flag at her peak trail on the water as she went down. "Now, my boys, we have no vessel save this! Five minutes will show whether it belongs to his majesty or `the Kyd.' Let us sweep yonder honest folk from her, boys," he cried, pointing aft, where the brig's crew were resolutely drawn up before the quarter-deck under their captain, by whose side stood, with a resolute eye and fearless attitude, his youthful secretary. "But, on your lives, spare the captain! Also harm not that fair youth beside him. I like his face for its resemblance to one I once knew. Now at them, and fight like devils, for either you or they must be driven overboard!"

"Receive them steadily and with firm front, my men," cried the captain of the brig; "remember, your lives depend on retaining your ship. Do not forget you are British seamen, fighting for your king and country, your wives and sweethearts! and that your foes are a set of bloodthirsty bucaniers, who fight from desperation, and show neither mercy nor favour. Edwin, my young friend, your station is not here."

"I will not leave your side," he said, firmly.

"Nay, then, here they come like mad devils. God and our country! Meet them half way! St. George and at them!"

He was the first to set the example, and met the desperate charge almost single handed. The number of pirates was more than seventy, while the crew and officers of the brig did not exceed sixty. Nearly the whole of these were now engaged; those at a distance, who were unable to mingle in the mêlée and use their swords, briskly discharging their firearms, while those of either party on the skirts of the fight cheered their comrades on with loud cries. For a few moments the brig's crew had the advantage, and pressed their assailants back on every hand, while from side to side flowed the heady current of battle, and the human masses swayed this way and that like an agitated sea; and, with a roar still more terrible than the ocean in its wildest fury ever sent up, shouts of onset, cries of rage or pain, yells, and execrations filled the air, mingled with the reports of pistols, the clash of steel, and the strange thunder of a hundred feet upon the hollow decks. At length the seamen gave way before their desperate antagonists, whom the cheering voice of their leader inspired with tenfold courage and ferocity.

"At them. Leave not a man alive! One good blow and the brig is ours. Bear them down! Give no quarter! Ha, Fitzroy! Ha! do we meet again! I have sought thee to enjoy this moment. Back, hounds," he shouted to his men; "will ye press me? there is meaner game for you! I alone deal with him."

"The same moment, then, crowns my wish and thine," said Fitzroy, crossing his weapon.

They had exchanged a few fierce passes without effect, when they were separated by the tide of the conflict, and borne to opposite sides of the deck. At this moment Edwin the secretary, who had been animating the crew by his cheering cries, said quickly in the ear of Fitzroy,

"Make a sudden charge with all your force, save six men to man the two after guns; drive them back to the fore-castle, if possible, and then retreat, and I will, at the same moment, turn upon them the pieces which I have already had loaded with grape." This was spoken with rapidity and clearness.

"It shall be done," was the stern reply. "Ho, my brave tars! one blow for merry England! one good blow for the king. Charge them all at once. Follow me. Hurrah for the king!"

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"Hurrah for King Billy, hurrah!" shouted the seamen, with one voice, catching the spirit of their young captain.

So sudden and well directed was the charge, that the pirates gave back in a body till they reached the windlass, when, in a voice like a trumpet, Fitzroy shouted,

"Every Englishman throw himself upon his face! Fire!"

"Down!" re-echoed Kyd, instinctively, at the same moment.

Disciplined to obey the lightest order, every sailor cast himself upon the deck; but most of the pirates heard too late the warning command of their chief, and the same instant, from both of the quarter-deck guns, a shower of grape whistled like a whirlwind over the heads of the crew, while with the roar of cannon mingled the groans and shrieks of half a score of bucaniers.

"Vengeance! vengeance! Will ye be slaughtered like dogs! Upon them! Cut them down! Leave not one alive! Vengeance!"

Loud and terrific was the cry of vengeance, followed by a rush of the pirates aft that was irresistible. The crew were cut down scarcely ere they had risen to their feet, and sabred with hellish ferocity wherever they could be grappled with. In a moment's space two thirds of the seamen, who had been seized with a sudden panic at the demoniac rush of the pirates, whom they expected to have seen discomfited by the wholesale slaughter of their comrades, fell a prey to their savage ferocity, and the decks were deluged with their blood. Many leaped overboard, and others sprang into the rigging to fall dead into the sea.

"On, on! the brig is ours!" shouted the pirate chief, waving his reeking sabre. "Charge the quarter-deck!"

Thither Fitzroy, with Edwin, had retreated with the remnant of his crew, which were scarcely twenty in number.

"Surrender!" demanded Kyd.

"With our lives only!" was the firm reply.

"Dash at them, ye devils! But see ye touch not the two I have marked as my own game! Let your blades drink deep; we shall soon be masters here. Now on!"

They were received by a discharge of pistols, which only increased the ferocity of those who escaped the fire, and, cutlass in hand, the quarter-deck was carried after a desperate resistance. Fitzroy was taken prisoner with much difficulty, and at the cost of several lives of his assailants, while Kyd himself disarmed the secretary. To a man the brave crew were slain, either in fair fight while defending their station, or massacred in cold blood at the termination of the sanguinary conflict. The pirates were now masters of the brig, though its conquest had cost them full half of their number.

"Clear the decks of both dead and wounded!" said the victor, leaning on his bloody sabre and gazing over the decks, which wore the aspect of a slaughter-house.

"Of our own men?" said he who has before been named as Lawrence.

"Ay! every man that cannot rise on his feet and walk. We want no hospital of the brig!"

At this order one or two of the wounded pirates attempted to get to their legs; but finding, after several ineffectual struggles, that it was out of their power, fell back powerless, with execrations on their lips, which had hardly

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ceased before their living bodies parted the crimson flood alike with the dead. The sun still shone upon the scene of carnage, and, ere he set, the brig was cleared of the bodies of both pirate and seaman; the decks were washed; sail was made; the new crew were posted at their different stations as they had been, though in fewer numbers, on board their former vessel; and, half an hour after the conflict, as the disk of the sun sunk behind the Highlands of Monmouth, scarcely a vestige of the terrific contest was apparent in the orderly exterior and accurate nautical appointments of the captured vessel.

The moon rose like a shield of pearl, and flung her pale, snowy light along the dark waves, and silvered the sails of the brig as she went bowling along over the sparkling surges. On the quarter-deck sat Captain Fitzroy and his youthful secretary. They were unarmed, and the elder manacled with heavy irons; but the younger was unbound. Not far from them, at times stopping to survey them, walked moodily their captor, his brow knit with thought, and his lips compressed with fierce resolution. At length he stopped, and said to an inferior officer who stood in the waste leaning over the bulwarks and watching the swift and steady progress of the vessel through the water,

"Griffin, prepare the plank!"

"You do not mean "

"It matters not to you what I mean. Obey me! You are given of late to question my orders too boldly. Bring the brig to and get out the plank," he reiterated, in a firm manner.

"There has been blood enough shed," said the man, with dogged determination, folding his arms and looking his commander in the face. "I will do no more of it."

"Ha! by the living spirit! Mutiny?"

"I will be a butcher no longer, be it mutiny or not. I am sick of it."

"Will you to your duty, sir?"

"To work the ship, but not to take more life," said the officer, steadily.

"You are mad, Griffin! My authority must not be questioned, even by you. I would not take your life," he added, placing his hand on the butt of a pistol and half drawing it from his belt. "You cannot be alone in this mutiny you wear too bold a front."

"Nor am I. Ho! lads *a Griffin! a Griffin!*"

The loud cry of the mutineer was responded to by the shout of eight or ten pirates, who instantly placed themselves, with drawn cutlasses, around him.

"By the cross! it is well matured!" muttered Kyd, with terrible calmness. "Back, fellows! To your posts! You, Griffin for the last time to your station, sir, and bring the brig to!"

"Never, sir! Draw and charge. Now is our time!" he cried to his party.

A cry between a yell and the sound made by the gnashing of teeth escaped the infuriated bucanier chief. Like a tiger, he sprung upon them singlehanded, and struck back half a score of blades with a single broad sweep of his cutlass, while those who wielded them stood appalled.

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"Back, dogs! Do ye fear me singly? Oh, ho, cowards! Stand where ye are! and you, traitor," he cried, breaking the cutlass of their leader short to its hilt, "go to your duty! I spare your life!"

"Never!"

"Then go to the devil with my compliments."

With the words he placed a pistol at his breast and fired: the man leaped high into the air and fell backward dead.

"Now, fellows, return to your stations," he said, returning his smoking pistol to his belt. "The first who hesitates or falters lies beside this carcass," he added, touching, with a contemptuous gesture, the body with his foot.

The mutineers dropped their weapons and returned to their posts without hesitation or a murmur. "Lawrence, you are no longer coxswain," said Kyd. "Take this mutineer's rank. See that my orders are obeyed! Lay the main topsail to the mast!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied the new lieutenant, with alacrity.

The helm was put hard down, the vessel came up into the wind, the heavy sail was reversed against the topmast, and the vessel became stationary. A plank was then run out over the gangway bulwarks with the largest end inboard.

"Now, Rupert Fitzroy, prepare to die!" said the bucanier, approaching his prisoner, who stood with folded arms and calm brow gazing upon the moon walking in her brightness, and looking as if he anticipated the speedy flight of his spirit through the starry world. He evidently expected death, and was prepared to meet it. His companion stood by him leaning upon his shoulder; his hands were clasped together, and he was pale and deadly in aspect, but not less resigned: nevertheless, he involuntarily shuddered as the footsteps of the pirate approached them, and addressed the former.

"I will give you a free leap into the other world, as your blood is gentle, sir, and will set aside the cravat of hemp; though in a swing at the yard—arm many a better man has gone to his account than Mark Meredith."

"Ha! do you know me?" demanded the other, starting from his revery, and fixing his gaze upon him with surprise and curiosity.

"Thou hast heard whether I do or not, and what was but suspicion is now proved by thy manner."

"Who, then, art thou?"

"It matters not. You must die. The last link that binds you to life is broken. You will soon learn if the proverb be true that saith there is but a step between this world and the next, for you will speedily measure it. The step is rather a wet one, but there is a fire priests prate about that will soon dry you." This irony and sarcasm was spoken with the most unfeeling manner, while hatred and malice seemed to dictate each word.

"Surely you cannot, you will not be so inhuman as to do such foul murder!" cried the youthful secretary, placing himself between Kyd and Fitzroy, and stretching forth his hands deprecatingly.

"Who is the blacker murderer, sir this man who robs of me my good name, or I, who merely take his life?" inquired Kyd, haughtily.

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"I robbed you not of it," said Fitzroy. "'Tis true, I have talked to many of thy deeds. But your good name! 'twas already gone thrown away by your lawless acts of piracy."

"'Tis false! I had never pirated when I took thee prisoner. Smuggling a few silks and laces, or costly wines; defending my ship against officious gentlemen under king's colours, who fain would board me, seeking contraband wares this have I done, and will do again on like occasion; but pirated I had not then."

"A distinction without a difference; a mere quibble upon words, to cheat thy rankling conscience into security."

"Have it thy own way," said the pirate, with haughty carelessness. "I will not quarrel with a man who has but five brief minutes to use his tongue in. Is all ready there at the gangway? We're losing time here idly. Ho! lead him to his death!"

"Impossible," exclaimed Fitzroy, indignantly; "you will not carry out a suggestion so infernal."

"Nay, sir, you will not do such cold-blooded murder," cried the secretary, catching the hand of Kyd, and kneeling at his feet. "Spare! oh, spare his life, and I will be thy slave!"

"Silence, boy! and you, sir, if you would use your speech, husband it in words of prayer. Thy time has come as surely as the moon now shines in the east."

"All ready, sir!" said Lawrence, coming aft a step or two and addressing his captain.

"Will you walk to the gangway, sir, or shall my men conduct you?"

"Farewell, my faithful Edwin," he said, with manly dignity, tenderly embracing the youth. "We shall in a few minutes meet beyond the skies!"

The youth cast himself into his arms, and the next moment Fitzroy unclasped his hold and laid him upon the deck insensible.

"I am ready!" he said, calmly.

"Perhaps you have a last request to make," said the pirate chief, sarcastically; "doubtless some wish is lurking in your breast, which, unexpressed, will add bitterness to death! If so, intrust it to me. I'll be its executor. Perhaps," he continued, in the same tone, "you have a ring, a lock of hair, some tender love-token to be returned to the giver. Perchance some maiden will ask how Fitzroy died. I'll bear to her a message! Ere to-morrow night I shall see the peerless Kate of Bellamont; she'll love me for bringing it, and perhaps yield the pressure of her haughty lips. I've had love favours on my own account of the willing maid ere now."

"Villain! thou liest!" cried the young man, goaded to phrensy by his words, and only restrained from springing upon him by the weight of the irons which shackled him.

"Ask her when you meet hereafter in the other world, for you meet no more in this!"

"Monster! the cup of death hath its own bitterness, and needs not thy impious words to drug it."

"Thou hast nothing, then, to ask?" said the bucanier, in the same tone of irony he had hitherto used. "I fain would do thee a kindness."

"I *have* one request!"

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"Name it."

"Take off my irons, and let me freely spring into the grave you have designed for me!"

"Knock off his chains! The devil'll have him bound in double irons ere the waves that gape to take him in flow smooth again above his head."

The manacles were unlocked and removed, when Kyd, turning to him, asked with bitter malice,

"What else?"

"This broadsword!"

Quicker than thought, he snatched a cutlass from one of the pirates, and attacked Kyd with a sudden vigour and skill that was irresistible. The bucanier retreated on the defensive several paces before he could rally or return a single blow for the shower that rained fiercely and unceasingly upon him. At length he caught the blade of his prisoner on the guard of his own, and arrested it. An instant they stood with their crossed weapons in the air, eying each other, and then simultaneously stepped back and resumed the fight. The pirates closed round and would have struck Fitzroy in the back, but the voice of Kyd restrained them.

"Not a blow, men! He is mine! I will tame him down ere long!"

For a few seconds longer they battled with terrible fury, neither having the advantage; now on one side of the deck, now on the other; now striding the body of the insensible Edwin, now fighting together in the waste, retreating and advancing alternately. At length the bucanier began to gain an advantage over his less athletic antagonist; he pushed him hard, and, step by step, compelled him to retreat towards the stern. Finally, by a strong and sudden stroke, he shivered his sword to his hand and left him defenceless. The blow with which he was about to follow up his advantage was arrested in its descent, and, turning away with a gesture of triumph, he said, as the other, with his arms folded, stood passive to receive the blow,

"'Tis enough for me that I have worsted thee! I have struck my game, so now let the pack worry him! Set upon him, men, and cut him down; he is yours!" he cried, with savage ferocity, pointing to the young officer.

The pirates, with a yell of joy, rushed aft like a pack of wolves and leaped upon him. With the strength and skill of desperation, he wrested the cutlass from the first who reached him, and, springing backward upon the taffrail, defended himself a few seconds against the fearful odds. But at length, yielding to superior numbers, he cast his sword into the air, and, leaping over the stern, amid the yells of the pirates and the firing of pistols, sunk from their sight.

Kyd cast a glance into the dark wave, and, after a few seconds' survey, said half aloud,

"He is no more! Henceforward I am sole Lord of Lester!"

These last words gave the clew to his strange and vindictive thirst for the death of his victim, and was a key to his otherwise unaccountable bloodthirstiness. Ho! there, villains! why do you gaze upon the water? Make sail on the brig! Man the braces all! Helm hard up! There she yields! Now she falls off. Steady! belay all!"

The after sails swung back to their original position as the vessel obeyed her helm; and at first with scarcely perceptible motion, but gathering momentum as she moved, she parted the moonlit waves before her, and went careering over the sparkling seas in the direction of New-York.

CHAPTER V.

"He then would make the nearest isle,
And go at night by stealth,
To hide within the earth a while
His last ill-gotten wealth."

H. F. Gould.

Towards the approach of evening on the day following the events related in the last chapter, Kate Bellamont was walking beneath the noble oaks that shaded the lawn lying between the front of White Hall and the water. She had been for some time watching the slow progress of a brig into the harbour, which, on first discerning it from the balcony, her spyglass told her was the "Ger-Falcon." Her impatience had drawn her to the water side, where the thin waves uncurled upon a silvery beach at her feet.

Slowly it advanced up towards the town, and the shouts of the citizens, and gun after gun from the Rondeel, welcomed her return. It was nearly night when, coming between Governor's Island and the city, she fired a gun without coming to; the British ensign was lowered at the same instant, and up in its place went the black flag of the bucanier. A loud wail seemed to fill the town.

"The Kyd! the Kyd!" rung through the streets and everywhere spread consternation. The battery on the Rondeel opened a heavy fire, which was returned by two broadsides from the brig, which then stood across towards Brooklyn, and anchored east of the town out of the range of the guns of the fort.

Kate had witnessed all this, at first, with surprise, which grew to terrible anxiety and alarm; and when the return of the fire confirmed the hostile character of the vessel, now too plainly captured by the corsair, a faintness came over her and she leaned against an oak for support. "Where was Fitzroy? A prisoner or slain?" were questions that she dared not ask herself. Overcome by her feelings, she was ready to sink at the foot of the tree in almost a state of insensibility, when she saw a skiff containing two men, which had been making its way from the direction of "The Kills," land not far from the "Rondeel." The twilight was sufficiently strong to enable her to see a fisherman step from it and approach her by the winding of the shore. She struggled against her feelings, for his manner seemed to betoken news; and with a quick step she advanced several paces to meet him.

"Do you bring news of Captain Fitzroy, or come you to confirm my suspicions?" she cried, as he came near her.

"Sweet lady," he said, wrapping his ample jacket closer about his person, "I am but a poor shipwrecked mariner. Yet I do bear sad news for thee."

"Of whom?" she asked, quickly, vainly endeavouring, in the dusk of evening, to read in his shaded features all he had not revealed.

"Captain Fitzroy!"

"Ha! speak! Words! words! why are you silent? I will hear thee."

"He has been captured by a pirate."

"I knew it."

"And is now prisoner to his captor in yonder brig."

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"His own courage should have kept it."

"Nay, lady, he did all he could to save his vessel."

"What fate met he? What became of him, seaman? There is life and death in your answer! Lives he?"

"We were captured by Kyd, who now holds our vessel, and all were condemned to walk the plank."

"Ha! and he?"

"Nay, lady, he lives! He, besides myself, alone escaped the death designed for us."

"Lives, lives! 'Tis happiness to know it! How escaped you?"

"I took the leap into the sea. By floating and swimming I was half an hour afterward picked up by a fisherman, who brought me hither."

"And Edwin, his secretary?"

"Alas, I know not."

"Direful, dreadful news! Fitzroy, Fitzroy! oh that I had died ere this sad news of thy dishonour, perhaps thy death, had reached me! Merciful God! sustain me in this hour!"

She buried her face in her hands, and seemed overcome by grief.

"Nay, Kate, dearest Kate, I am here! Fitzroy is before you; it is your Rupert who clasps you to his heart. Speak! I am by you, and fold you in my arms!"

He cast off his fisherman's coat and bonnet as he spoke, and she looked up revived at his voice, and beheld, indeed, the face of him whom she had mourned as dead or lost to her for ever.

"Fitzroy!"

"Fitzroy, and none else, dearest Kate!"

"How could you put me to such a trial?" she cried, almost weeping on his shoulder.

"Nay, forgive me! I planned it not beforehand; but seeing, as I approached you, that you knew me not, the fisher's coat and cap I borrowed of him who fished me from the water having disguised me even to your keen-eyed love, I was tempted to try your affections."

"Nay, Rupert, did you doubt it?"

"I have no cause," he said, embracing her.

"And did you escape as you just now said?"

"Yes. My brig was taken by a strange fatality after I had sunk the pirate vessel. All my men were slain none, save Edwin and myself, left alive. I, from some strange thirst for blood that possesses Kyd for I can divine no other motive was condemned by him to walk the plank. I succeeded in snatching a cutlass, for the purpose of selling

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my life dearly as might be, but at length was driven overboard. I had, before sunset, seen a fisher's skiff a mile off at anchor; and, rising far from the vessel towards her bows, struck out, when she had passed me, towards it. It so chanced that he had seen the brig lying to, and pulled towards her to find a market for his fish, when I hailed him and was taken on board. Knowing that the pirate would steer directly to this port, I bribed the man to bring me hither through the Staten Island Sound: and here I am once more in your loved presence."

She mused while he spoke, and then, as if unconscious of his presence, said,

"Robert, poor Robert, to what height of crime has passion led thee to what abyss will it plunge thee! Thou wert my first, my only love! As some wild vine clings around a stately trunk, curling its tendrils about its topmost limbs, as if in one embrace 'twould clasp it all, so did I entwine my heart around thee, taking thy shape! But, at last, the tempest came and swept my stately oak away. Lonely and lost, I stretched my wounded tendrils on every side, seeking some branch to cling to; then fell down, and lay in ruins along the ground. Ha, Fitzroy! Why is thy eye with such fierce scrutiny fixed upon me?"

The lover started, and then a moment or two hurriedly paced the sward ere, with hesitation and embarrassment, he said,

"It has reached my ears how, it matters not that, since my departure, you and this freebooter Kyd have met in private. From his own lips there fell dark words of favours given or received! The thoughts (forgetful of my presence) you now gave tongue to put to this, together, the one strengthened by the other, give "

"Fitzroy, cease! why will you seek to cast a cloud over the heaven your presence makes so bright?"

"Forgive me, but some demon tortures me with suspicion, spite of my confidence in thy love!"

"Ha, dost thou know this Kyd?"

"Only as a pirate! There is meaning in your question," he said, earnestly. "Who is he other than he seems?"

"To keep the secret from thee would be doing injustice to my pride of spirit. I have pledged my father to marry thee; I look upon thee as my husband; I will keep nothing from thee."

"Do you not love me, Kate?"

"If I had never loved till now, I should love thee, Rupert, next to my life. I have told thee the secret of my former love, and thou didst say thou wouldst take the half of my heart if thou couldst get no more!"

"I did, dearest Kate! The intensity of my love is alone my apology for intruding upon the sacredness of an earlier passion! Yet I thought thou hadst forgotten this "

"I had I but speak of it now. It is forgotten."

She now seemed to struggle with some powerful emotion, and then said quickly,

"The Kyd is is Lester!"

"By Heaven! your words have solved a strange feeling that governed me when I was in his presence to call him by a familiar name! But "

"He is Lester and Lester is `the Kyd.'"

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"He fled to sea I have learned, strangely leaving his title, wealth, and home. A pirate?"

"A pirate."

"How learned you this?"

"Through the sorceress Elpsy, and, more recently, through himself."

"You have met him, then?"

"I have, Rupert."

"He pressed upon thee his former passion?"

"He did."

"And you "

"Fitzroy, enough; I will not be interrogated. If you doubt me, I am unworthy your love; you to suspect my truth, unworthy mine."

"Forgive me, Lady Catharine! Yet you met?"

"For a moment. I told him I was betrothed to thee, and he left me, as I believe, to pursue thee."

"This accounts for his vindictiveness. Pardon me if I have wronged thee. You do not hear."

"I was thinking of Lester," she said, with unsuspecting frankness.

He gazed upon her absent countenance a few seconds, struck his temples with vehemence, and groaned with anguish. Suddenly he turned towards her and said, with the sternness of grief mingled with reluctant jealousy,

"Lady Catharine of Bellamont, answer me in pity, by the love I bear you, by the troth you have plighted me! With all his insatiate avarice and thirst for blood, his moral baseness and his numerous crimes, does there not linger in the embers of your earlier passion one single spark a proper wind may kindle into flame?"

"There is deeper meaning beneath your words than floats upon the surface," she replied, with dignity; "my woman's pride should rise in my defence, and meet with scorn the foul suspicion that lurks beneath them! But I will excuse you. I will think you soured by the recent loss of your brig, and so forgive you."

"This is no answer, lady! This Lester or Kyd, I well know, loves you! Thinking me dead, he soon will press his suit. By soft words, vows, and deep protestations of innocence and promises of reform, will he seek to reinstate himself in your affections if perchance they are forfeited! He is rich, noble, and smooth-tongued. I am, as now you see me, a shipwrecked mariner, with only my commission and my sword! Nay, you have even cast the loss of my vessel in my teeth!"

The handsome young man, with clouded brow, grieved and goaded spirit, turned away as he spoke, and, folding his arms, gazed moodily on the waves as they unrolled at his feet, tossing liquid diamonds upon the sand. Each word he uttered only served as weapons against him. Suspicion and jealousy will never turn back the current of woman's love if it has once flowed a contrary way. Gentleness will govern it and guide it; but violence opposed to it will, like a dam, convert it into an ungovernable cataract. The attachment between Kate Bellamont and Fitzroy

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was properly, so far as impassioned love was concerned, only on one side. Fitzroy, or Mark Meredith, had held her from youth in his eye as the star both of his ambition and his love; and when, by a fortuitous circumstance, five years after his departure as an humble lad from the fisherman's hut at Castle Cor, he found himself commander of the vessel destined to convey her to the New World, he, unrecognised by her, and under the name he had assumed, wooed her with diffidence, yet with the perseverance of a love that had strengthened with his strength and grown with his growth. She, in the mean while, was pleased by his attentions, flattered by his devotion, and not insensible to his love. She knew him only as Captain Fitzroy, who had been knighted for his gallantry on the sea, and whose youth only prevented him from attaining the highest rank in the navy. The earl (for the lovely Countess of Bellamont had deceased the year before) seconded the young hero's addresses, anticipating for the youthful knight the highest name and rank.

At length, on the day they arrived in New-York Bay she gave him the promise of her hand, though her heart went not with it. It was her father's wish that she should marry, and she herself believed Lester no longer lived. Fitzroy was therefore accepted; and though she did not regard him with the devotion of love, she esteemed him as a friend; while the gratitude she felt for his attachment he mistook for love. Although such second attachments are not altogether consistent with the character of a true heroine, yet they are not inconsistent with the character of a true woman!

The betrothed lady looked upon her lover with surprise as he concluded, and said mildly,

"This is strange! You are not wont to yield to moods of jealousy, Fitzroy!"

"Jaundiced and jealous I confess I am, until you answer me!" he said, with nervous impatience.

"Thou art ill, I fear," she said, laying her hand upon his shoulder tenderly; "and what at other times I might take deep offence at, having given no cause, I'll now regard as the workings of disease tinging your speech, which else were fair and worthy of you."

"I am not sick unless at heart," he said, burying his face in his hands. "She loves me not," he uttered to himself; "she loves me not! I have been blinded by my own deep passion! She loves me not! The hopes, the dreams of years are dissipated! She loves me not!"

All at once he turned to her and said,

"Once more forgive me, dearest lady! I was not myself just now; I knew not I knew not what I said! 'Tis over now; forget it!"

"I knew thou wert not thyself, and felt not thy words," she said, with sweet dignity. "Nay, shrink not from my embrace, Rupert."

"I am unworthy!"

"Nay, Rupert, I know your thoughts! You do yourself injustice. So far as my love can be bestowed on any one, it is bestowed on thee. That I think of Lester as he once was with tenderness, I do not deny; that I now pity and fear him, you need not be told. Still I do confess to you, that, were he Lester now, and worthy of his name, my love would be his did he claim it. But we can never be aught to each other more. Be jealous no longer! 'Tis unworthy thee; and I will henceforth give thee no cause."

"Nay, lady," he said, with seriousness, kneeling and taking her hand, "though I love thee truly and tenderly; though I have loved thee since my heart was first awakened to passion; and although this hand has been the goal of my ambition, and is at length surrendered to me, and is thus clasped in mine, yet I resign it, and here tender

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back to thee thy reluctantly given troth, and leave thee free!"

"Thou wilt not, then," she said, playfully, after hesitating in what vein to reply, "deign to accept my heart, while one little corner is reserved for the memory of a youthful passion?"

"Nay, if that little corner alone were wholly mine, and the rest were sacred to that youthful love, I should feel myself most happy most blessed. But not that I may be free, but that thou mayest be, do I make this sacrifice."

"Then it need not be made, Rupert. For it would be also a sacrifice to me."

"Do you say that truly?" he asked, with warmth.

"Truly."

"I am then happy."

"You will not be jealous again?"

"No. But it was my love."

"I confess you had cause. But it exists no longer. Let us return to the Hall."

"I will escort thee there, and then, as I should have done ere this, aid the earl in preparing to defend the town, for it doubtless will be attacked ere morning by Kyd. Lester Lester, said you? How strange, how very strange! An earldom thrown away; the haughty, highborn noble! Nay, I can scarce believe it. Yet, now I call him to mind, I do recognise the noble in `the Kyd.' At another time, fair Catharine, you must explain this mystery to me!"

They advanced towards the Hall as he was speaking, and were soon lost in the shadows that were cast by the trees, that stretched their gnarled limbs on every side, covering the lofty roof of the White Hall with a canopy of the densest foliage.

They found in the library the Earl of Bellamont, attended by the captain of the Rondeel and two or three of his council, who were also the principal citizens of the town, in some excitement on account of the reappearance of the Ger-Falcon under the pirate flag. In a few words Fitzroy informed them of the particulars of his meeting with the pirate, the loss of his vessel, and his own escape.

"To the Rondeel, Captain Van Hooven!" said the earl to the commander of the fort, with animation, as he ended. "We shall doubtless be attacked. Let nothing be wanting to defend your position and protect the town. Attended by these gentlemen and Captain Fitzroy, I will visit the other forts and stir the citizens to arms. Watch any movement from the brig, and fire at whatever moves on the water."

They instantly separated: the captain hastening to his fort, the governor and his party to visit the town and the two other forts, situated the one at the Countess's slip, and the other at the foot of the Wall-street, and Kate was left alone. When their departing footsteps had died away, she felt an undefinable curiosity to watch the motions of the vessel, the appearance of which created such a sensation in town and hall. She therefore hastened to her boudoir and took her station upon the balcony. The night had already set in, and the brig lay dark, still, and indistinct where she had at first anchored. All was silent in that direction, and her nicest sense of hearing could not detect a ripple on the water. Did she listen for one? Did she expect one? Did she hope, yet fear; doubt, yet believe, that the outcast Lester would seek her presence once more? There is a difficulty in saying what emotions passed through the maiden's mind. It is puzzling to tell which way the beam of a lady's thoughts will turn when a lover is in each scale! Yet it by no means requires a skilful analyzer of the female heart to tell which of two lovers a first one

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unforgotten, though discarded; a second unloved, though endured will be most in her thoughts. It has ever been a noble, yet weak trait in woman, to love unworthiness, and rarely has there been found a man, however black with crime, however despised by his fellow-men, who has not been, in his lowest estate of guilt and degradation, the object of some woman's devoted and undying love. Such love for such beings seems to be allied to the tender pity with which angels regard the whole erring race of mortals! It is not intended by these reflections to say anything of Kate's feelings that can be construed into disloyalty towards Fitzroy: they are only intended to show that women are good, kind, forgiving, charitable, and somewhat capricious creatures, and that, in loving, they obey the heart rather than the head.

Kate, after watching the still waters of the bay for some time, and catching no sign of movement, hostile or otherwise, on board the vessel, descended the steps of the balcony to the lawn, and, advancing across it, approached the gate that led towards the inn of Jost Stoll, in the direction of which she heard the voices of many citizens congregated there and discussing the crisis of affairs. As she came near it it was opened, and a person hastily entered and closed it after him. She started at the intrusion, and was about to turn towards the Hall, when the stranger called her by name in a low tone.

She stopped and surveyed him an instant as he slowly approached.

"Edwin Gerald, is it you? You are then safe! I congratulate you with all my heart!"

"I am, lady," said the youth, sadly. "But " and he hesitated.

"You bring me news of Fitzroy's death."

"You speak full lightly of it," he said, with surprise, "did you believe such my message. I know not whether he lives or not. Our vessel was taken by Kyd, who now holds it. Captain Fitzroy and myself alone were spared. He for a dreadful death, I for the more dreadful fate of surviving him."

"You were attached to him?"

"I was. Now that he is no more, I have no longer reason for this disguise, and here "

"Nay; do nothing rashly, fair sir; if you were about to tell me he loved me, I can tell you he has told me so himself within the half hour."

"How? Explain!"

"He is alive and well."

"Alive. Heaven, thou art kind! most kind! How was it?"

"He was driven overboard, as you believe, but was saved in a fisherman's boat. He will be rejoiced to learn of your escape. How was it, fair sir?"

"Kyd retained me prisoner to bear a courteous message to his lady love. I swore, to purchase my life, to be its bearer when he came to port. For this purpose I was landed above the town on the western side, and guided by him to this gate. He now awaits an answer to this billet. This done, I am released from my solemn oath to him. Fitzroy lives, said you, lady?"

She heeded not his words, but snatching the note from his hands, said hurriedly,

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"Wait my return."

She flew to the balcony and shut herself in her boudoir, and, drawing the curtains close, half opened the letter, when she hesitated.

"Nay, it must not be! 'Tis wrong. I will return it. But perhaps it contains something I should know! I should like to hear what the lost Lester can say. He comes, too, in such gentle guise! I will read it!"

The next moment it was open in her hand, and she read with a fluttering pulse,

"Dearest Kate,

"Let me see you for a brief moment just as the moon rises, by the linden that grows at the foot of the Rondeel. My temporal, nay, spiritual welfare hangs upon your answer. I am penitent. I appeal to you as to a heavenly intercessor! Refuse not this request, lest the guilt of my suicidal blood fall on your soul.

Lester."

She looked at the lines till they seemed composed of words of fire. Her brain reeled, her heart swelled, and she seemed torn by emotions of terrible power.

"Heaven guide me in this strait!" she cried, falling impulsively on her knees and clasping the letter in her folded hands. "Sudden and strange events crowd thick upon me, with tales of murder foul, and this newborn jealousy of Rupert whom I know not if I love or no, yet whom I should love had *he* not risen from the grave, as 'twere, to step between me and my newly-plighted troth! My brain is crazed!"

She rose to her feet and walked the room thoughtfully, with the letter in her hand, now looking at it with tenderness, now crumpling it with disdain. Suddenly she stopped and said with energy,

"The struggle is over! I will meet him."

She stepped to the balcony, beneath which the young secretary stood, and said calmly,

"Return, and say I'll come."

She withdrew herself hastily into the boudoir as she spoke, and the youth left her to bear the message back to the bucanier, and thereby redeem his oath and regain his liberty.

The moon was just rising above the Heights of Brooklyn, when, wrapped in a mantle, her face concealed by its folds, thrown over her head in the shape of a hood, Kate Bellamont left her boudoir by the door that communicated with the main body of the house. With light and hasty footsteps she traversed a long passage that led to the library. She cautiously opened the door, and, evidently to her surprise and pleasure, found no one within. She crossed it to an opposite door, which she opened with the same caution, and found herself in the family chapel, dimly lighted by two wax tapers placed upon a small stand before a crucifix. She gathered the folds of her mantle closer about her form, and, looking round the obscure apartment to see if she was observed, kneeled a moment in silent prayer before the altar, looking heavenward as she prayed, as if she sought guidance and protection. She then rose to her feet, and hastily walked towards a door partly concealed by tapestry, and passed through it into a conservatory verdant and fragrant with rare plants. A little wicket inserted in the Venetian blinds which surrounded this floral gallery she pushed open, and issued into the open air and upon a lawn that extended close up to the foot of the glacis that environed the Rondeel. She paused an instant ere she crossed the green, as if hesitating. The delay was but for an instant; for she directly afterward moved forward with a rapid pace towards a

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lofty tree, the topmost branches of which towered above the walls of the fort. Its foot was buried in deep shadow, the rising moon having only touched, as yet, the upper wall. Beneath it walked a man with a hasty and impatient tread, who at every third step stopped and looked towards the Hall with anxious scrutiny.

"'Tis past the hour; the moon is mounting high in the heavens, and yet she comes not!" he said, as he paused and surveyed the darkly-shaded lawn that stretched between him and the mansion. "Cursed oversight in making this boy my messenger! He has doubtless told the tale of Fitzroy's fate, and she'll not meet his murderer. Ha! a form! Hers in a thousand! She comes! Now aid me, all good angels!"

He advanced to meet her as she came near the tree, and said in a low tone, lest he should be over-heard by the sentry on the parapet above,

"Most kind, dear Kate! Forgive the rude and angry haste with which I last left you! You are indeed kind! My strong love told me my appeal would not be made in vain."

He knelt at her feet as he spoke and attempted to take her hand. She drew back with dignity, and said with firmness,

"Let this distance be between us. You have desired to see me!"

"I have. Is there no hope for me, Kate?"

"How mean you?"

"Do you believe me so far steeped in guilt that heartfelt penitence for what is past will not replace me in the seat of your affections, which I do confess most justly I have forfeited? Is there no hope of pardon for the penitent?"

"The thief found mercy on the cross. Heaven still forgives the penitent."

"And will you be less indulgent? I speak not now of heaven. The seat I have lost is in your heart! It is there, sweet Kate, I would be replaced!"

"Cease, sir. I came not hither, Robert, to hold converse on this theme. Your epistle, which brought me here against my will and better judgment, discoursed other language; atonement to Heaven, not to me. If other than your soul's weal be your aim, then is our conference ended."

She turned to leave him as she spoke, but he caught her hand.

"Stay! be not so hasty! I do confess there is some ground for Rumour's widespread tales, but I am not so guilty as she'd make me. Is there no pathway to your forgiveness?"

"Yes, when you have atoned to Heaven!"

"None to your love?"

"None!"

"Nothing's proved!" he cried, with animation; "I bear the king's commission against piracy."

"The more guilty then, that, under cover of it, you commit piracies. This king's commission! Do not all men know 'twas given thee because you knew the haunts of a dangerous horde of pirates in the Indian seas, having been one

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of them, though now their foe and rival; and, by giving thee employment, to keep thee out of mischief?"

"'Tis false!"

"I've heard enough. More I could tell thee of recent occurrence."

"Ha, dost thou know has the boy told "

"Nothing. I know enough. Your guilt is written out upon the sky! He that runs may read it! Go on; slay and pillage. You have a love of human blood, and, like the wolf, who, once tasting it, will touch no other, glut thyself till satiate."

"Kate!"

"Away, sir! Speak not, come not near me! Thy touch, thy very glance is pollution."

She turned to fly towards the Hall as she spoke, but, darting forward, he caught her by the arm.

"By the cross! if you will act the queen, then will I play the king. I have been an angler, and have learned from it a lesson in love. My letter to thee was but a hook cunningly baited with a gilded fly I knew you would snap at! I have given thee line enough, and now will draw thee in captive!"

He threw his arm about her as he spoke, and was bearing her around the bastion of the fort towards his boat, which, by making a circuit from his vessel round the bay and approaching the town on the North River side, he had succeeded in running into a little cove west of the Rondeel unperceived. The surprise of the maiden was at first so great as to deprive her of the power of speech. But, as she was borne round the fort by his strong arm, she said, in a tone of perfect self-command,

"Unhand me, Lester! Release me. I forgive you."

"You are *mine*, proud beauty!" he replied, through his clinched teeth. "I have been the plaything of thy pride full long."

"Unhand me, sir."

"Pardon me if I am somewhat rough," he said, ironically; "on shipboard I will atone for it."

"Heaven, then, has given me this in my hour of need," she cried, snatching a pistol from his belt, and by a sudden effort disengaging herself and springing away from him several feet. As she spoke she levelled it against his person.

"Ha, ha! my pretty one, you do the heroine excellently. Give me that pretty toy, sweet Kate," he said, advancing towards her; "it becomes not a lady's fingers."

"Back, sir," she replied with resolution, presenting it full at his breast.

"Nay, nay, then."

He sprung upon her at the same instant to secure the weapon, when she cried,

"God forgive me, then!" and fired.

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Instantly he released her wrist, which he had seized, with a cry of pain mingled with an exclamation of rage and disappointment.

The report of the pistol was answered by the roll of a drum on the Rondeel, and was followed by the noise of alarm and confusion in the town. Kate fled like a deer towards the Hall, while Kyd, wrapping his cloak about his left arm, which was bleeding freely, glided beneath the locust-trees that surrounded the Bowling Green, and gained his boat.

"Shall we pull back by the way we came?" asked the coxswain.

"No. Give me the helm."

The man obeyed his stern voice, and, after the boat had cleared the rocks, he steered her directly across the line of fire from the Rondeel towards his vessel.

Without hesitating, the men pulled steadily and in silence in the face of the fort, and, as the moon was now up, they could not remain long undiscovered. In a few seconds they were challenged from the battery. There was no reply. A second time they were hailed, but still the boat kept on her course straight for the brig.

"Fire!" cried a voice. "'Tis `the Kyd."

Instantly, one after another, the heavy guns opened upon them from the parapet, but the balls went roaring through the air high above their heads. Still steadily and silently the boat kept on her course. A discharge of firearms followed with more effect. Three of the eight oarsmen were shot dead as they sat, and scarcely one escaped unhurt. The desperate helmsman sat stern and silent, and only with an impatient wave of his hand bid them row on. A second volley reached them, and but three oarsmen remained seated and labouring faintly at their oars. Kyd left the helm and caught the fourth oar as the dead man dropped it, and, cheering them on, soon reached his brig, amid a third volley that rattled around him like hail.

"Ship your oars," he cried, as they came alongside, rising to his feet.

Not a man moved.

"Spring to the bows and fend off!" he shouted.

There was no reply; the men sat upright, and swayed their bodies to and fro, and still pulled at their sweeps!

The boat, at the same instant, came against the brig's counter with a shock, and the three men were thrown from their seats backward to the bottom of the boat. They were dead! He had been pulling an oar the last few seconds with corpses. He shuddered and sprung up the side.

Instantly the brig got under weigh, and, sailing up East River to Hell Gate, passed through the dangerous pass, and came to, not far from the Witch's Isle. A boat was lowered, and Kyd descended into it and landed there. As he entered the hut the witch was seated on the ground over a fire, rocking her body to and fro, and chanting a wild song.

"Welcome, Robert Kyd," she said, without turning round. "Umph! I smell blood!" she cried the instant after. "Thou hast been at thy old trade. Hast thou had revenge?"

"I have. His vessel is mine. Him I have slain."

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"Did I not promise thee this?" she said, rising and speaking with triumph. "Now thou art come to do my will and to fulfil thy oath."

"I have seen her within the hour," he said, with settled hate.

"And she has scorned thee?"

"Yes. I tried love at first, but it would not do, and "

"You then tried force?"

"I did," he said, ferociously.

"And she is now in thy state-cabin?"

"No. I bore her part way to my boat, when she drew a pistol from my belt and shot me here."

"And she "

"The garrison was instantly in arms; the town rose clamorous; she fled like a deer, and mocked pursuit. I barely escaped to my boat, and reached my brig with the loss of every man. By Heaven! I believe a score of balls struck my person, yet they seemed to fall from my cloak harmlessly like hailstones."

"It was the amulet!"

"True, woman! Yet I was wounded by a pistol in this girl's hand. Your charm here failed."

"No. Did I not tell thee if not, be it known to thee, Robert Kyd that ne'er devil wrought a charm a woman may not undo. Ball from men can harm thee not, but if a woman use the weapon the charm is naught. What wilt thou now do?"

"Return to Ireland and lay claim to the earldom. Perhaps, when I leave my present course of life, she will listen to me. By the cross! I am ashamed to woo a noble maiden whom I have loved, and still love, so roughly."

"I will woo her for thee."

"Nay."

"I will not heed thy nay! She must be thine. Yet I like this determination to assume your earldom. Go bury your treasures that are here, in some safe place, and sail for Ireland. After thou art become Lord of Lester, they can then be removed, and enable thee to support thy rank with princely state."

"I will take them with me, Elpsy."

"Thou wilt lose them, then, if pursued by a cruiser and forced to desert your vessel. Bury them here, and, when thou art an earl, thou canst come for them thyself, and bear them home without suspicion."

"Perhaps you are right; none will see in the Earl of Lester the outlaw Kyd. Save thyself and Kate of Bellamont, the secret is locked from all human knowledge."

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"Her pride will keep her from revealing it, and my projects for thy aggrandizement seal my own lips," said the sorceress. "Here are the treasures which for three years thou hast accumulated," she added, removing a stone from a crevice in the rock against which her hut was built, and exposing, by a torchlight, a cavity therein filled with vast piles of gold and silver coins, countless rings for the ears and fingers, cups of chased gold set with precious stones, bracelets, ducal coronets sparkling with diamonds, and innumerable jewels of every description. He surveyed the valuable deposite, and then, shaking his head, slowly said,

"They have cost much blood, Elpsy."

"Therefore should they be well kept. Take them with thee, and hide them in some secret place, easy of access from the sea, till thou hast need of them."

"I know a spot where three tides meet, which will be a safe repository for them."

"Call thy men and bear them to thy vessel."

"Wilt thou go with me to perform the rites?"

"I have other things to do in town. I have made a discovery there that has filled my soul with joy! Ho, I will tell it you when you return, for it concerns you, boy. Cusha shall go with thee. Slave, appear!"

From an obscure corner of the hut the hideous African made his appearance, his malicious and cunning features glowing with the hateful look they habitually wore.

"Slave, take with thee thy charms and follow thy master here! See that the gold is buried with all the rites of our mystic art."

He prostrated himself to the floor, and left her to obey her commands.

In a short time the pirate's crew had conveyed the treasure from the hut to their boat, and thence on board the brig, and before daybreak the vessel was many leagues up the Sound, steering an easterly course. The succeeding morning she doubled the easternmost cape of Long Island, and, altering her course to the southwest, stood towards Sandy Hook under a stiff breeze from the southeast. By night she entered the Sound between Sandy Hook and the south side of Staten Island, and, steering directly across the mouth of the Raritan, anchored close to an elevated peninsula that formed the northern shore of the river.

The report of the pistol fired by Kate Bellamont not only alarmed the garrison and the town, but brought out the earl from the library, whither he had just retired with his friends, after having taken the rounds of the threatened town.

"What means this, dearest Kate?" he cried, meeting her flying across the lawn.

"Nothing, nothing, father!" she gasped, flinging herself into his arms.

"My child is not injured? What is this firing and sudden alarm? Why are you here, and flying as if for life?" he asked, with anxious solicitude.

"The Kyd the pirate!" she exclaimed, with indignation.

"Ha!" he cried, bounding forward towards the Rondeel, and thence instinctively to the nearest shore where he anticipated he should meet him. A boat was just putting off. Without delay he hastened back to the Rondeel, and,

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taking the commander by the arm, led him to the rampart, and said,

"There is the pirate's cutter. Bring your guns to bear upon her."

The result of the fire is already known. When he saw that the boat reached the brig, and that she immediately got under weigh, he left the fort and returned to the Hall to seek his daughter. On his way he met Fitzroy, who had just arrived at the Hall, after having, through the governor, chartered a Bristol ship that was lying in the East Dock ready for sea, with the intention of putting on board of her the guns of the Rondeel, and attacking Kyd as he was at anchor in the harbour.

"She can be got ready for sea in twenty–four hours, my lord," he said with animation, as he met the earl. "But what is this confusion and heavy firing?"

"You are well met, Fitzroy! Go to my daughter, while I return to the fort! The bucanier has landed, so far as I can learn, and like to have carried Kate off, I believe. But I have had no time to inquire."

"I will see her at once," said Fitzroy, leaving him hastily.

"You will find her in her boudoir. I will remain and see that our defences are kept up! Ha! the pirate is under sail, and is moving up the Sound."

"He is going to sea again, doubtless; but, as our guns command both the channels out, he has taken the way by Long Island Sound."

"Heaven grant it be so!" said the earl, as he entered the Rondeel.

Kate Bellamont was walking her room with a rapid pace, a flushed cheek, and a flashing eye as Fitzroy entered.

"Ha, Fitzroy, you have come," she said, with the tone and bearing of Elizabeth of England when insult had touched her pride. "I am glad to see you! I have been insulted."

"Then you shall be avenged!" he said, taking her hand.

"Do you promise it?"

"By the love I bear you, I swear it!"

"Avenge me wipe out the stain my woman's pride has suffered, and I will be thy slave!"

"Nay, dearest Kate, I would rather thou wouldst be my bride," he said, smiling and kissing her cheek.

"Rupert Fitzroy, touch me not! Think not of love! When thou hast captured this freebooter when I behold him bound at my feet so low that I can place my foot upon his neck, I will then be thy bride. Ay, to the music of his clanking chains shall be performed the marriage rites."

"If not my own honour, thine at least demands his capture and death. Catharine of Bellamont," he said, kneeling before her and solemnly elevating his hands, "I swear by the cross that is the emblem of our holy faith that thou shalt be avenged!"

She looked on his animated features a moment steadily with her full black eyes, and then said,

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"'Tis enough! By thy urgency in this matter thou wilt show thy love for me, and by my determination to press it to its issue thou mayest construe mine for thee. I am now calm. Here is the flag I have worked for thee. It bears thy initials, with the arms of my house, conjoined. Take it, and beneath it win thy bride."

"Lady, it shall be done, or I will never see thy face more!"

"Ay, it should be for the world's weal that it should be done," she said, with eloquent fervour, "when every breeze comes tainted with the smell of blood; when wondering crowds, each with a tale that outweighs that his fellow bears, in nimble speech deal out to one another hourly marvels! When in bolts, bars, and locks before unknown in this peaceful land, each household, for leagues along the coast, seeks ill security against midnight dangers! When the fisherman fears to launch his boat, and towns count their strength and weigh the odds (as if a foe were thundering at their gates) against sudden surprise. When he who spreads such terror is captured, I will then be thine!"

"For this very enterprise am I now preparing. Within this last half hour I have got a ship that sails like the wind, which, with arms and ammunition on board, will place me on a better deck than that I have lost."

"Why did you delay to tell this, and lead me to blame you in my thoughts for supineness?"

"I would have kept it secret from thee till I had sailed."

"Wherefore?"

"Having," he said, with hesitation, "some regard for your former love friendship, I should say."

"Love it once was, therefore speak out and call it love!"

"I feared this might lead you to dissuade me from it. But this sudden attitude you have assumed fills me with surprise and admiration."

"Rupert Fitzroy, have you not been told from what peril I was but now saved? Have you forgotten how, in a jealous fit, you have unawares let drop that Robert Kyd, with his false lips, had said no matter what but, being false, can never be forgiven? Until this man is captive and lying at her feet in chains, Catharine of Bellamont's hand shall not be given in marriage. You have heard me, Fitzroy?" she added, retiring to the farther part of her room, as if she would be left alone.

"I have, and you shall be obeyed," he replied, leaving the boudoir.

The next morning but one a merchant-ship was hauled from the dock in which she had been several weeks lying, undergoing repairs; and two guns from the Rondeel, and several from the other forts, were placed on board of her, making eight in all. With a bold and willing crew, most of whom had volunteered on the service, at sundown she got under weigh, under the command of Fitzroy, accompanied by Edwin his secretary, and put to sea in search of the bucanier. She sailed through the Narrows instead of Hell Gate, a fisherman having informed him, as they were getting under weigh, that he had seen a vessel answering the description of the pirate sailing towards the mouth of the Raritan; and as sufficient time had elapsed to have enabled him to sail up through the Sound and double Montauk Point, Fitzroy determined to go in pursuit of the vessel mentioned by the fisherman.

The promontory off which Kyd had anchored at the mouth of the Raritan, now called Perth Amboy, descended on the south side to the river above named, with a gentle inclination. On the east it was washed by the waters of Staten Island Sound, and the island which gives name to it stretched east of it, with its high wooded bank far towards the north, till it terminated in New-York Bay. On the summit of the promontory was a small rustic

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church, with a slender spire towering high above the surrounding trees and humble hamlets. Around the church was a primitive graveyard, with here and there the unpretending tombstone which designated the last resting-place of some English Protestant or French Huguenot. From this rural cemetery was a wide view of island, main, and ocean.

It was twilight when the bucanier's vessel anchored beneath this promontory. At midnight the little churchyard presented a singular scene. In a deep shadow cast by the moon on the west side of the lonely church, were gathered a group of men the pale light shining broadly upon their rude costume and savage features, mingled with the red flame of dark lanterns, giving them a singularly wild appearance. They were standing with superstitious awe round an open grave, from which the fresh body had just been dishumed and was now lying white and glaring in its shroud upon the ground not far off. Over the grave stood the wizard Cusha, and beside it glittered heaps of treasure. Apart walked Kyd in thought, occasionally turning to the grave, and then walking with quicker pace and uttering his thoughts half aloud:

"Though reason tells me there is nothing in it, and laughs at charms, spells, and incantations curling her lip with incredulity, I cannot get the mastery o'er this superstition, but live its very slave, using the instruments of her dark craft as if my destiny and they were linked, yet scorning while I use them."

"All's ready, sir, black wizard and all," said the mate, approaching him and interrupting his meditations.

"You treat too lightly these ceremonies, mate! There may be deeper meaning in them than you dream of."

"If the infernal pit is at the bottom of them, they are deep enough! This negro wizard looks ugly enough to be the devil's grandfather."

"No more, Loff. Is all prepared?"

"All."

"Then give orders to the men."

"Ay, ay, sir. All hands to bury money!"

The pirates gathered round the grave, part of their number thrown into the shadow cast by the tower of the church, the remainder exposed to the full light of the moon. And moon scarcely ever shown on stranger or wilder scene. The negro was seated sullenly, with his head on his knees, upon the pile of grave-dirt, nor had he spoken until Kyd now approached and addressed him.

"If, as thou dost profess, dark slave, power to thee is delegated, by her whom thou hast served, to deal with beings of another world, by this amulet I wear I command thy service and obedience!"

As he spoke he held the amulet up to his view.

The wizard crossed his hands on his breast, and bowed himself to the ground.

"Cusha is thy slave. Speak."

"There lies heaped beside thee countless treasure jewels, stones of price, gold and silver coin untold each ounce of which has been purchased by its weight of human blood. What is so dearly bought should be safely stored and guarded. Perhaps some future day, awearied of the ocean, we may give up our roving life and settle down honest country gentlemen. We shall then need it to buy men's tongues and memories! Now perform the mystic orgies

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prescribed for such occasions."

The wizard slowly rose to his feet, and walked deliberately three times around the grave, the pirates giving back as he walked in superstitious alarm. The third time he began to chant, in a low key, unintelligibly; but, gradually rising in wildness and distinctness, he, with strange gestures and contortions of form and face, broke forth into the following chant:

"Beelzebub, prince of air! Mortals worship thee."

He elevated his arms as he sung this in an attitude of wild devotion.

"Apollyon, prince of sea! Mortals worship thee."

He stretched his arms towards the sea as he chanted, and a sudden dash and roar of its waves upon the beach rose to the ears of the listeners with an appalling sound.

"Sathanas, prince of earth! Mortals worship thee."

He struck the earth with his foot as he repeated the words, and then, prostrating himself, kissed the ground.

"Lucifer, prince of air! Mortals worship thee."

The wind seemed to sigh through the trees and to howl about the church tower as he recited the mystic verse. Then, with a singular union of all the gestures and ceremonies he had hitherto used, he chanted, in a tone that echoed like a chorus of demons through the surrounding forests, "Prince of air, earth, sea, and fire! Mortals bow and worship thee!"

"It's an accursed lie!" suddenly cried Loff, the mate, who, with the pirate crew, had been an appalled listener and spectator of the scene.

"Hist!" exclaimed Kyd, in a suppressed voice, forcibly grasping his arm; "a word of incredulity will destroy the spell."

"I have too much respect for my soul, captain, to let this black son of darkness sell it to the devil so glibly."

"Silence! Observe him!"

The wizard again began to chant, acknowledging the presence of each element by some appropriate gesture as he named it:

"By thy four great names we call thee! By the power thou hast conferr'd, Let our voices now be heard! By fire we call on thee!"

He then seized a torch held by one of the men, and waved it to and fro above his head.

"By water we call on thee!"

From a cruise that he had placed beside him, he took up water in his palm and cast it into the air.

"By air we call on thee!"

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He waved his arms upward, and a sound like the rushing of wind passed over them, and every torch flickered with the sudden agitation of the atmosphere.

"By earth we call on thee!"

He cast into the air a handful of the grave-dirt, which fell back to the ground with a hollow noise like the rumbling sound of an earthquake.

Every man stood appalled. Suddenly he ceased, and took, with much form and ceremony, a black cat from a pouch slung at his waist. He elevated her in one hand, while in the other he held a drawn knife above her, and chanted, turning the animal slowly round, "No spot of white Must meet the sight! Thrice shall it wave Above the grave! At a single blow The blood must flow!"

He waved his knife at the repetition of the second couplet thrice above the grave, and at the close of the last line severed the head of the animal, which, with the body, he dropped into it. Instantly there issued flames and dense smoke from it, which first lighted up the scene wildly for a moment, and then left it in murky darkness. When the black volumes of vapour rolled away, the wizard was standing astride the grave in the attitude of a sacrificer, his blood-dripping knife in his outstretched arm: he then began to chant, "'Tis kindled, kindled! Lucifer our prayer has heard! In his name Feed the flame! If dies the fire, the charm is broken!"

Then turning to Kyd, he cried, "The book with name not to be spoken! The book, the book to feed the flame, The book, the book none dare to name!"

"Think he means the Holy Bible, Captain Kyd?" demanded Loff, with religious horror.

"Silence!" cried the pirate chief.

He took from the folds of his cloak as he spoke a thick book, and gave it to the wizard, who received it with three several prostrations. He then tore it in pieces and cast the leaves into the grave. Instantly blue flame rose from it to a great height, thunder rolled in startling peals, while the most vivid lightning hissed and glared around them; at the same instant the bell in the church tower tolled without human aid with a sound so deep and solemn, so wild and unearthly, that every man was filled with consternation and horror. The wizard alone stood unmoved; and standing with one foot upon the treasure, chanted, "One half the sacrifice is o'er, In the grave your treasure pour! He who seeks must seek again, He who digs will dig in vain!"

"Thus much is over," said Kyd, advancing. "Pour the coin and jewels into the grave."

"Shiver my timbers! if I understand this!" exclaimed Loff. "There is more of Old Hoofs to do in the matter than I expected, or you wouldn't have caught me here. Umph! this black wizard smells of brimstone!"

After all the treasure was poured into the grave, the wizard, looking, as the moon shone upon his form and features, more like a demon than human, stood across it, and looked around malevolently upon the pirates as they leaned upon their spades prepared to refill it. After a moment's silence he began, in the same wild, monotonous chant: "Safe from every human eye Shall this gold securely lie; When a mortal who has seen The treasure placed the grave within, Shall in the grave alive be thrown: This done, the spot shall ne'er be known. And finish'd then the rites will be, Mortal, thou hast sought from me!"

"If I had my doubts before about his being leagued with Beelzebub, not one have I left now," said Loff, with indignation. "I can see a fellow walk a plank or seized up to the yardarm, but I am too tender-hearted to see such a thing done as he hints at in his infernal rhymes."

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The whole pirate crew seemed to be animated by the same feelings. At first general consternation prevailed; but, gathering confidence, they whispered together, casting the while revengeful looks towards the wizard. Suddenly, by one impulse, they laid their hands, without speaking, upon him, and cast him headlong into the grave; and then, acting as one man, filled it up with its living occupant in a moment of time. The first action of Kyd was to spring forward and rescue him; but the determined attitude of his men, whose minds were too highly wrought up to be held under control, checked the impulse. He stood by till the grave was smoothed over, so that not a vestige of it remained, and was then about to command them to return to the brig, which was seen through the trees lying at her anchor near the land: but ere he could give the order, the flame of a gun fired from her flashed upon his eyes, followed by a loud report, that echoed in many a deep, rumbling note along the wooded shore.

"A signal of alarm!" he cried; "to your boats all!"

He hastened forward to the verge of the promontory where the prospect was unobstructed, and, casting his eyes down the narrow strait that opens seaward between Staten Island and Sandy Hook, beheld not a mile off, coming round the headland, a large ship, her tall sails glancing like snow in the moonlight. Loud and clear rung his voice hastening his men to the brig, while gun after gun flashed and thundered from her, calling them on board to her defence. In less than five minutes three boats loaded with the pirates put off from the shore and pulled swiftly in the direction of the brig. Kyd stood up steering the foremost one. But the wind blew steadily and strong in from sea, and the strange ship came on so fast that she was soon no farther off from their vessel than they themselves. It was plain she knew what she was about.

"Strain every nerve, men!" he cried, in an even, determined voice that reached every ear, while its coolness was more effectual in inspiring confidence than loud shouts would have been. "Pull together and steadily! She must not reach the brig before us. Now, all together! Lively, lively! A few strokes and we shall reach her."

But they were yet several hundred yards from her, and the stranger came ploughing his way down without taking in a sail or altering his course, save just enough to enable him to cut off the boats, the approach of which, as well as the relative position of the brig with the shore, he was able to discern by the aid of the moon, which filled the atmosphere with brilliant light. In the mean while the brig cut her anchor, and, swinging round, with her diminished force directed a feeble and irregular fire towards her. But she kept on her course in majestic silence, without returning it and without apparent injury; and, ere the boats could reach their vessel, she sailed in between it and them, and poured a broadside into each. The brig felt the fire in every spar; but the boats, being so low in the water, escaped without injury, the shot flying high above the heads of the pirates, and crashing among the forests on the shore. The brig was now evidently in the power of the ship; and Kyd, finding that it would be impossible to reach her, shouted through the smoke, that settled thickly over the water, to his mate Lawrence whom he had left on board with but a dozen men,

"Let them not take her! Blow her up, and to your boat!"

His voice was distinctly heard by every man both in the brig and ship.

"Hard up! hard, hard!" was instantly heard in the clear voice of Fitzroy; and the ship, which was steering so as to lay the brig aboard, fell off and stood in towards shore. The moment afterward a small boat was seen to put off from the brig, which a few seconds afterward blew up with a terrible explosion, suddenly turning night, for many miles around, into broad day, and shaking the earth with the tremendous concussion. For an instant the air was filled with a shower of missiles, and trains of fire lighting up sea, forest, and boats with a momentary and wild glare; then all sunk into darkness, and the pale moon once more struggled to assert her right to the empire of her own gentle light, which had been so suddenly invaded.

"Now, my men, we are left to our own resources," said Kyd. "There is not water enough for this ship to pass up this narrow sound. Let us pull through it. Who our pursuer is I have no idea: a small corvette, sent expressly by

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the king in pursuit, doubtless. But let us do our best to get off. We shall find some trader in the harbour, and will cast ourselves on board of her. There is no other chance!"

His address was received with a shout, and the four boats, Lawrence having now joined them, began to pull northward through the Staten Island Sound. The ship, in the mean while, after recovering the ground she had lost in avoiding the explosion, stood steadily on after the boats, which were not a quarter of a mile ahead, occasionally firing a bow-chaser at the little fleet. The chase continued for half an hour, the pirates keeping the lead gallantly, and, being enabled to cross shoals by their lighter draught, occasionally they got far ahead, while the ship was slowly following the circuitous channel.

"She has a pilot who knows the ground," said Kyd, as he beheld the ship navigate safely an intricate reach of the narrow passage. "If he clears the Red Bank we have just come across, he will do what ship has never done before go through into York Bay! Now she comes to it!" he cried, with animation, rising in his boat and watching the advance of the ship across the shoal. Suddenly he exclaimed, while a shout went up from the men, who were so interested at this crisis of the pursuit that they forgot to pull at the oar,

"She has struck, and heavily too! There goes her fore-topgallant-mast like a pipestem!"

"She will off with the flood," said Lawrence.

"It is full flood now. She will stick there as long as two timbers hold together, unless they pitch their guns overboard," said Loff.

"Ho, my lads, all!" suddenly cried Kyd, addressing them; "she is now ours. Back water! Let us carry her as she lies!"

He was answered by a loud hurrah, and the boats' heads were instantly turned towards the ship, which was about half a mile off. The boats shot forward with velocity, pushing before them vast surges which their ploughing bows turned up from the surface. They had got within half their distance of her, when boats were lowered from every part of her, and, as if by magic, filled with men.

"They are on the alert! He who commands her knows his business!" said Kyd, who, as his boats approached, had stood up in the stern of his own, with his drawn cutlass extended towards the vessel, inspiring his men and panting for the conflict. But, at this indication of their readiness to receive him, he suddenly cried, turning and waving his hand to the boats in the rear,

"Hold on!"

He then surveyed the enemy, and said in a calm, deep tone, every accent of which was expressive of his determined purpose,

"There are six boats, with at least twenty men in each; we number fifty or sixty only. Nevertheless, we must fight them!"

This proposition, notwithstanding the previous ardour of the crew, was received with a universal murmur of dissent.

"We are willing to pull towards New-York Bay, Captain Kyd," said Loff, "and take possession of some of the craft there; but there are too many odds against us to risk fighting yonder barges. Besides, on the bows of the largest boat I can see a gun relieved against the wake of the moon."

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"It is too true. We shall be likely to have the worst of it," said Kyd, suppressing his rage, which was ready to burst forth at the refusal of his men, and satisfied on a second glance that it would be useless to attempt, with his ill-armed crew, to capture a flotilla of boats so well prepared both for attack and defence. "Put away, and let us get through this narrow sound at our best speed! If they pursue us we will lead them a long chase."

He was answered by a cheer from his men and a simultaneous dash of the numerous oars into the water, under the force of which the boats moved up the strait with direct and rapid motion. At the same instant a gun of heavy metal was discharged from the bows of the headmost boat of their pursuers, loaded with grape; but the leaden shower fell far short of them; while, at the same instant, with loud cheers, all the barges left the side of the ship and commenced hot pursuit of the pirate boats.

"A twelve-pounder, by its report," said Kyd, "and it would have done mischief if it had been elevated half an inch higher. Pull, men! they will shoot better the next time!" he shouted, waving his sword with animation and cheering them on.

Away they flew, pursuing and pursued! At one moment the ship's boats would be almost upon them, when the pirates would shoot from the main channel into some creek or bayou intersecting the marshy shores, and re-enter the Sound far above them. At intervals the twelve-pounder broke with a loud roar upon the night, echoing among the woods of Staten Island and the Jersey shore in multiplied reverberations; and, like a hurricane, its cloud of bullets would rush along the air, or plough and skip along the surface of the water, but with little effect. On they went, pursuing and pursued, neither yielding or showing signs of fatigue. At length the moon hung low over the western horizon, and shone with a cold, watery look; in the east flakes of light spotted the sky, and the darkness began to break before the dawn. Gradually the ashy hue of the sky became clearer, and changed to a delicate pink; and then, waxing brighter, grew to vermilion, till the whole eastern sky blushed with the incipient dawn. The clouds that hung about the path of the coming sun began to turn out edges of gold, and the sky to the zenith to radiate with beams of glorious dyes. The whole heaven, even down to the low west, had changed its livery of blue for the rose, while the jealous moon, disdaining to look on a rival whose coming was so gorgeously heralded, threw a snowy veil over her brow, and sunk, scarce visible on the brow of morning, beneath the horizon! Suddenly up rose the sun and filled the world with light!

As the day approached the hostile parties became plainly visible to one another, and were able to count each other's force. At sunrise the pirate's boats entered the bay of New-York, leaving Staten Island on the right, and closely followed within a third of a mile by their pursuers, pulled directly towards the town, which, with its wall and Rondeel, was seen rising from the water a league distant. Not far from the shore, between the Governor's Island and the town, lay three or four small Dutch yachts at anchor, waiting for the change of tide to take them up to Albany. It was evident, from the course he took, that it was the intention of Kyd to throw himself on board one of these vessels, and effect the escape of himself and crew. This seemed to be the idea suggested to the mind of the leader of the pursuing boats, and he urged his men forward in the most animated and eager manner. At the stern of his launch, which took the lead, and in the bows of which was mounted a twelve-pound carronade, floated a silken flag, on which were conspicuous the initials of his name and the crest of the house of Bellamont.

"By the cross!" exclaimed Kyd, as the sunlight struck on this flag, and a passing breeze unfolded it to his eye as he turned to watch the chase, "'tis the same flag!"

"What flag?" inquired Loff, taking a pocket spyglass from his jacket.

"Ha! you have a glass! Give it me!" he cried, hastily. "By Heaven!" he cried, after a moment's surveying, "'tis the same! The very initials. Now the wind opens it. 'Tis the same with the earl's crest! What can it mean? This youth Edwin may have become her champion since I so foolishly gave him his liberty! He, and none else, commands the barges! But there is too much skill displayed in directing the pursuit to emanate from a boy like him! Yet why this flag? Among the dense mass of heads beneath I cannot distinguish the leader's features!"

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"Shall we board the nearest yacht?" asked Loff. "We shall soon be close upon them."

Kyd turned and found that he was within a mile of three sloops that lay under the guns of the Rondeel. He looked back and saw that the barges were coming with increased speed, and would be up with him by the time he could reach the vessels. He cheered on his men with every gesture and word of encouragement; but, with all their exertions, he perceived that at every dip of their sweeps his pursuers gained on him.

At length the carronade from the leading boat opened upon them for the first time since sunrise and with terrible effect upon the nearest boat, commanded by Lawrence. Nearly every bullet told in the plank or flesh; and the ill-fated boat, which seemed to have received the whole charge from the piece, instantly went down, leaving (so effectually had it been converted into their coffin) only Lawrence and one of his comrades floating wounded upon the surface.

"For the yacht never stop to pick him up! for the yacht! Your lives depend on your reaching it!" shouted Kyd, with desperation. "Pull, ye dogs! Strong! together all! Bend to your sweeps like devils! In five minutes we'll be on board."

But the crew of the sloop, consisting of three or four men only, were already aware of their danger; and, cutting their cable, hoisted their jib and mainsail with what haste the occasion demanded, and, aided by the wind and tide, moved swiftly down the harbour beyond their reach. The other vessels followed this example as rapidly as possible; and, ere the pirates could get alongside, they were sailing away at a rate that defied pursuit.

"We are foiled by the devil's own aid!" said Kyd. He paused a moment. His pursuers were close upon him, and, save the shore, there was no avenue of escape. To delay and fight with his reduced number, even if his jaded and dispirited men would consent to it, would have been certain capture and death. For an instant he paused, and then said, in the calm, deliberate tone he was accustomed to use in times of most imminent peril,

"We must pull in shore and fight our way across the town to the East River, where we can cut out one of the vessels in the dock. There is no alternative! The town's people will scarce resist us! Will you land and let me lead you, men?"

"Ay, to the shore!" was the general cry; and swiftly the boats cut their way towards the foot of the Rondeel, which they approached on the western side, out of the range of its few remaining guns. Close in hot pursuit came the barges, pouring in upon them a constant and fatal discharge of fire-arms. The carronade was no longer fired, as its rebound so materially checked the speed of the boat that it soon fell behind all the others.

"Leave your oars and draw your cutlasses!" cried Kyd, as the boats struck the beach near the spot where he had landed when he attempted to convey Kate Bellamont to it. It was not far from the Rondeel, on the west of the governor's house.

With a shout the pirates bounded on shore, about forty in number, and, hastily forming in a body, headed by Kyd, with drawn sabres and pistols, were rapidly led by him around the base of the fort and across the lawn in the direction of Jost Stoll's tavern and the West Dock. The garrison in the Rondeel was so taken by surprise at the boldness of the bucaniers, that, before they could prepare to dispute their landing, they were moving at a rapid and steady pace across the grounds in front of the White Hall towards the wicket that led into the town. But here they were met with unexpected resistance. At the head of full eighty burghers, whom he had hastily armed and assembled to oppose this strange invasion from the sea, the Earl of Bellamont advanced upon them through the gate.

"Be men!" cried the earl to his command. "Remember, though unused to arms, you now fight for your homes, your wives, your children, your own lives, and all ye hold dear. Charge them ere they can form their body!"

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The governor himself rushed forward, sword in hand, as he spoke, the sturdy burghers with a shout pressed on, and the two parties were immediately engaged in a sanguinary conflict. The pirates fought with demoniac fury, while the townsmen, excited by the smell of powder and the clash of steel, dealt blows that told wherever they fell. Nevertheless, the bucaniers, by long habit, discipline, and indifference to danger, got the better of them, though scarcely numbering half their force, and drove them, in spite of the cries and commands of the earl, towards the gate. Everywhere Kyd was present, and high above the sounds of conflict was heard his voice cheering and encouraging. But, though victors for the moment, they were soon confronted with a fresh and better disciplined foe. The barges had by this time landed their crews, and they now advanced upon them with loud cries and in overpowering numbers.

"Face them! Fight each man for his own life!" shouted Kyd, as, on turning from the discomfiture of the burghers, he beheld the advance of his pursuers.

The combat was now waged with terrific fury. Now the victor, now the vanquished, Kyd attacked and defended with a degree of skill and courage that, employed in a better cause, should have had a better result. At length his men, being broken into small parties, were overpowered, and either slain or disarmed. He alone defended himself against a numerous division that had pressed him towards an oak, the branches of which grew near the window of Kate Bellamont's boudoir. They would have cut him down by mere force of numbers if they had not suddenly been restrained by the commanding voice of Fitzroy, who hitherto had been engaged in another part of the field.

"Hold, men! Back, and leave him to me!" he cried, advancing towards Kyd through the lane opened to him by his men.

"Ha! does the sea give back its dead?" cried Kyd, with horror, dropping his red cutlass and gazing upon him with mortal fear. "Can it be! Speak, I conjure thee, if thou art flesh and blood!"

"Monster, this day shall terminate thy career of crime!" replied Fitzroy, preparing to cut him down.

"By the mass! flesh or blood, I'll have a bout with thee!" cried Kyd, reassured by his voice, seizing a sabre from one of the men he had slain. "Ho! for Kate Bellamont!"

"Ha, villain! For *thyself*, then!"

A fierce broadsword combat ensued between them, and continued for a few seconds with equal skill and energy. At length the sword of Fitzroy caught in the strand of hair about Kyd's neck and severed it. Instantly the amulet it sustained dropped to the ground. Kyd's confidence and courage seemed to fail him at once, and, striking at random, he was soon disarmed by his cooler adversary, and his life placed at his mercy.

"Strike!" said the bucanier, despondingly.

The victor was about to obey, when his uplifted arm was arrested by a shriek from the balcony, and the voice of Kate Bellamont crying,

"Spare him! save him, Fitzroy!"

The point of his weapon sunk at his feet, and he bent low to her in acquiescence; then turning to his men, he said,

"Bind him. My lord, what shall be done with him? He is at your disposal."

"Bear him to the prison of the Rondeel, there to await his trial!"

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Silent and desponding, yet still holding himself with a dignified and lofty bearing, the captive pirate chief was borne, with his few surviving followers, to a dungeon in the Rondeel, while the earl, Fitzroy, and Edwin (who had not participated in the contest) together entered the Hall, leaving their victorious party to clear the ensanguined field of the melancholy traces of the morning's fight.

CHAPTER VI.

"When guilt had prospered with him, all the love
She bore him faded, as the floweret fades
Before the simoom's breath. But when the tide
Of fortune turned, and on its bosom bore
His barque, dismantled by misfortune's blast,
To ruin's coast, youth's warm affections came
Once more with freshened vigour, and the heart
That in a happier hour deigned not to save,
Now felt it leaned on him, and him alone,
And broke when that support was gone."

M`Leod.

Three weeks after the events just recorded, in a cell built within the massive wall of the Rondeel, sat the terrible pirate chief whose name had so long spread terror throughout the world. It was nearly midnight. He stood by a grated window, that looked towards the moonlit bay, in deep meditation, occasionally starting, with clanking chains, as some burning thought set his brain on fire. All at once he fancied he heard a noise, as if some one was carefully turning the lock in the door of his cell, wherein was set a grated wicket, through which the jailer could communicate with him. He started and fixed his eyes in the direction whence it proceeded, when he saw it slowly open and a muffled figure enter. The intruder then closed it carefully and threw off the mantle. It was Kate Bellamont. She was pale, and her noble features wore a sad and anxious look.

"Thou hast sent for me, Lester? so thy jailer told me."

"I have," he said, in the subdued tones of a chastened spirit. "I would kneel at thy feet and ask forgiveness for all the wrongs I have done thee!"

"Thou hast wronged thyself, not me, Lester! I forgive thee."

"Thanks a thousand thanks, kind lady!" he said, overpowered by his feelings. "I dared not hope you would come to see me. Oh, lady, let me not presume too much. To-morrow morning I am to be led forth to receive my sentence. It will be death."

"Oh, speak not of it. I know it. Oh God, that I could stay the hand of justice!"

"Do you feel so much for me?"

"Feel? my heart bleeds for you," she cried, with eloquent pathos. "Oh, Lester, Lester, why have you brought this on yourself?"

"Will you forgive me?"

"May Heaven forgive as freely."

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"Lady Kate dearest Kate! I am about to die. The approach of death fills my soul with wondrous thoughts, while penitence, like gentle dew, has strangely softened my heart. The thoughts of youth come over me like a last-night's pleasant dream, and I feel as I did when we were children together! Can you have forgotten our childhood?"

"Lester, no! Robert, Robert, you will drive me distracted."

"Nay, but did you not love me then?" he said, tenderly taking her hand and drawing her unresistingly to his heart.

"Oh, sustain me, my good angel!" she cried, burying her face in her hands; "my heart, my poor heart!"

"Kate, this world and I have parted, and we soon must part. I will therefore address you frankly. I love you even as I first loved you! You have for years been the spirit of my dreams, the sun of my waking thoughts. Tell me at this solemn hour see, the dawn of the last morning I shall ever know on earth is streaking the east speak, and let the thought of it bless my dying hour do you love me still?"

"Oh, Robert, ask me not. I am betrothed I "

"Nay, I ask not for the confession of thy love for me; I look not upon you with human love; but with the feelings of a dying man, who longs for some cheering word to sweeten the draught of death. Tell me, sweet Kate, that you love me still!"

She could not resist the solemn earnestness of his appeal:

"Yes, yes!" she cried, bending her head upon his shoulder and bursting into tears.

He gazed on her fair cheek fondly, but his penitent lip sought not to profane it. His thoughts too plainly were subdued by contemplation of his approaching fate. He felt as he spoke. But a ray of grateful pleasure at her words illumined his haggard features, and, speaking softly to her, he said,

"I know not how to thank you for this, dearest lady!"

"Oh, Lester, must you die?" she cried, without heeding his words. "Your immortal spirit! Oh, I tremble for its fate!"

"I have thought much of it of late! It seems now, as I look back, as if the last five years of my life had been passed under a spell. I am penitent, it is true, but feel there is no hope for me!"

"There is, there is!"

"I know the boundless arms of your holy faith will reach even to the gates of perdition; but I am beyond their reach. Yet I die composedly, since you have told me you love me still!"

"Talk not so, Robert; I will pray with you!" she said, earnestly.

And he knelt beside her as, with impassioned fervour, she addressed to the Virgin a simple and eloquent prayer for the soul of him who was so soon to become a habitant of the world of spirits. Both remained silent a few moments after she had ceased. Their souls seemed to have blended in one by flowing upward together on the holy tide of prayer. Suddenly, prompted by the gentle feelings that filled his heart, he turned to her and said,

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

"Dearest Kate, one thing I would ask of you; 'tis bold, but there is no earthly feeling or human emotion united with it. Consent to unite yourself to me here not by words of marriage not as an earthly bride but that our souls may be one hereafter!"

"Robert, tempt me not; the current of my young love has rushed back upon me in an irresistible flood; therefore, if you love me, tempt me not!"

"Nay, Kate, dearest, 'tis but a word, and the last request you can have the power to grant me. Let me take your hand; 'twill be a spiritual union only."

He gently took her passive hand in his as he spoke, and said in a voice of love, that vibrated along every chord of her heart,

"Will you be mine?"

"Yes, yes!" she replied, with great agitation.

He kissed her cheek as she answered, and at the same instant a deep voice said,

"I pronounce you man and wife! Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder!"

The maiden shrieked and would have fallen to the floor but for the support of *her husband's* arm, who, turning in the utmost surprise, beheld Father Nanfan standing without and looking upon them through the grated window of the cell.

CONCLUSION.

The morning sun shone brightly into the courtchamber in the White Hall where the Earl of Bellamont was wont to administer justice. It communicated with his library, and occupied the whole of the western wing. Its windows opened to the ground on two sides, while on the other two doors communicated both with the library and chapel. Surrounded by the chief citizens and dignitaries of the law sat the governor at a table, on which lay the papers relating to the piracies of Kyd. Before him stood the pirate chief in chains, silent, composed, and dignified, if not somewhat haughty in his bearing before his foes. He was there to receive his sentence. The lawn was crowded with curious spectators, and the windows filled with those most anxious to be close to the scene. In the back part of the room, whither she had silently stolen through the window, stood Elpsy, gazing on the proceedings with folded arms and lowering brows. Through the half open door that led to the chapel was a tall dark lady of majestic person, dressed in widow's weeds, her countenance marked with the deep lines of long-continued sorrow. It was "the Dark Lady of the Rock." Not far removed from her, within the hall and near where the earl was seated, stood Fitzroy, and by his side Edwin his secretary. At a small desk covered with black velvet, on the right of the earl, sat the priest Nanfan.

At length everything was prepared, and the prisoner was commanded to stand forth and receive his sentence. The noble judge addressed him briefly, recapitulating the numerous crimes that had made his name a by-word of terror throughout the world, and which had been proved upon him, and then proceeded to execute the death-warrant. By accident, there was no pen within his reach. The bonnet of the bucanier lay on the desk before him, and caught his eye as he turned for one.

"Ha," said he, "I will pluck one from this sable feather, which has been the terrible pennon under which his dark crimes have been perpetrated. 'Tis a fit instrument to seal his doom."

Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea

He drew from the bonnet a falcon's plume, and with a few rapid strokes of the knife prepared it for use. He was about to sign the paper, when a solemnly prophetic voice, whence no one could tell, said,

"Beware of the black plume!"

The earl arrested his hand, and every eye turned in the supposed direction of the voice; but, discovering no one, they turned again towards the earl. A second time he bent his head to sign the paper; but, ere he had touched the sheet, a wild scream curdled the blood in every man's veins, and Kate Bellamont rushed from the library into the hall, and cast herself upon the shoulder of the prisoner.

"Father, hold!" she cried, lifting her face and fixing her wild eyes upon him with a terrible gaze, "hold! you shall not murder him! He is my husband!"

"*Thy* husband!" repeated Fitzroy, springing forward to release her from the affectionate embrace of Kyd.

"*Her* husband, earl!" said the priest, rising and speaking with triumphant malice.

"Woman," said Fitzroy, with forced calmness, "art thou his wife?"

"Who speaks?" she cried, wildly, putting her hair back from her face and staring at him as if she recognised him not. "Ha, Fitzroy, is it thou? Oh, I thought I loved thee! Yet I would have been thy bride if Heaven had not made me his! Yes, Robert, I am thine thine!" she added, with wild passion.

"My child wedded to a pirate "

"Who calls him a pirate? He is Lester's earl!" cried the poor maiden.

"Lester's earl!" cried the countess, rushing forward. "'Tis my son, then my son!"

"Nay back. Listen, all of ye!" said the sorceress, striding into the midst. "I can tell ye a mystery and solve it, my lord! This pirate was the Earl of Lester; but, being convinced that he was a bastard and the son of a fisherman, fled from home and became what you see him!"

"This young Robert of Lester?" exclaimed the earl; "now do I recognise his features!"

"Interrupt me not!" she said, harshly. "The true Lord of Lester was a lad called Mark Mere dith, and there he stands, a third time risen from the sea to thwart my schemes! Countess of Lester, in him behold your son!"

The lady looked a moment and scanned his features with increasing amazement.

"My lord himself! The mother's heart owns her son!"

And Fitzroy, to his surprise, found himself clasped for the first time in a mother's embrace.

In a few brief words the sorceress explained everything that has already been unfolded in the preceding pages in reference to the characters, save her own relation to two that were present.

"And who art thou, woman?" asked the wondering earl.

"The fisher's daughter, and the leman of Hurtel of the Red-Hand, and the mother of Robert Kyd!"

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"My mother?" repeated the pirate.

"The fisher's daughter?" exclaimed the priest, rising with astonishment.

"Ay, Hurltel of the Red-Hand! I was thy leman! This pirate is the fruit of my illicit love and of your guilt. Ha, ha! do you not know me? Earl of Lester, behold before you, in Father Nanfan, Hurltel of the Red-Hand! Ho, ho! when I told thee yesterday that Kyd was thy son, and that thou must join me to make him wed the noble heiress of Bellamont (as the devil has given thee an opportunity of doing), I did not tell thee that I was the mother of him. So, so, thou wilt swing for it!"

"And thou shalt die for it!" he cried, snatching the sword from its sheath at Fitzroy's side and rushing upon her. Ere his hand could be arrested the point entered her bosom.

"If I hang I am well avenged on thee for it!" he cried, drawing forth the reeking blade as she fell, with a curse upon her lips, and expired.

A few words will bring the story to a close. Kyd was sent to England and executed; but Kate Bellamont died of a broken heart ere the vessel that bore him had half crossed the Atlantic.

Fitzroy was not long in discovering in Edwin his secretary no less a personage than Grace Fitzgerald; and, his affection for Kate Bellamont being chilled by her singular marriage with Kyd, he the following year, as Earl of Lester, made her his bride. Thus her true love was rewarded; and it cannot be denied that, although she loved him very much as lowborn, yet she was by no means sorry that he had proved noble.

THE END.