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The Dare Devil; or, The Winged Witch of the Sea.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.



"HA! THIS IS YOUR GAME, IS IT?" AND WITH THE SPRING OF A TIGER DUDLEY DASH WAS UPON HIM.—Page 6.

The Dare-Devil;

OR,

The Winged Witch of the Sea.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE.

"As I live! it is a boat! yes, and I see a form moving about in it—all that is left, doubtless, of the crew of some gallant craft that has gone down."

The speaker was a man of middle age, clad in duck pants, a heavy sailor's jacket, and his face was half shaded by an oilskin hat, while he wore high boots, coming up to his knees.

He had a bold, weather-beaten face, browned by long years of exposure to sea and storm, and appeared just what he was—a hardy fisherman on the iron-bound coast of Maine.

He was reared in front of an humble, yet comfortable and substantial cottage, that snugly clung to the hillside, which rose bold and bleak far above it.

In front of him lay the vast ocean, spreading away until lost in the horizon, and immediately under his eyes was an island-dotted bay, one of those numerous indentations that causes the coast of Maine to appear on the map like network.

From the cottage to the snow-white beach wound a steep pathway, and upon the glistening sands half a dozen boats of various size and model were drawn up, while upon rocks were drying nets, used to entrap the finny tribes of the deep.

It was near the sunset hour, and Carter Hayes, the old fisherman, was enjoying his after-supper smoke, when he suddenly sprung to his feet, and gave expression to the words that open this story.

His eyes rested far off upon the sea, where a small, dark object was visible, drifting shoreward on the incoming tide.

I must hurry my old bones, or the boat will dash on the reef ere I can reach it," he said quickly, and hastily descending the hill, he shoved a small boat into the water, sprung in, and with vigorous pull sent the light craft flying over the tiny waves.

A row of half a mile brought him to the lee of a large, crescent-shaped island, the two points toward the land, and in the small cove thus formed lay one of those short-masted *nondescripts*, with black hull, swallow-tailed stern and high bows, called a fishing-smack, or "Chebacca boat," common on the New England coast half a century ago.

Springing upon the deck of the craft, he quickly raised the sail, drew the anchor aboard, and a moment after the chebacca boat was gliding swiftly seaward through the circuitous channel leading among the islands.

A sail of half an hour, and Carter Hayes luffed up into the wind and drew the drifting boat alongside.

With horror he beheld a sad scene, one that touched his generous heart to the quick.

It was a large yawl, and in it were five human forms—two men, two women, and a boy of five years of age.

But alas! Death had already claimed four of the little crew, and the boy alone lived; sad-eyed, haggard-faced, suffering, but yet alive.

"My poor little man—thank God! I am in time to save *you*," and the kind-hearted fisherman drew the boy close to him, and held him firmly there.

Then he sprung to action once more, and taking the yawl, with its ghastly crew, in tow, stood swiftly landward.

An hour more, and he entered his cottage, the boy still in his arms, and carrying in one hand a portmanteau, that seemed exceedingly heavy.

A warm fire and warm food soon caused the little waif to revive, and then sink off into a pleasant sleep.

Laying him gently down upon his own bed, Carter Hayes lighted his pipe and began to muse, half aloud:

"Poor child! His parents, all gone; but I will be a father to him. God has sent him to my home to cheer my old age.

"It may not be right to keep him: but I cannot give him up now. I am certain those two well-dressed people in the boat were his father and mother—and they were rich, for yonder boy is heavy with gold. Yes, I will bring him up as my son, and with the gold I will educate him, so, when I am gone, he will be able to move among his equals. Carter Hayes, this has been a lucky day for you."

CHAPTER II.

A BOY AT BAY.

TEN years after the scenes related in our opening chapter, a small, though stanch, cat-rigged boat was standing across the rough waters of an island encircled bay on the Maine coast.

A hard wind was blowing from the northeast, and the waves ran high, which caused the little craft to bound wildly in the dashing caldron; but, reefed close, and held firmly on her course, she headed for a distant island, the one furthest off from the shore, and the largest of the chain that encircled the bay.

The boat contained but a single occupant—a boy of fifteen—a boy with a darkly bronzed, handsome, fearless face, and black, earnest eyes that narrowly watched his staggering craft, and the wild course ahead.

With a firm, daring hand he held the carved tiller, and crouched down in the cock pit, already half filled with water, from the waves that ever and anon dashed over him.

But, dressed in a stout pea-jacket, duck pants, stuck in top boots, and a sailor's tarpaulin shading his brown curls, he seemed little to care for the dashing spray.

After several hours' hard struggle with the rough waters his little boat glided quietly in under the lee of the island, and the sharp keel grated upon the sandy beach.

A sigh of relief broke from the boy's lips. He had safely crossed the bay; but, as though forgetting his danger just passed, he took from beneath the forward deck a long shotgun, powder-horn, shot-pouch, and game-bag and sprung ashore.

It was a wild, bleak-looking spot where he had landed, but further on the island appeared more inviting, and with rapid steps the boy trudged up the rugged hillside.

But a short way only had he gone, when he came to a sudden halt, his face flushing, and his manner that of an attentive listener.

Distinctly voices came to his ears—a childish voice crying:

"Oh! sir, do not take me away with you—do not take me away with you."

"Shut up, gal—I'll muffle that mug o' yourn ef yer don't keep quiet," angrily replied a man's harsh tones.

"I'll not beg any more, sir; but, please, do not—"

"Shut up, I say! I'm detarmined to revenge myself on ther chief—he cussed me once too often, an' when he comes back an' finds you is gone, I guess as how he'll git pesky mad. Come along, gal, 'cause I ain't got no time ter—well, youngster, who the devil are you?"

The man stopped suddenly, for before him, and only a few feet distant, stood the young sailor, his gun thrown forward, his finger upon the trigger.

"I am one who would know where you are taking that young girl?" said the boy, firmly.

"Durnation an' furies!—is I to be questioned by a boy?" and releasing the girl's hand the man quickly drew a knife from his belt and stepped forward.

"Back, sir, back! or I will shoot you down!" cried the boy in determined tones.

But, unheeding, the man sprung forward, a huge, burly ruffian, clad in seaman's attire, to attack the slender, graceful form before him.

Instantly the long barrel rose, the butt pressed the shoulder, the fearless eye ran along the iron tube, and then followed the flash and report.

A groan, a muttered curse, and the ruffian fell dead in his tracks, his gleaming knife burying itself half its length in the earth.

One instant the boy looked upon his fallen foe, and then turned toward the girl.

She stood in a half startled, half glad manner, her hands clasped together, her position that of one about to bound away in fright.

"You have killed him," she said, in a horrified whisper.

"Yes; who is he?"

"A smuggler—"

"Then it is true that this island is the home of smugglers?"

"Yes: they live in a cave on the other shore; but the chief is away, and that bad man was going to take me away with him. I am so glad you came; but you do not belong to the band?" she asked, timidly.

"No; I sailed across for a hunt on this island. I expected to find lots of game here. Do you belong to the smugglers?"

"The chief is my adopted father. He took me years ago from a vessel he robbed on the high seas. I was a little girl, and don't remember much about it; but he is very good to me, and I live with Lucy."

"Who is Lucy?"

"She's an old woman, and she's cross to me. I don't want to go back; please don't make me."

The boy gazed an instant into the beautiful face before him, for she was really a beautiful, sunny-haired maiden of twelve, and then said firmly:

"No; come with me; I will take you to Father Hayes, and he will treat you well. He is as kind to me as though I was his own son. Are you afraid to go in the boat and cross the bay? It is blowing great guns."

"No, sir; not afraid if you are with me," confidingly replied the young girl; and with a shuddering glance at her late enemy, she followed her daring boy preserver down the hillside, and in ten minutes more the little craft was standing away from the island, the youthful helmsman and his fair young passenger crouching in the cockpit, and the seas breaking wildly over them.

It was a long, hard struggle with wind and wave, but the boy helmsman proved himself a bold, skillful sailor, and just as the shadows of night crept over sea and land, the keel of his boat grated on the sandy shore in front of the cottage home of Carter Hayes, the old fisherman.

CHAPTER III.

A BOLD RESCUE.

WITHIN the shadows of a clump of trees, that fringed the summit of a cliff jutting out into the sea, lay a youth at full length upon the velvet grass.

His form was graceful, slender, tall, yet denoted both strength and activity far above the average of one of his years, which could not have been over seventeen, though his fearless, determined face caused him to appear older.

His features were regular, expressive in a marked degree, and few would have pronounced him other than an exceedingly handsome youth.

He was neatly dressed in a suit of dark clothing, and a slouch hat, and an open book lay by his side upon the grass.

But his dark eyes were not on his book; they rested upon the ocean where were visible two vessels, standing slowly in toward the little bay, which was sheltered by the earthen arm that terminated abruptly in the cliff.

One of the two vessels, and the one furthest seaward was a saucy looking schooner, with masts that raked far aft, and an armed deck.

The other was a sloop of thirty tons under main-sail and jib, heading for an anchorage under the shadows of the cliff.

Upon her decks were visible three men besides the one at the helm.

With interest in his gaze, the youth watched the two vessels, until the sloop dropped anchor, and then he turned his glance landward, for he heard the sound of hoofs approaching.

Inland, his gaze fell upon a scene of hill and valley, serenely beautiful in the light of the slowly descending sun, whose rays burnished up the massive walls of a distant structure—the university where the youth was a student.

Nearer and nearer came the hoof-strokes, until two persons suddenly drew rein upon the cliff.

The one was a young man of perhaps twenty-two, with a striking face, which, however, bore traces of reckless dissipation, and an elegant form, attired almost to dandyism.

The other was a maiden of twenty—clad in a close fitting riding-habit of dark blue, and with a face of rare loveliness.

"Is not this a lovely scene?—and see, yonder is an armed vessel, a league away, and here in the cove is a little craft at anchor."

It was the maiden who spoke, and while a strange light flashed in the eyes of her companion, he said impatiently:

"You will not listen to me then, fair Louise; you will insist upon changing the subject."

"How often have I begged that you would not speak of love to me, Mr. Dunstan? Had I believed you would have broken your word, I certainly never should have accepted you as my escort—home. But see; there are two men coming up the cliff path. Let us go."

The young man's brow darkened, but he said quietly:

"I will not offend again, Miss Raynor. Pray linger awhile here and enjoy the scene;—is it not lovely?"

"Beautiful indeed, and—"

But, ere the maiden could say more one of the two rough-looking men who had ascended the cliff suddenly seized her bridle-rein with one hand, while with the other he rudely dragged her from her saddle to the ground.

With a face pallid with indignation and fear, Louise Raynor turned toward Paul Dunstan for succor, but he had also been dragged from his saddle, and felled to the ground.

"Come, Dick, let's get out o' this," cried the man who held Louise Raynor, at the same time raising the maiden in his strong arms, and placing his hand rudely over her mouth to prevent an outcry.

But suddenly, a slender form bounded upon the scene, and the man who held the maiden dropped to the earth like dead, struck down by a well-directed blow dealt by the youth, who, from his retreat in the shadow of the bushes had witnessed all.

But, instantly, the brave boy, for he was hardly more, was confronted by the other ruffian, who rushed upon him, a knife gleaming in his hand, a curse upon his lips.

Fearlessly the boy met him. There was a short, terrible struggle, and the seaman was hurled bodily over the cliff, while the panting youth, staggering backward, beheld the ruffian whom he had first struck down, spring to his feet and dash down the steep pathway to the beach below.

"Curse you for a meddling fool, Dudley Dash," said an angry voice, and turning quickly, the youth beheld the pale face of Paul Dunstan.

"As you were too cowardly to defend the lady yourself, Paul Dunstan, I felt it my duty to interfere," quietly responded the youth.

"This to me, sir? You forget that I am a

gentleman and you a fisherman's son," angrily said Paul Dunstan, with irate scorn.

The youth seemed as if about to reply in anger; but he calmly said:

"You seem to forget, sir, that Miss Raynor is lying in a faint, and needs your care."

Paul Dunstan glanced toward the maiden, and then approaching the youth, said savagely:

"Dudley Dash, in what you have done to-day you have made me your bitterest foe, and, curse you! I will make you answer to me for the insinuation that I was a coward."

"I am wholly at your service, Paul Dunstan, at any time or place. You know my room in the university, and I will be in all the evening."

So saying, Dudley Dash turned away, and securing his hat and book, rapidly descended the cliff pathway.

Upon arriving at the beach, he beheld two men crossing the white sands, and going rapidly toward a small boat that was awaiting them.

Between them they carried a limp and lifeless human form; it was the body of the man whom he had hurled from the cliff.

Watching the men attentively, he saw them enter the boat with their ghastly burden, and row rapidly out to the little sloop, which immediately after spread all sail and stood seaward.

Ascending the path to the summit of the cliff, he found it deserted—Paul Dunstan and Louise Raynor had departed.

Turning his gaze again upon the sea, now darkening beneath the shadow of night, he beheld the sloop flying swiftly down the coast and hugging the shore, while the schooner was now close in under the cliff, and slowly moving toward a convenient anchorage.

Turning upon his heel, Dudley Dash walked rapidly away in the direction of the university, and soon disappeared in the shadows of the valley.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DUEL.

AGAIN the sunset shadows fell upon land and sea, and again Dudley Dash was alone upon the cliff.

But not, as on the day before, lying indolently upon the grass, or idly watching the scene before him.

True, his gaze fell upon the schooner, anchored far in under the cliff and looking grim and deserted, for not a human being was visible upon her decks. If eyes kept watch and ward over the vessel, they were invisible to the observer upon the land.

With pale face, and brow and lip strangely stern, Dudley Dash paced to and fro, ever and anon glancing down the road leading to the cliff, as though expecting some one, and impatient for their arrival.

Presently his bright eyes flashed; in the distance he beheld two horsemen approaching, one of whom he recognized as Paul Dunstan, the other as Loyd Newton, a fast young fellow, from the village a league away.

"He said he would come alone; but, what matters it? it were better perhaps to have a witness," he muttered, and as the two men rode up he coldly saluted them.

"Well, sir, I have come to punish you for your impertinence and interference yesterday," haughtily said Paul Dunstan dismounting.

"I came here to act, not to talk, Mr. Dunstan. Are you ready?" sternly replied Dudley Dash.

"Yes; my friend Newton, here, will load the pistols, and step off the distance, agreed on in your rooms last night."

"Pardon me, Mr. Newton can step off the distance, and give us the word; but I prefer to load my own weapon."

Angrily Loyd Newton turned upon the fearless youth—

"Do you doubt my honor, sir?"

"I do; I would not trust you," coolly answered Dudley Dash.

"You shall answer to me for this insult, boy."

"One thing at a time, Mr. Newton. I am here to meet Mr. Dunstan, who came to my room at the university last night and demanded a meeting. Then, nothing was said of a third party to the affair; but, as he has seen fit to bring you, he can use you to suit himself. I act for myself."

Paul Dunstan and his second then walked apart and conversed for some moments together in an undertone.

Then they again approached Dudley Dash, and Loyd Newton began to step off ten paces, after which he marked the spot where the two duelists should stand.

Having done this he took from his pocket a pair of long dueling pistols, while Paul Dunstan sneeringly remarked:

"Not expecting a fisher-lad possessed of such luxuries as duelling pistols, I brought my own."

"You were very kind—I will use one of them—it would place us on a more equal footing," and Dudley Dash took one of the handsome weapons and began slowly to load before his enemies, for as such he looked upon both men.

It was at once evident that the perfect coolness of Dudley Dash disconcerted both men. They had hoped to intimidate him: but, boy though he was, he showed indomitable courage and a nerve that was remarkable.

At length the preparations were made, and the two antagonists took their stands, just as the sun sunk below the horizon.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?" sung out the voice of Loyd Newton, and at his words the eyes of Dudley Dash fell upon the sea, and with surprise he beheld slowly coming along the coast the same sloop that had entered the bay the evening before, with the evident purpose of kidnaping Louise Raynor.

Then, with increased surprise, he saw half a dozen forms coming along the beach in the direction of the cliff.

But it was too late to speak then, for he saw a look of devilish hatred in the face of Paul Dunstan, and to his surprise Loyd Newton again called out in slow tones, "Gentlemen, are you ready?"

As the words left his lips, Dudley Dash cast his eye again upon Paul Dunstan, and his fears of foul play were realized.

The evil eyes of his antagonist gleamed at him along the glittering barrel, and, without waiting for the word to fire, his pistol flashed, and the report rung out sharp and clear.

Dudley Dash staggered back and dropped on his knees, and then recovering himself he quickly raised his own weapon and fired upon his treacherous foe.

Instantly, with a half cry of rage and pain, Paul Dunstan sunk down in his tracks, while Dudley Dash slowly arose to his feet, wiping from his left temple a blood-stain, for the bullet had grazed the flesh, momentarily stunning him.

With a cry of alarm Loyd Newton sprung forward and knelt beside his friend, who breathed, but seemed dying, for the bullet had pierced his heart.

"Curse you, boy, you have killed him. Here, men, this is the murderer. String him up!" And Loyd Newton sprung toward a half-dozen men, who just then rushed up the cliff pathway, and one of whom Dudley Dash recognized as the man who had attempted to kidnap Louise Raynor. The others were a gang of dissolute fellows he had often seen hanging about the village inn.

With one accord the men rushed upon Dudley Dash, who seemed as if about to spring upon the steed of Paul Dunstan and fly; but, suddenly changing his mind, he drew a pistol from his pocket and boldly faced them.

Momentarily they were checked by the fearless attitude of the boy; but, urged on by Loyd Newton they again rushed forward in a mass.

There was the ring of a pistol, a groan, a heavy fall, and then a desperate struggle of a few minutes.

Then the men arose from a confused heap upon the ground, and Dudley Dash found himself bound hand and foot.

"Men, he deliberately shot down Paul Dunstan, and he should die!" cried Loyd Newton, excitedly.

"Yes, string him up," said the man whom Dudley Dash had put to flight the evening before.

"Ay, ay, fellers! let's hang him—he's got a bad eye," cried another, and, as though they had come prepared for a work of the kind, a rope was at once produced, and a noose made in one end of it.

The other end was then thrown over the projecting branch of a tree, and the noose placed around the neck of the brave youth.

"Men, would you murder me? How have I injured you?" said Dudley Dash, his eyes flashing, his face pale, and yet his manner utterly fearless.

"You've killed Mr. Dunstan, and—"

"I shot one who sought my life, and by treachery nearly succeeded. See, he wounded me here."

"String him up, boys! Why palaver with him?" cried Loyd Newton, and, as though recognizing in him a leader, the men gave a drag upon the rope, and choked off the utterance of the youth, who in vain attempted to speak—and he felt that he must die—hung like a dog, by those whom he had never injured in his life.

Then darkness came upon him, his eyes seemed bursting from their sockets, a roar like thunder resounded in his ears, and then all was silent; he knew no more.

CHAPTER V.

TO THE RESCUE.

"GOD above! they have hung him!"

The ringing cry startled the guilty wretches who stood in the twilight, gazing upon the dying youth they had so cruelly hung.

But, they were startled still more to see a tall form bound over the edge of the cliff, and by one sweep of his sword cut down the swinging youth, and gently receive him in his arms.

In dismay they turned upon the bold intruder who had dared to interrupt their deadly sport; but behind him came a score of gallant seamen, armed with cutlasses, and the panic-stricken lynchers turned to fly.

Quickly Loyd Newton threw himself upon his waiting steed and darted away, while his companions were most anxious to follow his example.

But the seamen hurled themselves upon them, at a word of command from their chief, and in two minutes time, three of them lay dead, and the remainder were prisoners.

"Thank God! the boy is not dead. Here, men, carry him quickly aboard the schooner," cried the leader of the rescuing party, and instantly several of his followers raised Dudley Dash in their arms, and bore him down the pathway to the beach.

"And now, you devils, I've a mind to carry you aboard and hang you—but this man seems to be alive and I'll release you to look after him. Here, Pedro," and the leader addressed a few words in Spanish to one of his followers, who at once cut the bonds of the captives.

"Now, bear this wounded man away. He is badly hurt, but may recover," and the leader bent over the prostrate form of Paul Dunstan.

"There; now be off. Never mind your dead companions; they need no care.

"Curses on these fellows—they have spoiled my little game," he continued, as the men bore Paul Dunstan rapidly away.

"Yes, it would be madness to make the attempt now—I will put to sea, and another time will do—come, lads."

So saying, apparently addressing no one, he walked down toward the beach, followed by his men.

Arriving at the water's edge, he found the boat just returning from bearing Dudley Dash aboard the schooner, and springing into it, he said sternly, "Give way!"

Five minutes more and he was on board his vessel.

"Senor Valdos, at once put to sea. There has been the devil to pay ashore and we will have to defer our expedition," he said in Spanish to a young officer who approached him.

"Si, Senor Capitan," politely replied Valdos, and ten minutes after the schooner was gliding seaward.

In the meantime the commander of the vessel entered his cabin, where he found Dudley Dash reclining upon a lounge, and an officer and attendant beside him.

"Well, doctor, is the youth alive?" he asked.

"Yes, captain, and will to-morrow be all right, though five minutes later he would have been dead."

"I know it. Well, young sir, you had a narrow escape from dying the death of a dog?"

Dudley Dash, still pale and weak, half raised himself and replied:

"Yes, sir, and to you I owe my life, do I not?"

"Yes, I arrived just in time to cut you down. I saw your affair of last evening on the cliff, for I was watching yon shores with my glass, and this evening felt that some foul play was going on, so kept on the alert.

"When I saw you alone, with two against you, and a band of rufflans stealthily approaching, I was convinced that they were about to play a game of deviltry, so called away a boat's crew and went ashore. I am glad I arrived as I did."

"Thank God for it, sir! and from my heart I thank you."

"Do not mention it, my fine fellow."

"But it deserves mention, sir. You saved me from a horrible death. This is a vessel of war, is it not?"

The captain hesitated an instant, and then said:

"Yes, oh! yes—this is a vessel of war; but, tell me, my young friend, what was all this trouble on shore about?"

"I can hardly tell, sir. Paul Dunstan, the man whom I shot in the duel, was a student at the college I was attending; but he was expelled just after I entered, and his mother, who is rich and belongs to a good family, got him an appointment in the navy, which he held but a short time ere he was dismissed.

"Two months ago he returned home, after wandering a year, none knew where, and began a very fast life, which caused a young lady to whom he had been engaged, to sever her engagement with him; but, last evening he was riding with her, when two men who had landed from a sloop, attacked them, and I went to the rescue and got cursed for my pains; nay, more; Paul Dunstan challenged me to meet him, and I did so."

"And bravely, too; but do you know I believe Dunstan planned that attack on the lady? He was easily overcome; and, more—I believe he intended to do away with you. I believe him to be the leader of a damnable scheme—who was his friend?"

"Loyd Newton, once a student at the university, but now a profligate, reckless spendthrift."

"A precious pair; and you are—?"

"Dudley Dash. I live on the Maine coast, and was a student at the university, for my adopted father, though an humble fisherman himself, wished me to receive an education."

"And run to seed as a lawyer or doctor?"

"No; I wished to become a sailor. I love the sea."

"Good! Do you know any thing about a vessel?"

"Yes, sir; everything," modestly replied the youth.

"Better still. Lost one of my officers a few days since in a fight with a—a—vessel of war. You shall fill his place, for I like you."

"In what service are you, captain?"

"I am under a roving commission. I am—"

"Who?"

"Hast ever heard of the "Sea Lance?"

"Yes; it is a pirate vessel."

"Hast ever heard of Captain Winwood?"

"Yes; he is a cruel buccaneer, and—"

"Well, my lad, *this vessel is the Sea Lance, and I am Captain Winwood.*"

CHAPTER VI.

THE CRUISE OF THE SEA LANCE.

OVER the springing waters of the Atlantic ocean, and in latitude a little south of New York, a vessel was dashing fleetly along, with every thing set that would draw, and seemingly anxious to escape from a persistent little sea-hound that was crowding swiftly in her snowy wake, but fully a league astern.

At a glance it was evident that the tall and stately ship was the pursued, the rakish-looking schooner the pursuer.

On the deck of the latter were a motley crew, attired in dark-blue shirts, white duck pants, and red woolen caps.

Upon the quarter-deck, besides the two men at the wheel, were half a dozen officers, judging from their dress, and in two of them the reader would have recognized Captain Winwood, the buccaneer, and Dudley Dash, with a troubled look upon his pale face.

"Well, my young friend, you will not now throw your fortunes with mine; you will still refuse to be a gallant sea-rover?" said the pirate chief, turning to Dudley Dash, who answered firmly:

"I cannot link my life with crime, Captain Winwood. You saved me from death; you nursed me through a severe illness that followed, and I owe much to you, for you have been ever most kind; but I cannot become an outlaw, sir, and I beg that you will not urge it."

The buccaneer chief turned away with a muttered oath; but after a moment said, quietly:

"We will soon be in range, and then I'll bring yonder vessel to, and I wish *you* to board her, Mr. Dash, find out where she's from, where bound, and about her freight and passenger list. You will do this for me?"

"Yes, I will do that much for you, captain," quietly responded the youth; and in half an hour more, Captain Winwood gave the order to fire a shot over the flying ship.

Away hurtled the iron ball, and yet the ship stood on.

"Keep up that music, until the lady shows some desire to take notice of our attention," called out the buccaneer, and again and again the gun was fired after the flying vessel, until a shot cut away her mizzen topmast.

Then her bow swept up into the wind, and she lay quiet upon the waters, for her commander seemed to feel his perfect inability to escape from his untiring pursuer.

A short while after, the beautiful schooner swept gracefully into the wind, while a boat put forth from her side full of armed men.

In the stern sheets, and in command of the boat, sat Dudley Dash, pale and stern-looking.

Rapidly the cutter neared the ship, and soon ranged alongside, and Dudley Dash sprung upon the deck, followed by half a score of buccaneers.

But as his foot touched the deck a volley of musketry was poured upon them, and four of his men fell dead.

"Now we have them—at them lads, and drive them overboard," cried a ringing voice, and the brave English captain rushed forward, cutlass in hand, and at his back came nearly two score of men, composed of his crew and passengers.

Taken wholly by surprise, and with no time to offer explanation, Dudley Dash was forced to rally his men around him, and call upon the six oarsmen, still in the boat, to come to his aid.

Then began a fierce and deadly encounter, and only the thorough recklessness of the buccaneers prevented their being at once overwhelmed and trampled under foot.

But they met the attack half-way, and the crew of the ship were checked in their advance, and then recoiled upon themselves.

"Ho! the Sea Lance!" rung out in the clear voice of the youth, who felt that he had but a temporary advantage.

"Ay! ay!—I am coming," floated across the waters in the voice of Captain Winwood, and glancing over his shoulder, Dudley Dash beheld the schooner already under way, and rushing toward the ship, while above her decks were visible the red caps of two score of boarders.

Then the captain of the ship saw his mistake: he had failed to catch his enemy in the trap he had laid for him; there was nothing more to do but to fight it out to the bitter end.

A few moments more and the unequal struggle was suddenly reversed; the sharp bowsprit of the Sea Lance appeared over the side of the ship, and dozens of flying forms were hurled upon the decks of the doomed vessel.

In the advance still, Dudley Dash pushed forward, and the crew were driven backward to the quarter-deck, where many of the brave defenders of the ship were slain.

"Hold! Are you fiends incarnate, that you kill men who cry for quarter?" cried Dudley Dash to his reckless followers.

"Captain Winwood never shows quarter," said an under officer, pushing forward.

The youth glanced quickly around him, and with surprise discovered that neither captain Winwood nor his lieutenants had come on board the ship—he had left the fight to him, determined to make him a pirate.

"I command on this deck, sir, and *I* show quarter. Down with your arms, and your lives will be spared," he called out to the ship's defenders, who instantly obeyed.

"Ha! there is loveliness, and my prize," exclaimed the under officer, who had before addressed Dudley Dash, and he sprung forward and threw his arm around the waist of a maiden who had just come from the cabin, with pallid, anxious face.

In an instant Dudley Dash confronted the buccaneer, and his voice rung threateningly as he cried, "Release that lady, ruffian."

The man's only answer was to raise his blood-stained cutlass, and defy the youth.

"Ha! this is your game, is it?" and with the spring of a tiger Dudley Dash was upon him.

Then followed a short, fierce, deadly struggle, hardly half a moment in duration, and the buccaneer lay bleeding and dying upon the deck, while his companions shrunk back from before the blazing eyes of the youth.

"Lady, have no fear; I will protect you," said Dudley Dash, and the maiden was about to reply, when a deep voice said.

"Well done, my gallant amateur buccaneer; I have strong hopes of you now. Take her; she is your prize."

Dudley Dash turned quickly; Captain Winwood stood before him.

"I will take you at your word, captain, and claim her as my prize—have no fear, lady," he added in a low tone, gazing upon her frightened but beautiful face.

"Now we'll see if the game is worth the cost—who commands this vessel?"

The sturdy English captain advanced, bleeding from several slight wounds, and said:

"I *did* command her. You are a buccaneer?"

"Softly, softly, captain; we are free rovers. Where are you from?"

"New York."

"Where bound?"

"Havana."

"What cargo?"

"Assorted."

"Of considerable value, I guess?"

"Yes."

"You have passengers?"

"Yes, a number, and most of them ladies."

Captain Winwood was silent for a few moments, and then said:

"Captain, if you can raise the sum of twenty thousand dollars on board, I will let you go free—unless some of my men take a fancy to rob you of some of your fair passengers. A seaman's life is a lonely one, you know."

"It is impossible to raise that sum, Sir Pirate."

"Then I shall take what I can of your cargo, burn your ship, and set you adrift in your boats."

The stern reply of the buccaneer chief startled all, and none more so than Dudley Dash, who had not believed him a man of such cruel nature, though he had often heard terrible stories told of him.

The captain was about to reply when the maiden, whom the youth had rescued from the hands of the under officer, called him aside, and after a conversation of a few moments he said:

"I will agree to your terms, sir. In a few moments you shall have the money; but you certainly will not carry out your threat—to take from me any of my passengers?"

"I certainly shall."

"Captain Winwood, can I speak to you, sir?" and Dudley Dash stepped forward. "Captain, I have no right to ask a favor of you, sir; but humanity dictates it. You have gained twenty thousand dollars with the loss of only a few men; will you not now, sir, be good enough to let this vessel go on her way, unmolested?" and Dudley Dash spoke earnestly, while the maiden and other passengers eagerly watched the chief and the youth, whom they believed his lieutenant, and who they felt was begging for their safety.

"Will you promise to become my first officer, boy?"

"No, sir, I will not promise that."

"Will you promise to guide an expedition to rob the villa of that rich old fellow, Judge Raynor—which I intended to do the night I saved you from hanging?"

"No, sir, I will not promise that."

"And yet you ask me to release these passengers, by the payment of a small sum of money?"

"Yes, sir, I ask it, I beg it."

Captain Winwood was silent for a few moments, and then said:

"Be it so. Get the money from the captain and then come on board the schooner. The ship can go on her way."

"Captain Winwood, from my heart I thank you."

The chief turned away, a peculiar smile upon his face, and called to his surprised men to return to the schooner, while Dudley Dash stepped forward to acquaint the captain of the ship with the result of his conversation with Captain Winwood.

"Here is the money, young sir—twenty thousand dollars, and may every dollar of it haunt your soul," said the captain.

Dudley Dash flushed crimson, and his eyes drooped before the earnest gaze of the maiden, who said softly:

"To you, senor, I feel that we owe our release, our lives. I owe you far more, and from my heart I thank you, and, buccaneer though you be, I will ever pray to the Virgin Mother to watch over you. Here, wear this as a token of my appreciation of what you have done for me."

Ere Dudley Dash was aware, she took his hand, and placed on the left little finger a band of gold, in which was set a single diamond of rare size and beauty.

A moment more and she had descended into the cabin.

With a sigh and a flushed face Dudley Dash took the bag of gold, and walked slowly to the ship's side and sprung on board the schooner.

An hour more and the two vessels were a league apart.

The ship going to the southward, the Sea Lance sailing northward, on the search for further adventure and gold.

CHAPTER VII.

ENTRAPPED.

"Captain Winwood, I am confident that yonder vessel is a man-of-war."

"Your eyes are the best aboard the schooner, Mr. Dash; but they deceive you this time. The vessel, in my opinion, is an English supply ship, sent to the fleet in these waters."

"Then she would make a good prize to some American cruiser—for there is no doubt now but that war has begun between England and the States."

"None; the brig we captured gave us that news. See, she is a large vessel, much larger than the ship we took two months since, and which your humanity caused me to let go for the paltry sum of twenty thousand. Yes, yonder craft is a supply ship and I intend to take her."

The speakers, as the reader is doubtless aware, were Captain Winwood and Dudley Dash, and they stood on the quarter-deck of the Sea Lance, which, stripped of canvas, laying to, was riding out a gale that had been sweeping the ocean for hours.

The night was dark, and the spray was blown in masses from wave to wave, which kept the low lying schooner from being seen in the darkness from the decks of a large vessel that was driving along with only her storm sails set.

"She is about to pass us. Get the schooner under her jib and mainsail, reefed down, Senor Valdos."

"Ay, ay, senor," replied the Spanish lieutenant, and ten minutes after the schooner was flying in the wake of the huge ship, appearing like a hound upon the trail of a buffalo.

Still unperceived from on board the vessel, the schooner drew nearer and nearer, until but a quarter of a mile divided them.

"Fire a gun over her, Valdos, to bring her to," ordered Captain Winwood.

A moment after and a bright flash illumined the sea, and the deep boom of the gun and rear of the iron messenger were heard.

"See, Dash, she is coming to. Was I not right?"

"It seems so, captain," replied the youth, as the bows of the huge ship swept round slowly, and a moment after lay heading the gale.

"I knew she was a supply ship. Now I have a chance to supply myself with arms, ammunition and provisions, for she is doubtless well stored.

"Are you ready to be my boarding-officer again?"

"Upon one condition, captain?"

"And that is—?"

"That if you do not burn the ship you will let me leave in her."

"I am sorry to lose you, Dash; but, as you seem determined not to become a buccaneer, I might as well let you go. Call away the lifeboat, and take half a dozen men with you aboard."

In a short while the lifeboat of the schooner was bounding over the mad waters, Dudley Dash at her helm.

It was a long and hard pull; but at length the huge vessel was reached in safety, and Dudley Dash and four men went over the high bulwarks, one of these men to spring suddenly back into the boat, saying:

"For your lives, men, give way!"

Quickly the order was obeyed, and a passing wave bore the lifeboat swiftly away on its bosom, and Dudley Dash and his three companions sound themselves on board an armed frigate.

Resistance would have been madness, and they quietly submitted to their fate, and were ironed heavily.

"Run a gun out and sink that boat!" called out a stern voice, and a heavy gun poured its iron hail into the lifeboat, which was at once seen to go down.

"Now stand away for yonder schooner. Lively men, lively!" ordered the same voice, and the huge ship began to slowly wear round.

But the schooner had already taken the alarm; the flash of the gun had shown her armed decks, and easily handled she was scudding away before the gale with the speed of a race-horse, and by the time the frigate was fairly on her course the fleet buccaneer was a mile away, disappearing rapidly in the darkness and gloom.

In vain was it that every eye was strained to keep her in sight. She was soon lost to view, and with a disappointed manner, the English commander descended to his cabin, and ordered Dudley Dash to be brought before him.

"Well, sir, who are you that boards the King's frigate in a gale? You doubtless mistook me for a merchantman?" and the Englishman gazed with surprised admiration upon the youthful and handsome face before him.

"I believed you to be just what you are—and so told Captain Winwood:—but—"

"*Winwood?* Was yonder schooner the buccaneer Sea Lance?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you are a pirate officer—egad! you've begun a career of crime at an early age."

"I am no buccaneer, captain. Circumstances over which I had no control carried me aboard the Sea Lance, and—"

"You would prove a Peter—deny your crime-stained comrades, to have your own neck. No, no, my young bantam, I have made a good capture to-night; you ran into a trap, and one which you will only get out of by putting your head in a noose. In two days, sir, you and your companions shall be hung to the frigate's yard-arms.

"Guard, remove the prisoner."

In vain was it that poor Dudley Dash tried to speak, to offer some explanation;—the English commander would hear not a word, and the youth was led away to a vacant stateroom, where a strict guard was placed over him, for he was under sentence of death, and he felt that fate had indeed dealt unkindly with him.

Was he, Dudley Dash, who had ever been considered the soul of honor, to die thus—was he to be hung as a pirate—a man who had hunted his fellow-men to death for gold?

Such were the harrowing thoughts that crowded through his brain and almost drove him to madness, as he paced his little prison, dragging his chains after him with a clanking sound that smote him to the heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BOLD STROKE FOR LIFE.

THE night following the capture of Dudley Dash and his three buccaneer companions, the English frigate was cruising slowly along the Massachussetts coast, in the neighborhood of Cape Ann.

During the day there had been a meeting of the officers on board, and the captive youth had been brought before them, and again told his story in a frank manner: but he could see that most all believed it to be concocted to save him from death.

The three buccaneers were then examined separately, and each one declared that the story of their young officer was false, for if they were to die, their hardened hearts would show no mercy to him;—nay, more—they said he was the son of Captain Winwood, and had for years been an officer on board the Sea Lance.

With this seemingly conclusive testimony, and with appearances terribly against him, Dudley Dash was sent back to his stateroom with the sentence of death passed upon him.

In an agony of spirit he paced his prison. Not that he was afraid to die—but oh! to die such a death—hung as a pirate to the yard-arm of the frigate!

With a throbbing heart he glanced through the open port upon the bright waters, no longer lashed by a storm, but rippled by a five-knot breeze—and a choking sensation swelled up in his throat as he beheld, a league distant, the green shores so near his own home, where dwelt his adopted father, Carter Hayes, and Gabrielle Gaston, the sweet little maiden whom he had rescued from the smugglers' island, and whom he had learned to love most dearly.

In vain would they wait and watch for his coming; he was doomed to die.

At length darkness crept over the waters, shut out the land from sight, and in despair he buried his face in his hands, for with the rising sun he must die.

Presently he was aroused by the door softly opening, and from without came a glimmer of light from a bottle lantern, revealing the tall form of his guard standing in the doorway.

"Well, what do you want now?" asked Dudley Dash, sternly.

"Hush! I want to be of service to you. Look on my face. There, now that the light shines on it, did you ever see it before?"

The youth gazed earnestly into the face before him, and then said quietly:

"Yes, I have seen you; but when or where, I cannot now recall."

"I'll tell you. I was on board the ship you captured two months ago; and whose passengers you saved, for I know Captain Winwood. All would have gone up if it had not been for you. I was steward on the ship, and when we got into port I left, and shipped aboard this frigate, for I'm an Englishman. Now I am a marine, and my duty to-night is to guard you well."

"I know your duty, sir, and I—"

"Suppose I don't do it—what then?"

The youth started. Could this man be his friend? Was he not to die after all?

"What mean you?" he asked, as the man said no more.

"I'll tell you. I don't want to see you die. You are but a boy if you are a private officer, and you served me a good turn once. Before I took to the sea I was a locksmith."

"Well?"

"Well, that is the way I got your door open; I picked the lock, for the key is in the captain's cabin."

"Indeed! Do you mean to aid me then?" asked the youth, hardly daring to hope.

"Yes; I'll pick the locks of those hand-cuffs in a minute, and there are pieces of boards and other things in here that you can make a respectable raft out of—can you swim?"

"Like a fish," replied the youth, gayly.

"Well, I'll pick your irons off, for I always carries the tools, you know, in case of accident myself, and then you can just let your raft out of that open port, and slide out after it—you understand."

"Yes."

"Good! We are off Cape Ann, and it is a league to the shore, and the tide is running in like a mill-race."

"I understand; but if I escape, my good fellow, I fear you will be the sufferer."

"No fear; but it's good of you to think of me. You see your door is kept locked, you are in irons, and I'm only out here to prevent communication with you. You were not searched, and no one knows but that you had the tools with you to set yourself free.

"I'll get cursed for not knowing you intended escaping; but, that's natural, and I'm willing to take it. Here—see; you are free from your irons now, and good-by."

Dudley Dash could not speak—his heart was too full; but he warmly wrung the hand of the honest guard, and the door again closed upon him.

Looking, or rather feeling around his stateroom, he found it was used as a kind of lumber-room, and he quickly gathered together a few boards, oars, and other odds and ends, and with some pieces of rope and his knife, he soon constructed a long, narrow float, capable of sustaining him greatly in the long swim for life.

Attaching a rope to one end, and then passing it through an iron ring in the deck, he slowly lowered it into the water.

The five-knot breeze was blowing off the sea, and the frigate careened over toward the shore, so that he had not very far to lower himself, and the wash of the waves prevented him from being heard.

It was a desperate, daring undertaking, for his float was but slight at the best, and without his own aid would not support his weight, while there was a probability that the motion of the frigate might suck him under.

Then the land was a good league distant, so had said the guard; it was too dark to see the shore, and he must risk it on faith.

At length the float reached the water and was dragged violently along; but the moment after Dudley Dash swung himself from the port, and rapidly slipped down the double rope until he clasped his legs about his frail support.

Then he let go one end of his rope and pulled the line through the iron ring.

Rapidly he was whirled around, as he felt himself free from the frigate, and he believed that he was being drawn beneath the waters.

But manfully he struggled for his life, and after a moment of suspense, swept out under the stern of the frigate, and was thus far safe.

Lying low in the waters, to prevent being discovered by any keen eyes that might be on the quarter-deck, he saw the frigate glide swiftly away from him, and then he gave vent to a sigh of relief; he was free—yet alone upon the wide waters, and no land in sight.

CHAPTER IX.

RUNNING THE HOME STRETCH.

"ANCHOR apeak, sir."

"Ay, ay—run up the jib—aha! there she swings round. Hulloa! what does that feller say, anyhow, Mister Greenfiddle?" and Captain Dusenbury, of the packet sloop Pretty Girl, turned from his work to answer the hail of some one in a small boat that was coming aboard.

A moment after, the boat ran alongside the sloop, and a youth, attired in uniform, looking the worse for wear, sprung on board. It was Dudley Dash, haggard looking, pale, but resolute. Politely saluting, he said inquiringly:

"Captain, I learn that you are going to risk capture by the English cruisers, and are running for the Kennebec?"

"I am that. I'm leavin' Gloucester harbor for perhaps the last time, stranger; but, yer see, I live in Kennebec, an' I hain't goin' to let my pretty craft rot here dorin' ther war. I'm off now."

"I am glad to hear it. I wish to go as passenger."

"An' I'm ther man to take yer, for yer looks like a likely chap, as had seen salt water afore."

"I have. Let me dismiss my boat, and I'll pay you the passage money."

The boatman, who had rowed him aboard, then returned shoreward, and Dudley Dash handed Captain Dusenbury the amount of his passage, and then sprung forward and aided in setting sail.

"Neow, that's what I call a likely youngster. He hain't afeerd o' gettin' his hands s'iled, an' he's a officer, too, as yer kin see by his clothes, tho' they does look a little hard, I admit. Look lively thar, Mister Greenfiddle, or I'll make the youngster as jist come aboard my mate, an' throw you inter ther sea," he called out to a long, lean, lantern-jawed Yankee, who served in the honorable position of first officer of the Pretty Girl, for Captain Dusenbury had a second officer too, one who was just the opposite to Mr. Greenfiddle, for he was a fat, moon-faced, tipsy-eyed little man, who always had an expression of assumed bravery on his countenance, as if desirous of proving to the world at large that he was a bold sailor.

For crew, the Pretty Girl had a negro, of almost giant stature, and an Indian of the Tarrantine tribe, a few of whom are still found in the mountains of Maine.

On the quarter-deck of the sloop, besides her captain, who stood at the helm, were two other persons—a regular cut-and-dried old-maid, with a visage as sour as a crab-apple, and a cadaverous-looking gentleman, whose sanctimonious face, huge spectacles, and white neck-cloth, indicated him as being a parson, if the painfully plain cut of his black clothing did not do so.

"Wall, we've a good wind, Parson Squeezbreeze, an' I'm thinkin' we'll make a good run of it. Don't you think so, Miss Nancy Primrose?" said Captain Dusenbury, addressing the parson and the old-maid.

"We are all in the hands of Providence. The wind bloweth and it dieth away," said Parson Squeezbreeze, in a sepulchral voice, while the old-maid replied, in tones like a cracked clarionet:

"I'm not a lady as gives her opinion, capting, regardin' what is goin' to happin to those as goes down inter the sea in ships; I'm a lady, who—" But the captain heard no more, for he was well acquainted with Miss Nancy, and having started her tongue, left the parson to become her victim, while he went forward, muttering to himself:

"That old hen is just like a clock. You wind her up, and durn me ef she stops until she runs down for want breath."

Swiftly down the harbor glided the Pretty Girl, with all sail set to catch the six-knot breeze that was blowing, and as darkness came on, a new moon hung in the heavens to light her pathway over the waters.

All on board felt that they were running a great risk to attempt to reach the mouth of the Kennebec; but then, Captain Dusenbury had made up his mind to run his vessel home, and he was a fearless man, and a skillful seaman.

"I guesses as how you can take a turn at the tiller, stranger, as yer seem ter want to be occupied," he said, after the sloop had gained an offing and was dashing swiftly along.

"I am willing, sir; but I would advise you to keep a bright lookout, as I've reason to know that there is an English frigate cruising in these waters," and Dudley Dash quietly took the helm.

"You don't say so! Wall, I'll skin every eye aboard to be ther lookout. Miss Nancy, you has be-utiful eyes, so please to keep 'em off the parson and skim 'em over ther summer sea. Parson Squeezbreeze, jist quit raisin' them orbs o' yourn ter Heaving, and look ter windward, kase Providence hain't goin' to help none as don't help therself.

"Here, yer tar-black nigger—skin it up that ther mast an' look both ways fur Sunday!" and the worthy captain, having set his passengers and crew at work, called his mates aft for a council of war.

"See here Mister Greenfiddle, and you, Mister Toddy Tipplemuch, this here stranger says as how he knows thar's danger hereabouts, an' I don't want the Pretty Girl to run smack under an Englisher's guns, do ye hear?"

"Yas," and each valorous mate cast his eyes in one sweeping look around the horizon.

"Ef we does, I loses the sloop, and mayhap my life. The parson will be tuk for chapl'in o' some cruiser, sartin, an' Miss Nancy 'll stan' a chance to marry a commydore in the king's sarvice, while this young feller 'll be held as a prizner o' war. As for you, Buttermilk"—and he raised his voice to address the negro—"why, you and the Ingine will be tuk to ther museum as cur'osities; but Greenfiddle, and you, Toddy

Tipplemuch, the Lord ha' mercy on yer—they'll hang yer both sartin', for hev'nt yer both told me that yer granddads fout at Bunker Hill?"

"I never had a grandfather," said Toddy, ruefully, while Mr. Greenfiddle remarked, in an awe-inspiring tone:

"Yas, but my grandfather was killed thar, an' thet makes us even."

"Toddy Tipplemuch, you hev' lied to me, then, fur yer distinctly told me thet—"

"Sail ho!" rung out in the clear voice of Dudley Dash, and all started suddenly, while Toddy Tipple much as suddenly disappeared down the companion way into the cabin.

"There it is, Captain—just off our starboard bow. It is a schooner, and looks like a privateer. Strange I did not see her before," and Dudley Dash pointed to where, lying low upon the waters, was visible one of those rakish-looking vessels so commonly seen, half a century ago, cruising under the flag of the pirate.

"Come down out o' thet riggin', yer blind chunk o' charcoal! an' you, Injin, whar was yer eyes?" cried Captain Dusenbury, severely, while he leveled his glass at the strange sail.

"Me see him long time; he lay quiet on water—just set he wings, and come this way; but man talk much and I no tell him," said the Indian, complacently, while Buttermilk, the negro, came slowly down to the deck, having evidently been asleep on watch.

"Yes, it is a cruiser or a privateer; anyhow, I think an American."

"Let me get a shot at him with Bunkerhill—I'll settle him," cried Toddy Tipplemuch.

"You be durned! Is thet what yer went inter the cabing fur so suddint?"

"Yas, Capting."

"Wal, jist stay on deck arter this. Ef any body goes inter ther cabin it must be the Parson and Miss Nancy."

"Amen!" said Parson Squeezbreeze, fervently, while Miss Nancy looked pleased to get a chance at the parson alone (for he was a widower), even if there was danger surrounding them.

"Wal, I'll jist stan' on, and ef that feller seems detarmined to worry me, I'll jist put inter some little inlet, fur I knows this coast pretty well—what do you make her out, stranger?" and Captain Dusenbury placed his glass in the hand of Dudley Dash, who, after a long survey of the strange craft, said, slowly:

"I have seen her before, Captain; it is a schooner that has been for several years a smuggler on the Maine coast."

"Oh Lordy!" groaned Mr. Greenfiddle, while Dudley Dash continued:

"Of late months I have heard that her commander has become *a pirate.*"

Down into the cabin went Toddy Tipplemuch, while all on board, except the Indian, seemed greatly impressed with the startling information that had just fallen from the lips of Dudley Dash.

CHAPTER X.

THE EFFECT OF A BROADSIDE.

An hour's sailing fully proved to all on board the sloop that but one means of escape lay before them, and that was to run close in shore, abandon the Pretty Girl, set fire to the craft, and then escape in the yawl, which hung at the stern dairts.

"I would hold on, captain, if the passengers are willing to run the gauntlet of the schooner's fire. She might hit us, and then again we might escape serious injury. I think it is worth the risk," and Dudley Dash glanced toward Parson Squeebreeze and Miss Nancy Primrose, hoping they would agree to his motion.

"Do you think the wicked men would fire at us with malicious intent to kill us," asked the parson solemnly.

"They wouldn't fire to amuse us, parson, you may bet your barrel o' soverns on that," replied Captain Dusenbury, while Miss Nancy said in a whisper:

"S'pose they was ter hit yer, parson, an' yer was ter be tuk off suddingly in yer youth, who'd be a mother to yer two blessed children?" and she placed the corner of her handkerchief to one eye, while she nervously watched the effect of her words on the parson with the other.

"Captain, I beseech you to give me warning, that I may dodge, if they go to shooting at us. Nancy, my child, we are in deadly danger now, so cling to me."

Miss Nancy took the parson at his word, and at once placed herself under the shelter of his long bony arm.

Just as she did so there was a flash from the bows of the schooner, and a roaring sound in the air.

Instantly the parson dodged to the deck, carrying with him the form of Miss Nancy, while Toddy Tipplemuch, with the flash, disappeared in the cabin, and Mr. Greenfiddle cried in fright.

"What in dumnation shall I do? I'll be killed sartin. I wish I was ter home."

"*Do?* Why, stand up like a man! Stranger, you've got more courage in your little finger than my mates has in their hull body—durn 'em—an' I'm lookin' to you to help me in this difficulty. What would you advise?"

"Why, to run the gauntlet of their fire and try and reach the inlet—where the schooner will not follow us," calmly said Dudley Dash, who still held the helm.

"I'll do it, ef I has to sacrifice the parson an' Miss Nancy. Here. Injun, you and Buttermilk haul this sheet taut, and trim in on the jib. Whar in thunder's that nigger? Down in the hold I'll bet Greenfiddle agin Tipplemuch. Well, sir, what has yer bin doin' in the cabin?" and the captain turned upon Toddy Tipplemuch, who just then came out of the cabin.

"I've bin armin' myself for the fray, captain," and Toddy pointed to a huge sword he had hung to a belt at his waist.

"Wall, now you is armed, stay on deck an' fight it out. I'm goin' to board an' take that skunner.."

This was too much for Mr. Greenfiddle, who at once started for the cabin.

"Whar yer goin', Greenfiddle?"

"Inter ther cabing to git *my* weepins. I'll blow ther durned pirat's inter ther skies."

"The schooner is preparing to fire again, sir," said Dudley Dash, as he caught sight of a light moving on their enemy's deck.

"Lord save us! Nancy, child, this is no place for us. Come," and dodging about like a chicken with its head cut off, and with the old maid clinging to his coat-tails, the Parson sought the cabin.

"It ain't possible they could 'a' heard me, is it?" whispered Mr. Greenfiddle, trembling with fear.

"Doubtless they did, sir," replied Dudley Dash, greatly enjoying the fright of the two mates, and yet wondering how men could be so craven.

"Capting, is yer really goin' ter board that ar vessel?" asked Toddy Tipplemuch, with an air as though he had further business in the cabin.

"Yas, I think of it. Ef we don't git away I'm pretty sartin we will."

"What in thunder would yer do that fur?" inquired Toddy.

"To have you biled inter soup for 'em, so as it would make 'em brave."

Toddy was about to reply, when the schooner luffed quickly up, and then one, two, three, four, bright flashes came from her side, and as many deep booms broke the stillness of the waters.

"Down all! Here comes her broadside!" cried Dudley Dash, still standing erect himself, as though he disdained to shrink from death.

But the order was unnecessary, for the Parson and Miss Nancy were already flat on the cabin floor, and at the first flash they were joined by three others—Buttermilk and the two mates.

Then came the roaring iron hail, cutting away the topmast and the bowsprit, and rending a huge hole in the sail, which caused the little sloop to tremble from stem to stern, and broach to.

Even Captain Dusenbury, a thoroughly brave man, stooped down as the broadside struck his craft; but Dudley Dash and one other never flinched. That other was the Indian sailor, who, with folded arms, stood erect and unmoved.

"Wall, stranger, I guesses as how we's gone up," said Captain Dusenbury, sorrowfully, and then he added, quickly; "We can take the yawl and row ashore."

"No; I have a plan: let that yawl alone, or I'll blow your cowardly brains out," sternly cried Dudley Dash, as Mr. Greenfiddle and Toddy Tipplemuch rushed to let fall the boat from the davits.

The mates stopped as if petrified; they feared the calm, slender boy.

"Captain, the sloop has drawn such a swell behind her that I am convinced we are in very shallow water."

"Yas, not more than three fathoms hereabout."

"Good! The schooner is deep and will not come in here. She is already laying to, to send a boat aboard—"

"Yas, we are gone up, sartin."

"Not yet. She will send a boat aboard—it is coming now, and if my plan works well, they will find they have caught a tartar."

"What is your plan, sir?" asked the captain, more and more impressed with respect for his gallant and youthful passenger.

"Let them come aboard, and then ask the officers into the cabin, and I will be there. As soon as they have entered let the Indian and negro, who are to lie hid on the opposite side of the caboose, fire upon the men in the boat, or make them prisoners, which ever is easiest to do—"

"But the skunner will send her boats aboard and murder us all—"

"Trust me, captain, I beg you, in this. If I do not catch the captain here, why then we can escape in the yawl. If the schooner's captain comes aboard we will have no trouble."

"Boy, you are a trump! I'll be durned ef—"

"Never mind, captain; but, have you pistols and guns on board?"

"Yas, a dozen, thanks to that thar shakin' coward, Toddy Tipplemuch, who insisted upon buying enough to equip a man o' war."

"Yer see, stranger, I've bin in tight places afore, an'—"

"And you are in a tight place, now, Mr. Tipplemuch. I would not brag until after we count our dead and wounded—"

"Oh, Lordy! I'll go an' look up ther guns. I wish we had a thousand cannons, a million muskets, and—"

"You'll do no sich thing, Mr. Tipplemuch. The guns and pistils hain't lost, an' we want you an' Mr. Greenfiddle at yer posts. Ef yer skulk *now*, durned ef I don't shoot yer myself."

This was a quietus on the two valorous mates, and they subsided in fear and trembling.

Going into the cabin with the captain, Dudley Dash found the parson and Miss Nancy on their knees saying their prayers, which the youth at once interrupted to drive the pious couple into one of the small staterooms.

"Now, captain, I will await here for you to bring the officers down, when I will either make them surrender or kill them—"

"Thou shalt do no murder, young man," came in sepulchral tones from the stateroom, and in the parson's voice.

"Shet up, Parson Squeezbreeze! Ef I hear a word from that stateroom I'll fire a bullit inter it."

"Captain," continued Dudley Dash, smiling at the quiet that followed the threat, "you had better now place the Indian and negro with their arms, and as the boat comes near, call down to me how many men are in it."

"I'll do it. Now I'll go on deck."

A few moments of suspense followed, and then Dudley Dash distinctly heard the sound of oars; then followed a stern hail:

"Sloop ahoy! what sloop is that?"

"The Pretty Girl, from Kennebec."

"Why the devil didn't you come-to when I first fired?"

"I kind o' thought it mout be more healthy to try and git away. What skunner's that?"

"None of your business. I'm coming aboard."

"Thar's one officer and four men in ther durned boat," whispered Captain Dusenbury down the companion-way.

"Good; send *him* down," came back in the cool tones of Dudley Dash.

A moment after the boat ranged alongside the sloop, and a tall, elegantly-formed man sprung on deck, dressed in a dark uniform, profusely trimmed with gold lace.

He was armed with a pistol in his belt, and a sword carried in his hand; and his stern, dark, yet handsome face, proved that he was ready to use his weapons, either for offense or defense.

"Well, sir, what cargo have you?" he said, sternly, addressing Captain Dusenbury.

"I'm durned sorry to say, kase I b'lieves yer ter be a pirate, that I've got a very valuable cargo. Ef you'll come inter my cabing I'll show yer."

Instantly the officer followed down the companion-way, saying sharply:

"And be in a hurry, skipper, for this is a bad neighborhood for a man who serves under my flag."

"And what flag mout that be, capting?"

"The Death's Head and Crossed Bones, skipper," recklessly said the buccaneer; but, as the words left his lips, there came the clearcut order:

"*Move one inch and you are a dead man!*"

The buccaneer felt that he was entrapped, and he turned his eyes toward Captain Dusenbury; but he had glided like a shadow up the companion-way.

"Whoever gives that command is a fool. My schooner lies but half a mile distant," said the buccaneer.

"True. And her commander is in my power. Lay down your arms on that table, or I'll kill you," said Dudley Dash, from his place of concealment.

A strange light came into the face of the buccaneer, as he slowly laid his sword upon the table, and then drew his pistol from his belt. Instantly he leveled the weapon in the direction from whence had come the sound, and fired.

A shriek and a deep groan followed the deafening report, and then the buccaneer turned to bound up the companion-way.

CHAPTER XI.

CATCHING A TARTAR.

With a curse upon his lips, the buccaneer rushed up the companion-way, to start back with a cry of rage and terror. He was securely shut in the cabin.

With a bitter curse he strained to force his way out, when there was heard a volley of musketry on deck, and the cries of wounded, struggling men.

"Captain, you are in my power. Surrender or you die."

There was no use for the buccaneer to turn; a cold pistol-muzzle pressed hard against his ear, and the flashing eyes of Dudley Dash looked full into his own.

"What would you, boy?" he demanded, unflinching.

"Merely to pass on our way unmolested. Parson Squeezbreeze, bring that rope and bind this man."

"It is not meet and right that such as I should mingle with—"

"Miss Nancy, you do as I ask, please, as the parson is afraid," impatiently said the youth.

Instantly, Miss Nancy came from the stateroom, rope in hand, and with a vicious look at the buccaneer, proceeded to bind his hands behind his back, with a skill that was amusing to contemplate.

"Curse you, fellow, you shall repent this—"

"Repent, thyself, oh, wicked man, for thy crimes are many," came from the stateroom.

"I will answer for my act, Sir Pirate. Ho! the deck!"

"Ay, ay, youngster! Have yer caged the varmint? An' who's been killed?" demanded Captain Dusenbury, appearing in the companion-way.

"No one is hurt. The buccaneer got frightened and fired at his own shadow. Did you capture the crew?"

"We've got one o' them slick as grease; t'other three is gone cruisin' in a lake o' brimstone an' fire."

All right, captain. Now, sir, come on deck with me."

Silently the buccaneer obeyed, and a glad light came into his face, as he glanced out over the waters and beheld two dark objects moving rapidly toward the sloop.

"Now, young man, your time has come," he said gleefully.

"Not yet—are you the captain of yonder schooner?"

"I am."

"And you are he that is called, or was, until the breaking out of war, Rafael the smuggler?"

"I am."

"Very well. Now, captain Rafael, *the Pirate*, we desire to go on our way unmolested, and I look to you to aid us. Give an order to the officers in yonder boats to put back at once to the schooner, or, so help me God! I will scatter your brains over this deck," and Dudley Dash placed the pistol he held against the head of his prisoner.

Captain Rafael cursed bitterly. He saw that he had caught a Tartar, and one glance into the face of his captor proved that he would do what he threatened.

"Quick, sir! hail those boats and tell them to put back. Your minutes of life are numbered if you refuse."

"Ho! the boats! Weston, rest on your oars where you are, for a minute; I am caught in my own trap," rung out in the clear tones of the buccaneer chief.

"Then we will dash forward and rescue you! Give way, men, with a will," cried the officer in the nearest boat.

"Order them back, I say!" and the youth's voice was hoarse with passion.

"Back, Weston! for the love of God! back, or I shall be killed!" cried the chief in accents that he meant what he said.

Again the boats hesitated, and not a cable's length from the sloop.

"Now, captain, my plan is to at once get under way, and run close in shore, where your schooner cannot follow me. Captain Dusenbury, rig a bowsprit just as quick as you can, and I hold you, sir buccaneer, as hostage; if your boats follow, *you die*."

"Do you intend to keep me as a prisoner and hand me over to the authorities ashore?"

"I had not thought of that; it *would* be a good idea."

"Then hear what I have to say. I am a reckless man, and an outlaw: if taken ashore I would be hung, as you know: but I love life, as all men, not fools, do, and I will agree to let you go, if you swear to release me as soon as your sloop is in a place of safety."

Dudley Dash was silent a moment, and then said.

"What if I refuse?"

"I will give the order for my boats to come on, and I will be killed. It is better to die at your hands than on a gallows."

Dudley Dash saw that the buccaneer was in deadly earnest, and he said, after a moment's thought:

"I agree to your terms. Order your boats back, and I will let you return in the one alongside, and release the man now a prisoner with you. Mind you, the boats are to return to the schooner, and the sloop is not to be followed."

"I understand. Ho, Weston, I have come to a compromise. Return on board the schooner, and in an hour I will join you."

"Don't trust them, Captain Rafael," called out the officer.

"Do as I say, sir; I am the best judge of what I should do," angrily returned the chief, and the boats immediately put back toward the schooner.

"The bowsprit is rigged, mister," said Captain Dusenbury, and then he continued:

"Leastwise, it'll do for present use."

"Very well. Get the sloop at once under way, and stand in there, Captain Dusenbury," replied the youth.

The order was at once obeyed, Mr. Greenfiddle and Toddy Tipplemuch springing to work with an alacrity that was astonishing.

A few moments more and the sloop was bowling merrily along, the schooner's boat, with its ghastly load, towing astern.

When the schooner had disappeared from sight, Dudley Dash, who held the helm, said quietly:

"Haul that boat alongside. Now, captain, you and your man are free. An hour's hard row and you will meet your vessel. Here, sir, let me release you—there! I will keep your sword and pistol as a souvenir. Farewell, sir."

With an oath the buccaneer sprung into his boat, followed by his companion, and Dudley Dash gave the order to cast loose.

A moment after the boat was dancing in the wake of the sloop, and as all eyes watched the two thwarted buccaneers they saw them hurl the three dead bodies into the sea, and then spring to their oars with a will.

"Wall, my young friend, you is the pluckiest chap that ever wore breeches. Bless my soul, ef I don't owe you more'n I kin ever pay," and Captain Dusenbury grasped the hand of Dudley Dash, who quietly remarked:

"You owe me nothing, captain; but, thank God! we are safe."

The captain was about to reply, when he observed Toddy Tipplemuch and Mr. Greenfiddle lying flat on the deck, and preparing to fire at the receding boat.

"Blarst yer lubberly beasts, what's yer doin'?" he yelled out.

"I'm agoin' to show them pirits thet thar's brave men as defends this here vessil, an' blow ther durned heads—"

What more Mr. Tipplemuch would have said is unknown, as he was suddenly seized in the strong arms of the captain and hurled into the cabin, knocking down Parson Squeezbreeze, who had just made up his mind to come on deck and search for Miss Nancy, who had followed Dudley Dash and the prisoner.

"You go arter him, durn ye," yelled the irate captain, and Mr. Greenfiddle followed the surprised Toddy.

"Now fur the nigger—"

But Buttermilk towered too high for the captain to believe that he could so easily manage him; and besides, he had blazed away at the pirates in the boat, when ordered to do so. If he hit any of the three who were killed, it was accidental, for Buttermilk had closed both eyes and fired at random.

"Now I've got 'em, and I mean ter keep 'em caged. They is enuff to worry one to death—hain't they?" and Captain Dusenbury closed the companion-way and securely fastened it.

Then, turning to the old maid, he said:

"Miss Nancy, you've made a man o' yerself this here night, an' ef yer can't git married, I'll marry yer myself, ef I'm ever a widdower."

Miss Nancy smiled sweetly, and was beginning to make a little speech, when Dudley Dash said:

"Now, captain, we will stand on up the coast with all speed—and keep close in shore, for there is danger further out."

"Thet's so!—You jist do as yer like, youngster, kase you runs ahead o' my time, ye do, an' when we strike ole Kennebec, durned ef you won't be the boy as has done it. I'm yer passinger, I am; so go ahead, capting, an' no questions axed!"

Dudley Dash smiled pleasantly, and headed the sloop up the coast, while he mentally congratulated himself upon his narrow escape, and looked forward with glad hope of soon being at his cottage home.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RETURN.

THE scene of my story again goes back to the iron-bound coast of Maine, and the humble home of the old fisherman, Carter Hayes.

But over all rested an air of neatness and comfort that was not there when the reader last beheld it, for the dainty taste of Gabrielle Gaston, whom the old fisherman had found a ray of sunshine in his home, had improved the little cottage and its immediate surroundings greatly.

Beds of flowers blossomed in front of the door, a shell walk wound down to the beach, and pretty white curtains hung at the windows, while all within was tidy and inviting.

It was near the sunset hour, and upon the porch, in front of the cottage sat two persons—one was an old negress, with a gayly colored bandanna around her head, and attired in a plain homespun frock.

She was engaged in knitting a pair of blue worsted socks, and her hands kept time to a low, plaintive tune that she was humming.

The other was Gabrielle Gaston, grown from the child of twelve, into a tall, graceful girl of fourteen, just on the verge of womanhood, for she was most mature for her age.

Her face was still more beautiful, than when the reader beheld her cowering beneath the threats of the smuggler, and a mass of golden curls hung in perfect abandon down her back.

She was neatly attired in homespun, and was occupied in mending a seaman's jacket, while a sad look rested upon her face, proving that her thoughts were not of a happy nature.

Suddenly a deep boom burst upon the quiet air, and the roar of a heavy gun startled the silence of the hills, and echoed along the rocky shore.

Both Gabrielle and the old negress started, and turned their eyes seaward.

"What can the frigate mean by firing, Patience? Is there any other vessel in sight?" asked the maiden, glancing up and down the coast, and then letting her eyes fall upon a large ship of war that was lying a league away, and just outside of a chain of rocky islands that formed a break-water for the little bay in front of the cabin.

"I don't see nothin', missy; I guesses as how dey is jist shootin' to scare folks, an' dey is doin' it, too, kase I don't like dem big guns, nohow; de Lord didn't make dem big guns, missy, an' I don't like 'em," replied the old negress, evidently displeased at having her tune broken in upon with such a rude bass as the roar of a heavy gun.

"Hark! there it is again. Can Father Hayes be running in, and are they firing at him, I wonder?"

"No, missy; de boss hain't bin gone but one day, an' he didn't spec' to git back afore a week. Dey's jist shootin' kase dey knows it am wrong."

But Gabrielle did not seem to accept the views of old Patience on the situation, and rising, began to narrowly search for the cause of the firing.

Again and again pealed forth the deep boom of the gun, startling the birds from their coverts in the crevices of the rocks and pine thickets.

"See, Patience, see! Now I know why they are firing," and Gabrielle pointed seaward, where the skies were becoming rapidly overcast with inky storm-clouds, and a faint roar of a coming storm reached their ears.

"Dat's so, chile; dat big wessil am becalmed dar on de coast, and dat dar storm am goin' to knock it apieces. Yes, chile, dey wants a pilot, dey does."

"Oh! that Father Hayes was here!" cried Gabrielle, earnestly.

"It won't do no good, missy. De boss am a reg'lar 'Merican, an' he hain't gwine to help dat ship of he war here. Don't you see de flag, missy?"

"Yes; she is English, and therefore an enemy; but humanity would cause Father Hayes to go to their aid and pilot them into the bay. I hope some good fisherman will do it."

"No, dey won't, missy; dey wouldn't help dat wessil, kase she's a enemy. No, chile, dem poor sailors is got to die afore our eyes."

"Oh! that I knew how to manage a large vessel! *I* would go."

Old Patience adjusted her spectacles, which she always looked *over* instead of *through*, and gazed upon the young girl as though she believed she had taken leave of her senses.

After awhile she said, reproachfully:

"You is a *gal*, chile."

"And what of that? I have sailed the sloop many a time, and I know the channel well. See, Patience, is not that a boat? Yes, it is. See, it comes around the point of land—just rounding the whale's back."

"I see him, chile. Yas, dat am a boat, an' it am headin' here."

"Then it must be my father returning. No, it is not his sloop, but a small boat, with a single sail. Who can it be? Hark! how piteously those guns cry for help."

"It's no use, missy; dey won't git nobody to help 'em here."

"Yes, the boat is coming here. See, it has rounded the point, and there! he has hauled down his sail and taken to his oars, for there is not a breath of wind. How boldly he pulls! See, his boat just flies over the water. Oh! Patience, suppose that should be Dudley?"

"Don't talk of Massa Dudley, missy; de Lord am done hab him safe in He bosom. Poor boy, we nebber see him any mo'."

The tears sprung into the beautiful eyes of Gabrielle, but she said quickly:

"No, Patience, I feel that Dudley is not dead; he will yet return. Come, let us go to the beach and meet the boat, and I will urge whoever it contains to go out to the aid of the English frigate."

Swiftly Gabrielle descended the shell pathway to the beach, followed more leisurely by the old negress, who, upon her arrival, found the young girl dancing about and clapping her hands.

"Yes, Patience, it is, *it is*, Dudley! Don't you recognize him now?"

"Fore God! de chile am right! It *am* masser Dudley, or he ghost."

The next moment the boat ran half its length out on the beach, and the well-known form of Dudley Dash sprung out upon the sand, and clasped Gabrielle in his strong arms—he was again at home.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BOY'S PLUCK.

AFTER the warm greeting given him by Gabrielle, and a hearty "Gor' bress you, chile," from Patience, Dudley Dash turned and glanced anxiously seaward at the rising storm.

Gabrielle saw his look, and then beheld his

earnest gaze at the frigate, whose pleading guns each moment seemed to call more loudly.

Anxiously she watched his face, and then said quickly:

"Dudley, that vessel is in terrible danger."

"Yes, Gabrielle."

"She will be wrecked if some bold fisherman does not go out and save her."

"Yes; she is on a lee shore, and a more dangerous one she could not have found—there is not a breath of air, and yonder storm will burst upon the sea within half an hour. See, the swell, driven before it is already coming in."

"Dudley, is there no one to save her?"

"She is English, Gabrielle; I know her well; three nights ago I was on her, and condemned to be hung at the yard arm."

"*You*, Dudley?" and the young girl's face paled.

"Yes; they believed me to be a pirate—"

"A *pirate!* believed *you a* pirate?" and Gabrielle raised her hands in holy horror.

"Yes: but it is a long story—I will tell it you another time—now I must *act*."

"What are you going to do, Dudley!"

"Save yonder vessel."

Now was Gabrielle's time to object, for Dudley's words had greatly alarmed her. Should he voluntarily go on board a vessel where he had been condemned to death?

"Look a here, Massa Dudley—you is a pop'lar boy in dis neighborhood; but, chile, ef der fishermens knows you sabe yonder vessel from abstruction, dey gwine to git hoppin' mad wid yer, an' no mistake."

"No doubt of it, Patience; but must I stand here and see five hundred men go down before my eyes, when I can save them?"

"Dat's a fack; but you kin turn yer eyes away."

"But their cries would haunt my very dreams. Where is Father Hayes, Gabrielle?"

"Gone to Portland in his sloop."

"Then I must act upon my own responsibility—Gabrielle, I am going aboard yonder vessel."

"And I will accompany you."

"*You!* Why, little girl, you are wild."

"No, I am not. If you meet danger I will share it with you. Why, I thought of going myself and trying to save the frigate."

Dudley burst out into a ringing boyish laugh; but, suddenly checking himself, he said, as though thinking aloud:

"Yes, we can reach the frigate before the storm bursts, and once there the danger will be over. Besides, we can prove that I told the truth, and am not a pirate.

"Come, Gabrielle, we will take the life-boat. Patience, I guess you want to come, too?" he said, with a merry twinkle of mischief in his eyes.

"Nebber! bress de Lord, chile, you done gone crazy; yer mind is clean gone! Git me in dat ar shell? No sar! I'm gwine to de house ter pray fur you two child'en, I is. I'se gwine to git in out o' dis yer storm, or dar will be a cullud funeral 'bout yer, an' *I* won't be de corpse."

So saying old Patience trudged back toward the house, while Dudley and Gabrielle sprung into a long, narrow life-boat, or rather surf skiff, and, seizing the oars, the youth sent it skimming over the quiet waters.

As he rowed swiftly along he told the deeply interested girl of his remarkable adventures, and learned that Carter Hayes had written to the university, when weeks went by without hearing from him, and that one of the professors had replied how Dudley had been kidnaped by a pirate vessel, the crew of which had landed, and carried him off, in revenge for his having frustrated their design the day before, of carrying off the daughter of a wealthy gentleman, whose villa was on the sea-shore.

The letter furthermore stated that a Mr. Dunstan had, with a few men he called to his aid, attempted to take Dudley from the pirates, but that Mr. Dunstan had been severely wounded and several of his men killed.

Dudley smiled grimly at this version of the affair, and made known the truth to Gabrielle, whose beautiful eyes flashed with indignation.

"But, how did you get home, Dud?"

"Why, I got the captain of the sloop to let me take his yawl, when we reached the mouth of the Kennebec, and here I am; but see, Gabie, how rapidly those clouds rise, and just hear how the storm roars! I tell you, we are going to have a terrible time. The frigate is fairly caught, for she can't budge until the gale strikes her, and then she will drive right on the reef, for it will be impossible to stand out to sea against this storm."

"I know that, Dudley; but you can save her—"

"Yes, if I arrive in time; but it is a hard pull yet. Gabrielle, do you know there are many who will look upon it as a crime for me to save that vessel?"

"Will there be men so heartless?"

"Yes, and women, too. She is the enemy of our country; she has ventured in here, perhaps to plunder our people on the coast, and if she is lost, it will be said it served her right; but do not look so frightened; I have made up my mind to pilot her in under the lee of this island, and I will do it. How dark it is getting; it will be a fearful night, I tell you."

Gabrielle cast a glance over the motionless sea, and then upon the rushing storm-clouds, ever and anon split in twain by arrowy lightning, and then shaken with rolling bursts of thunder, which devoured the deep boom of the signal gun.

"This is terrible, Dudley," and the young girl shuddered and momentarily hid her face in her hands.

Dudley Dash made no reply, but bent to his oars with increased energy, while his face each moment became more daring and resolute.

"Look! Gabie, how far is she off now?" he asked, quietly.

"Not a half a mile, and they see us, Dudley; they are waving to us, and the gun has ceased firing; pull, Dudley; pull for your life, for the storm is sweeping up as though it would wash the very land away."

Dudley Dash cast one quick glance behind him. What he saw there caused his veins to swell out, his teeth to set hard, and every nerve and muscle to strain, for he knew that he pulled for his life, for the life of Gabrielle, and the lives of five hundred human beings.

"Ho! the boat! Pull hard! for the love of God! pull hard," rung in hoarse, startling tones across the waters, and Gabrielle waved her hand in reply, while she trembled like an aspen leaf with excitement.

She would not, she *dare* not speak now to him who was straining for very life and death. He knew every danger—he felt all; he could do no more than he was doing.

A wild cheer of encouragement broke from five hundred throats; but the boy's face was like marble—he heard, and he kept on at his killing, terrible stroke.

"On! on! for the love of God! on!" rung out in trumpet tones.

The boy heard, but remained silent, and still kept up his fearful stroke.

Once he glanced into the face of Gabrielle; her nerve was gone; her face pallid, and, with clasped hands and staring eyes, she gazed upon him—him, who held so much of life and death in his hands.

Again there came a cry from the frigate—but the roar of the storm rendered it unintelligible, and then all on board stood in silence awaiting.

Nearer and nearer came the surf-skiff flying over the yet calm, but darkening waters, and the next instant, rushed alongside of the huge frigate.

A wild yell of triumph mingled with the roar of the storm, and then Dudley and Gabrielle were seized in strong arms and dragged upon the deck, amid a wild, heaving mass of human beings—they had reached the frigate one minute before the storm!

CHAPTER XIV.

RUNNING DEATH'S GANTLET.

"THANK God! you have arrived in safety, pilot. What is to be done?" and Commodore DeLancy met Dudley Dash at the gangway, and in the driving spray and increasing darkness failing to recognize him, as one whom he had sentenced to death, several days before.

"To save the frigate—set a jib; her foretopsail—close-reefed, and spanker reefed down. Our only course is to get into the bay and under the lee of yonder island."

"A fearful chance; but we will aid you all in our power."

"I shall need it. Come, Gabrielle, stand by me, here," and Dudley placed himself at the wheel, where already stood three strong seamen, awaiting his orders.

The sails were quickly set by willing hands, and a silence like death fell upon the ship, for the roar of the storm was appalling, and only a few hundred fathoms distant there rolled a huge white wave, weird and terrible in its phosphorescent light, and looking like a drove of wild, foam-covered mustangs charging upon the devoted vessel.

The inky clouds above were in a mad chaos of motion, and trailed along the sea, dragging volumes of water after them, while their gloomy shadows, added to the approaching darkness of night, rendered the land invisible from the frigate's decks.

"My God! pilot, I cannot see how you can find a harbor in this hurricane and darkness," exclaimed Commodore De Lancy.

"I know my bearings, sir. Ha! here comes the storm. Down all! and hold hard! for your lives!"

As the clear voice of Dudley cut through the storm, he threw one arm around Gabrielle, and with the other clung hard to the wheel.

Then down, down, sunk the noble vessel, as though the very sea were falling from under her, and above her hovered the huge, rushing wave.

With the force of an earthquake it struck, and like a mere plaything the mighty vessel was hurled landward, then driven over upon her beam-ends, while mingling with the roar of the storm arose the cracking of spars, smashing of timbers, snapping of cordage, and wild wails of a score of brave seamen torn from their hold, and carried shrieking away into the caldron of waters to their death.

It was an awful moment, and the phosphorescent glare upon the sea, lighting up vividly the appalling scene, all eyes were turned upon the young pilot, who still clung to the wheel.

"Here! Hold this girl, and, on your life! cling to her," and Dudley gave to a seaman the unconscious Gabrielle.

Then he cast his eyes at the rigging. The main-topmast was gone, and the fore-topmast, jib, and spanker had been blown into ribbons.

"Cut away the masts," cried Commodore De Lancy, through his trumpet.

"No, she will right herself: hold!" cried Dudley, and as he spoke the vessel was again thrown upon a mighty wave, and with a terrific lurch, that hurled a dozen more men into the sea, she righted—going so far over to windward that it was feared she would never rise.

But a moment after the gallant craft righted, and was on a level keel.

Again all eyes turned upon the young pilot; but he was calm and attentive, for his eyes were sweepingly cast through the rigging.

Then his voice rung out with a peculiar clearness that was heard by all:

"All hands to make sail! Set the fore-topmast staysail and the fore-course! let fall the main topsail and mizzen-course! Lively men! *lively!*"

There was no need of the latter order; the willing seamen were already moving with the energy of life and death.

"She feels her sail! thank God! the canvas holds! At the wheel! starboard! *hard-a-starboard!*"

The three seamen, aided by Dudley, threw their whole weight upon the huge wheel, and the frigate's bows swung slowly round; she minded her helm even in that terrific storm. and a sigh of relief broke from the lips of all on board.

But the danger was not yet over, by any means. All around was darkness, and mad waters leaped high heavenward, while the winds howled savagely through the rigging, and the red lightning that momentarily lit up the scene but seemed to show the awful dangers surrounding the struggling ship.

"What does she draw, sir?" yelled Dudley at the top of his voice, although Commodore De Lancy stood by his side.

"Twenty-seven feet."

"Good! I can run in to windward of the Whale's Back—a channel to the south of us," replied Dudley, and he bent his piercing gaze around him.

"Young man, the frigate is in your hands. If you can save her, God alone must aid you," said Commodore De Lancy, who could see nothing landward to serve as a guide by which the Boy Pilot could get his bearings.

Dudley made no reply; every nerve, every energy was bent upon the desperate work before him, and he stood calm and confident while the ship drove on with a speed that was frightful.

Around him stood a score of officers, the lightning blazing brightly upon their brilliant uniforms, and in the waist of the ship, and forward were hundreds of brave seamen, awaiting in breathless suspense the end of the frightful drama they were playing, with Death.

Not a word, not a whisper did any one utter; their lips refused utterance—their eyes took in the awful scene in one glance, and then turned upon the Boy Pilot; in him was their hope.

"Port!* put your helm! hard-a-port!" yelled Dudley in a voice that was heard only by the helmsmen at his side.

A vivid flash of lightning had shown him his bearings.

"Starboard! hard-a-starboard! and about ship—ready, about!" came in startling tones, and all whom duty did not call upon to spring to busy action, stood breathlessly watching the result.

Would the good ship come round?

Would not the mad waves dash her back?

Would it be death to all if she missed stays?

Such were the mental questions asked.

But the noble vessel swept up into the wind and water, and though torrents were hurled upon her decks, and she trembled, as if in abject terror, the bows went round, and the sails, catching the gale upon the other quarter, filled with a report like the discharge of cannon, and forged the frigate ahead once more with frightful velocity, and rushing toward a huge wall of foam directly ahead.

"Men—we have to weather yonder reef—there! where the sea breaks with such fury. If we fall to leeward of it there is no hope. Now you know your duty. Keep her close! if she falls off half a point we are gone."

This was said to the helmsmen in calm, but severe tones, and with iron energy they grasped the wheel, and every eye was turned upon the danger ahead.

Suddenly a vivid flash of lightning made the danger visible; the vessel had to pass through a narrow channel—an island of rock to windward—a sunken reef to leeward!

*At the time of which I write the word *larboard* was in use. AUTHOR.

Like a mad racer the frigate swept on, and then her bows cut into the surging foam.

There was an instant of awful suspense, a heavy shock, as a huge wave, hurled back from the rocky island fell upon her decks, a blinding shower of spray, and the gantlet of Death had been safely passed! Ten minutes more and the noble vessel was anchored in safety under the lee of the large, crescent-shaped island, where Carter Hayes was wont to keep his little sloop at anchor.

Then from the throats of nearly half a thousand men burst one long, loud huzza: the frigate had been saved by the skill and courage of Dudley Dash.

CHAPTER XV.

A LEAP FOR FREEDOM.

"Pilot, come with me into my room—you have saved the ship, and I would speak with you," and Commodore De Lancy led the way into his comfortable new quarters.

With the delighted Gabrielle—who had regained her spirits, now that the fearful ordeal was over—clinging to his hand, Dudley entered the cabin, where Commodore De Lancy and half a dozen of his officers had preceded him.

As he came into the presence of the English officer, he threw aside the slouch hat he wore, and which he had purchased in Gloucester, after his escape from the frigate.

"Great God! who are you?" cried Commodore De Lancy, springing to his feet, as the bright lamp of the cabin fell full upon the youth.

"I am the one who just acted as the frigate's pilot!" quietly returned Dudley.

"That I well know; but were you not a prisoner on board this vessel three days since?"

"I was—I was under sentence of death for piracy on the high seas."

"Boy, I believed you dead; it was thought that you preferred drowning to hanging, and in some way managed to unlock your manacles, and sprung overboard."

"I unlocked my irons, and swam ashore. Had I not escaped, this vessel would now be in pieces on the rocks."

"I know that well; but how did you get here?"

"I reached the shore, as I said, in safety, after a long and desperate swim, and finding a packet sloop coming up the Kennebec, took passage in her. My home is on this coast, not one mile from here, and this young girl will prove to you that I told you the truth when I said I was no pirate."

All glanced at the beautiful Gabrielle, who blushed with confusion, and hid her face upon Dudley's shoulder.

"Thank God, you escaped the fate of the three buccaneers who boarded the frigate with you! Come here, my dear, and tell me how it is I found this handsome young man on a pirate vessel."

Thus addressed, Gabrielle stepped forward and in a frank, earnest voice, told Commodore De Lancy, and his officers, all that she had learned from the lips of Dudley.

"And did you know this frigate when you started to her aid?" asked the commodore, gazing with admiration upon the face of the brave boy.

"I did, sir. Humanity alone prompted the act. What my countrymen will say of what I have done I do not know; doubtless they will believe me a traitor."

"You are an American, then?"

"Heart, body and soul, sir."

"If all American youths are like you, England had best look to her laurels on the sea," said the commodore, earnestly; then he added:

"And what can I do for you, for saving the frigate?"

"Allow my sister and myself to return home. Our surf-skiff is on the deck."

"But what reward can I—"

"Commodore De Lancy, I will take no reward for what I have done; did I do so, I would look upon it as blood-money," and Dudley's eyes flashed with pride.

"Your sister, then, will accept this."

"No, sir, I will accept nothing," frankly replied Gabrielle, and the English officer seemed to feel himself in a bad position.

After a while he said:

"My young friend, no thanks of mine, or those whom you have saved, can ever repay you, and you will have nothing else; did I think you would accept it, believe me I would offer you a commission in his Majesty's service; but as an American I fear you would refuse it."

"Most certainly, sir; but I thank you for your kind offer."

"For my having once sentenced you to death forgive me—I ask it from my heart; but you came aboard under most suspicious circumstances, and in very bad company, you must admit; but that is past. Here, wear this medal; it is one I am entitled to give from the king of Great Britain, to any officer whose distinguished services have won it; you have more than won it."

As Commodore De Lancy spoke he pinned over the left breast of Dudley Dash, a handsome gold medal, sparkling with precious stones.

The youth's eyes flashed with pride; he had won acknowledgment from an enemy, but he said quietly:

"I thank you, Commodore De Lancy. I will wear this medal in memory of this eventful night; now will you permit my sister and myself to depart?"

The Englishman looked perplexed—"My young friend, cannot you stay and pilot us out to sea?"

"No, sir; I saved the frigate when in danger; in calm weather you can tow out with your boats at slack tide, and after taking soundings."

"Is this fair? You have us in a trap, should an enemy come along and catch us here, or a force from the land attack us."

Dudley was silent a moment and then said:

"I will send you one, when I return, sir, who will pilot you to sea; but for fear he may get into trouble, you must promise to land him some leagues up or down the coast, and he must come on board to-night."

"Is he as experienced a pilot as yourself?"

"But one other person knows this coast as I do, sir, and *he* would never serve you; but the man I will send you is an experienced pilot—he is an Indian."

Commodore De Lancy stepped aside and held converse with several of his officers in a low tone for a few moments; then he returned and said:

"Much as I regret it, my young friend, duty to my king, my ship, my officers and my crew, compel me to detain you to act as our pilot. It will take several days to refit, and repair the damages we have sustained; but as soon as we are at sea, you shall be sent ashore."

Dudley's face flushed, and then paled, while an angry light came into his eyes; but controlling himself, he said, calmly:

"My sister at least can return on shore?"

"Certainly—I will call away a boat and—"

"She has her skiff, sir; she can return alone in that. Come, Gabrielle!"

As the two left the cabin, Dudley held a short, whispered conversation with Gabrielle, and then the surf-skiff was lowered into the water, and Commodore De Lancy himself aided the young girl into it, again urging upon her the acceptance of a purse of gold, which she indignantly refused, for her temper was up at the detention of Dudley.

Silently they watched her row swiftly away, until she disappeared behind an island, and then Commodore De Lancy said pleasantly:

"Come, my young pilot, you are to be my guest for a few days. I will give you dry clothing to put on."

Dudley said nothing but walked along aft, until the Englishman started into the cabin companion-way; then, with a sudden bound, he rushed to the side of the frigate, and sprung overboard into the sea!

CHAPTER XVI.

OUT OF THE SEA AND INTO IRONS.

The act of Dudley Dash was as unexpected as it was sudden, so that it was a minute before those who saw it realized what he had done.

Then there arose the cry—"Man overboard!"

"Lower away the boats!" added an officer, while Commodore De Lancy, returning quickly on deck, and learning the cause of the alarm, at once countermanded the order.

"No, let him go. A boy as brave as he is deserves to go free."

But all eyes sought the water for some sign of the bold swimmer, yet nowhere was he visible.

"He may have drowned?" suggested an officer.

"Not he! One who risked what he did three nights since to escape from the frigate, has perfect confidence in himself. Let him go, and we will work out of here as best we can," and Commodore De Lancy re-entered his cabin.

As for Dudley, he kept on under the water, swimming in a certain direction, and when he rose for breath, only held his face up to inhale air.

Then he again swam under water, until he felt he was too far off to be seen, when he arose to the surface, and struck off with bold strokes for a small and distant island.

At length he reached the lee of it, and here, quietly seated in her surf-skiff, was Gabrielle.

"Well, Gabie!"

"Oh! Dudley, I am *so* glad you have come. I feared you might not get away, but I was going to wait all night for you."

"I made it easily. Now give me the oars, for I need something to warm me up."

Seizing the oars, the youth sent the light skiff rapidly over the waters, and in half an hour was in sight of the beach; but between the spot where they then were, and the beach, rushed a fearful sea, which had bounded over the outer reef, and driven by the wind, made even that land-locked and island-guarded bay, a turbulent mass of waters.

"Gabie, I never saw it rough like this in here before, but we'll risk it, for as soon as we reach the lee of Fisherman's reef, we will have it plain rowing to the beach."

"Go ahead Dud; I am not afraid," said the girl in the stern of the surf-skiff, and Dudley went "ahead," to the next moment regret it, for the waters were wilder than he imagined.

But he could not retrace his way now; he must keep on, and struggling with the tumultuous waters he pulled on with all his strength.

But, in the darkness, and with his back to his course, he lost his bearings, and suddenly the skiff was dashed with terrible force upon a sunken rock.

Both Dudley and Gabrielle were hurled into the water—the youth to instantly clasp the young girl around the waist, crying:

"Now, Gabie, we have to swim for it! Strike out with me—there!"

Gabrielle was a good swimmer, and a brave girl; but in those mad waters she lost partly her presence of mind, and Dudley had nearly her whole weight upon him.

But he bore up bravely, and after a long, hard struggle for life, reached the lee of Fisherman's reef, where Gabrielle was able to help herself.

Ten minutes more and they landed upon the beach, both utterly exhausted by their efforts.

After a short breathing-spell they went up the pathway to the cottage.

A bright light gleamed through the windows, and numerous voices were heard within.

Opening the door, they entered together.

The room was filled with tobacco smoke. Patience was cooking before the fire, and a dozen rough-looking men were seated around, smoking their pipes, and conversing in boisterous tones.

At the sight of the youth and the young girl the men sprung to their feet, and one of them said harshly:

"Dudley Dash, who piloted that frigate into Crescent Bay?"

"*I did*, Daniel Dawes."

"Did you know that she was English?"

"Yes."

"Then I arrest you as a traitor to your country. Hold out your hands, boy, for the bracelets."

Dudley Dash knew the man well; he was the county constable. Without a word he held forth his hands, while his wrists were immediately ironed; he was looked upon as a traitor to his country, and had become the prisoner of a gang of heartless men.

CHAPTER XVII.

PATIENCE AND GABRIELLE AS ALLIES.

By midnight the storm had so far abated that all of the men, except two, left the cottage of Carter Hayes for their own homes.

The two were the constable and his assistant—they were to remain all night at the cottage, and go on with their prisoner to the town of Bath the following morning.

But there were two persons determined that Dudley should *not* go there, and those two were old Patience and Gabrielle.

Unwittingly the old negress had told who was the frigate's pilot, to a group of men who had come to the coast, and instantly pronouncing Dudley a traitor, they had sent off for the constable to arrest him.

Now that they had him, Patience was determined that they should not hold him, and at once she and Gabrielle put their heads together to plot a plan of escape.

Dudley, who was calm and hopeful, felt, as he watched the plotters, that something was going on, so to aid them all in his power, he asked Daniel Dawes to let him go into the next room and put on some dry clothing.

The constable at once transferred the manacles to his ankles, from his wrists, and said:

"Go ahead youngster; but no foolishness, mind you."

Once in the room Patience, under a pretense of getting his clothing went in after him, and whispered:

"Chile, it's gwine to be all right—Missy Gabie an' me gwine to fix dem mens, an' you kin git away."

"That I am anxious to do, and for one reason in particular: but, work carefully, for Dawes is a sly fellow."

"Hab no fear, massa: we're fixin' t'ings all right," and the negress re-entered the room where the two men sat.

"Say, old auntie, can't you give us a bite, and a pull at some of Hayes' good old rum?" asked Daniel Dawes of Patience.

"Yas, massa; I was t'inkin' you mout be hungry like; I gits you somefin to eat."

In half an hour Patience, with Gabrielle's aid, set before the officers of the law a tempting supper, which they had sharpened their appetites for by several pulls at a black bottle.

"This is indeed good, auntie: but the bottle's dry."

"You shall hab 'nother, sah—Massa Hayes git wery mad ef I didn't gin yer all yer want in he's house," and Patience placed another bottle before them—not rum as had been the other, but pure French brandy, which the old pilot had gotten years before from a wreck on the coast.

The men ate to their hearts', or rather stomachs' content, and drank deeply—so deeply in fact that they were very drunk ere they attempted to rise from the table.

But the effort was too much for them; the hearty meal and mixed liquors had done their work, and they leaned forward upon the table and were soon snoring deeply.

Patience, in clearing the things off, managed to abstract from the pocket of Dawes' jacket his bunch of keys, for she had seen him place them there, and handing them to Gabrielle, she continued bustling about the room.

But instantly Gabrielle had slipped into the other room, where Dudley was lying asleep upon his bed, for he was utterly worn out after all he had gone through.

A light shake awakened him, and the chain attached to his feet rattled ominously.

"'Sh—Dud! Don't speak! Here, let me unlock your irons."

"And Dawes?"

"Is fast asleep, as is Simmonds also. There, you are free; now you must get out of the window. Be quick!" and Gabrielle gently raised the sash.

Quickly Dudley sprung through, and the next instant Gabrielle followed him, when the youth gently lowered the sash.

"Now, Dud, which way?"

"To Portland. I will take my cat-rigged boat and run down the coast. Gabie, it was good and smart of you to release me."

"Patience did it, Dud; I only helped her; but are you going to join Father Hayes?"

"No; I overheard Dawes say that the Sentinel, an American frigate, was in Portland harbor. I am going down to bring her up to fight the Englishman."

"Oh, Dudley!"

"It is true. I can get back before the Englishman sails, and then I will prove that I am no traitor, as they dared to call me."

"Oh, Dudley—this will be grand."

"Won't it, Gabie? but don't mention it to a soul; and, Gabie, I want you to do something for me; I promised Commodore Delancy that I would send him a pilot, and I wish to keep my word, so I depend upon you."

"What shall I do, Dud?"

"Go over the hills to-morrow to the cabin of the Tarrantine—"

"The Indian fisherman?"

"Yes—old Tellico—and say to him that I wish him to go on board the English frigate to-morrow night, and be ready to pilot her to sea—"

"Will Tellico go, Dud?"

"Yes; he will if you tell him I asked him. You know I saved his life three years ago, and he has not forgotten it—"

"Yes, and people said you were a fool to risk your life to save an Indian."

"I know it, Gabie; but he was drowning, and it would have been sinful not to have gone to his aid: but you tell him to let no one see him board the frigate, and in the day-time to keep out of sight, as there will be people watching the ship from the shore with glasses."

"Yes, Dudley."

"And tell him to only pilot the frigate beyond the reef, if she goes out at night; if in the day-time, to some place on the coast where he can leave her without being seen, for I do not wish to get him into trouble; and, ask him to delay her as long as possible, with some excuse about the tide and wind, for I wish to get back with the American frigate. Do you understand all this, Gabie?"

"Yes, Dud. Now you must be off, for I am *so* afraid that Daniel Dawes will wake up."

At once Dudley set off for the beach, and was soon in his boat, the same in which he had crossed the bay to the northward, when he rescued Gabrielle.

With a good-by to the young girl, he raised his sail, reefed close, for the wind yet blew half a gale, and started down the coast, his craft dashing over the waters with wonderful speed, and, with a fair breeze over her quarter, heading for Portland!

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN AMERICAN COMMODORE RECEIVES IMPORTANT NEWS.

COMMODORE DUNCAN, the commander of the American frigate Sentinel, was ashore, enjoying the hospitality of one of Portland's wealthy citizens.

Around him were gathered a number of distinguished gentlemen, and in the room were bevies of lovely women, flirting with the commodore's handsome young officers.

"An officer would speak with you, sir; he is in the reception room," said a servant.

The commodore excused himself, and entered the designated apartment.

An officer advanced to meet him, and by his side was a youth of eighteen, clad in fisherman's garb, and with a pale, haggard face.

"Ah! Lieutenant Wheeler, it is you? Anything wrong aboard ship?"

"Nothing, sir; but I took the liberty of troubling you as this youth is the bearer of most important news."

"Indeed! What is it, my man?" and the commodore turned his keen eyes at once upon the youth, in whom the reader has doubtless recognized Dudley Dash.

Dudley met the gaze unflinchingly, and replied in his clear, self-possessed tones:

"Commodore Duncan, last night I piloted the English frigate Iron Duke, Commodore De Lancy, commander, into a small bay on the Maine coast, above the mouth of the Kennebec river."

"Indeed! I knew that the Iron Duke was on this coast somewhere; but why did you take her in where she could damage our citizens?"

"She was becalmed off my home, and the storm coming up would have wrecked her. I acted for the sake of humanity, sir, and—"

"You are a bold-spoken young man for one of your years. What is your name, sir?"

"Dudley Dash, sir."

"Well, Mr. Dudley Dash, go on with your story."

"I had just returned home, sir, when the storm was coming up, and seeing the frigate's danger, my little sister and myself went out to her in a surf-skiff, and arrived just in time.

"After anchoring under the lee of Crescent Island, I asked to go ashore, and the commodore, because I refused gold, presented me this," and Dudley handed the commodore the decoration his courage had won from an enemy.

"By Heaven! your services must have been great for him to have given you this, boy. Many men have lost their lives in striving to win a trinket like this; but go on with your story."

"Commodore De Lancy refused to allow me to go ashore, as he said I must pilot him to sea again; but my sister departed in the surf-skiff, and, as I had told her, waited under the lee of an island for me, and I jumped overboard and escaped."

"Brave boy! I wish we had more like you in service; but go on."

"Upon my return to my home, I was arrested by the county constable as a traitor to my country; but Gabrielle and—"

"Who is Gabrielle?"

"My adopted sister, sir."

"I see."

"Gabrielle and Patience—"

"And Patience is—?"

"An old negress, a servant."

"Go on; I am deeply interested; are not you, Wheeler?"

"Indeed, I am, sir; it was on hearing his story that I determined to bring him to you."

"You did right. Proceed, my lad."

"Well, sir, Gabrielle and Patience got the officers of the law drunk, and released me, and I took my boat and ran down here, because I heard the constable say that there was an American frigate anchored here, and I thought I could pilot it up the coast and aid in the capture of the Iron Duke."

"Nobly said, my gallant boy, and you shall; but, has not the Englishman put again to sea, you think?"

"No, sir; the frigate was somewhat damaged in the gale, and lost two score of men overboard. The commander said he would remain several days for repairs, and I sent an Indian to pilot him to sea again."

"Why did you do that?"

"I promised to send some one on board, if they would let me go; but I told Gabrielle to ask the Indian to delay all in his power, as I would come as soon as I could with the frigate."

"Splendid! Now, my boy, we'll go at once aboard ship and get under weigh. If we capture the Englishman you shall have a midshipman's berth on the Sentinel. Until after we meet in combat, you shall be my pilot."

A proud smile crossed the face of Dudley Dash, and his heart throbbed with joy and hope, as, half an hour after, he stood at the wheel of the Sentinel, which, under a fair breeze, was swiftly gliding out of Portland harbor—bound on a cruise in search of the haughty English foe.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BOY PILOT.

"WHEN we get abreast of yonder island, Commodore Duncan, we can see if the English frigate is in the bay," said Dudley Dash, who stood at the wheel of the Sentinel, amid a group of uniformed officers.

At once all was excitement on board the American vessel. It was feared that their enemy might have flown, but every heart beat high with hope that she was still in the bay, for, though the Englishman was slightly the superior of the Sentinel in men and guns, yet all on board, from the commodore to the powder-monkeys, longed to try their strength with the Iron Duke.

As for Dudley Dash, he was more than anxious, for he wished to redeem himself in the eyes of all who had called him a traitor.

Every eye was at once turned upon the island, and, as the frigate slowly glided abreast of it a wild hurrah burst from officers and crew; the English frigate was still at anchor in the bay.

That the coming of the American was a surprise to the English vessel was evident, for great excitement was at once visible upon her decks, and the roll of her drums, beating to quarters, was distinctly heard on the Sentinel.

"Will you stand in and attack her at her anchorage, sir?" calmly asked Dudley, politely saluting the commodore.

"I would rather fight her with plenty of sea-room. Beat to quarters, Mr. Wheeler, and have a shotted gun fired to leeward to dare her out."

There was little need of the order to prepare for action, for the willing crew were already at their posts, and the officers hastily equipped themselves in fighting trim.

Steadily the American then stood on, taking in all superfluous sail, and by the time she came opposite to where the Englishman lay, she was ready for the work of death.

In the meantime the English frigate still lay at anchor, though she was apparently prepared for conflict, but trusted to the American having no pilot to enter the bay.

"They are working rapidly upon their repairs, sir. Shall I stand on in?"

"No, pilot; we will give him a surprise first; he doubtless thinks we have no pilot. Mr. Wheeler, fire the gun to leeward and run up the Stars and Stripes."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

With the deep boom of the gun, and roar of the shot landward, the flag of the United States was run up to the peak, and the long pennant of the commodore fluttered from the main topmast.

Instantly the blood-red flag of England was spread to the breeze, and the pennant of the English commodore hung above his decks.

But the gun was not answered and the work of repairing went steadily on.

"We'll stand off and on for awhile, Mr. Dash, and then suddenly surprise him by standing into the bay. There does not seem to be much working room there, though?"

"There is plenty, sir. The islands cause the bay to look smaller than it is."

"And there is plenty of depth, you say? You know these vessels of war sink deep in the water?"

"Excepting on the shoals and sunken rocks, which I know well, there are seven to ten fathoms in every part of the bay, sir. The Englishman has the Indian for a pilot; I recognize him standing by the wheel"—and Dudley Dash handed the glass he had been looking through for some moments, to the commodore.

"And you recognize some one else on the rocks, yonder—eh?" said the commodore, smiling.

"Yes, sir; my father and sister are there, and a number of country people."

"Well, they will have a chance to witness a grand fight. I pray God they may not see the stars and stripes go down in gloom."

"I do not fear it, sir. The Sentinel, I think, will prove a match for the Iron Duke."

"God grant it! Now, pilot, you can stand in; but it looks to me as though there was as much danger in running through this rock-bound channel as in fighting the Englishman."

"Never fear, sir; I know every foot of water about here. The Englishman seems determined not to come out."

"For that reason I intend to go in and attack him. Pilot, the sailing of the frigate is in your hands; for God's sake have a care."

Dudley Dash made no reply. He at once took his stand at the wheel, and in a few moments the Sentinel was heading in toward the bay, through one of the narrow and circuitous channels that led from the sea shoreward.

It was now plainly evident that the Englishman had not believed the American able to come into the bay, and was greatly surprised to see her suddenly standing gracefully through the channel, at the same time again taking in all but her working sails, for she had set extra canvas when standing off and on.

"The Englishman is slipping his cable, sir. He is swinging round to the breeze. There! he is standing across the bay with royals aloft and topsails on the caps," and Dudley Dash seemed to feel a tremor of delight at the prospect of the engagement that must follow.

The Sentinel was now within a mile of the Iron Duke, and advancing at a slapping pace.

As she drew nearer, another gun was fired to leeward, and instantly the Englishman squared round and answered it with a broadside that shook the very sea, and rumbled like a hundred bursts of thunder along the rocky coast.

With fearful velocity the iron hail rushed on and tore over and through the brave American, sending down a topmast there, cutting away a heavy yard here, and crashing through the massive hull, to leave the deck slippery with human gore.

Instantly the American luffed, and again the thunders of artillery shook the hills, while her hull seemed on fire as the guns belched forth their iron loads, and the Iron Duke trembled from keel to truck as the fearful shock came, with far more disastrous effect than had been her own fire upon the Sentinel.

Then the roar of the guns became incessant, as the two huge sea-warriors tacked about the little bay, each moment lessening the distance that divided them.

Nearer and nearer they came to each other, and fiercer and fiercer grew the roar and rattle

of combat, while more fearful became the carnage.

With their rigging shattered, their hulls pierced in a hundred places, their decks strewn with dead and dying, and their crews stripped to the waist, still fighting their guns, the two vessels approached within almost pistol-shot distance.

Then the Englishman was compelled to go about to avoid a sunken rock ahead, and as she did so, the boy pilot saw his advantage and quickly altered the course of the American so that a raking fire was poured from stem to stern upon the Iron Duke.

The effect was appalling, and ere the English crew could recover from its effect, the voice of Dudley Dash was heard above the roar of battle, giving orders to the sailing crew, and the next instant, by a masterly and daring move, he laid the American alongside of the Englishman.

"Boarders, ahoy! Follow me!" rung out in the cheery tones of Lieutenant Wheeler, who led the boarding party.

As he sprung upon the Englishman's deck, a slender form was by his side. It was Dudley Dash, with pistol in one hand and cutlass in the other.

Then began a desperate hand-to-hand fight on deck, while below decks, on each vessel, the heated guns were pouring their fire into the trembling hulls.

But human nature could not long withstand the impetuous rush of the Americans, and in an hour from the time the first shot was fired, the flag of the Iron Duke was hauled down.

Instantly there flattered up to the peak in its place the Stars and Stripes, run up by the hands of Dudley Dash, the boy pilot of the victorious frigate.

He had nobly won his berth, as a midshipman, in the navy of his country.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DARE-DEVIL MIDDY.

THE Sentinel had won a great victory; the Iron Duke had struck her colors to her bold adversary; but each vessel quickly stood away for the lee of Crescent Island and dropped anchor, for both were badly battered in hull, shattered in rigging, and groans of anguish went up from a hundred throats on deck and in cockpit and ward-room.

Commodore Duncan was as gallant an enemy as brave, and Commodore De Lancy's sword was returned to him.

By the side of the American officer, when he had his interview with the English commodore, stood Dudley Dash, a proud smile upon his face; he had erased the ban of traitor from his name.

"And you, sir, were the pilot of my conqueror! By Heaven! I half believed it when I saw the masterly manner in which the frigate was handled," and Commodore DeLancy turned his gaze upon the youth, who replied quietly:

"Yes, sir; I sought to redeem myself in the eyes of my countrymen, for saving your vessel."

"And nobly have you done it, boy; you will yet win a great name for yourself, and you deserve a commission," said the kind-hearted Englishman.

"He has already been appointed a midshipman in the American navy, commodore. Mr. Dash, you can now go ashore to visit your friends, who must be anxious regarding you. Return to-morrow morning and commence upon your duties."

"Thank you, sir," and politely saluting both officers, Dudley left the cabin and went on deck.

As he appeared, there was an excitement at once visible among the crew of the Sentinel, and the boatswain, springing upon a gun, waved his tarpaulin around his head and cried in stentorian tones.

"Three rousing cheers, lads, one and all, *for Dudley Dash, the Dare-Devil Middy.*"

The roar of voices that responded was almost deafening, and the youth's face flushed with joy and confusion; but, politely raising his hat, he bowed low to the enthusiastic crew, and walked across the blood-stained deck to the gangway, for he had just caught sight of a small boat coming alongside, and containing two familiar forms.

At the gangway stood the tall form of Tellico, the Indian pilot, whose eyes flashed with pleasure as Dudley greeted him, and said:

"You did well, Tellico; but, what detained the frigate so long, while we were delayed by the calm?"

"Much heap work to do. Tellico had heap much gold—see!" and he displayed a bag of the precious metal, given him for his services.

"I am glad of it, Tellico; but you must not tell any one how you got it. Come, go ashore with me, for I see Father Hayes and Gabrielle are alongside."

So saying, Dudley went down the gangway steps, followed by the delighted Indian, and there a warm welcome awaited him from his adopted father and the happy Gabrielle.

"Boy, I am proud of you! I saw the whole fight, and when I beheld the American standing off and on outside, I feared you were not on board; but when she headed in, grazed the Turtle rock, and then passed between the Twin Castles, *then, then* I knew that *you* ordered her wheel, for, excepting myself, no man on this coast could have brought the frigate in by the channel you came. Boy, my brave boy, I am proud of you," and Carter Hayes wrung the midshipman's hand until he winced.

Springing into the boat, and followed by Tellico, the party at once set off for the shore, where upon their arrival at the beach they were met by hundreds of fishermen and country people of both sexes, drawn to the coast to see the sea duel between the frigates.

"Wall, I do declar'—ef yer hain't ther gamest boy in these yer diggin's, then jist call ther ole woman a liar," and old Patience almost hugged Dudley in her joy at seeing him.

As she dropped his hand Daniel Dawes, the constable, stepped forward—

"Forgive me, Dud; I was rather hard on you, I admit; but you must mind that the wind was against you; it did look bad; but then, the old nigger and Gabie got revenge for you, for I'm cursed if I hasn't a headache yet from that liquor, and my partner is drunk yet! I fear they've made a hopeless drunkard out of him."

Dudley laughed heartily, and replied:

"I hold no ill-will, Daniel, and I admit appearances were against me; but, it is all over now, and for my services I have been made a midshipman on board the frigate."

"Hooray! hooray for Dudley! hooray for the young middy!" was heard on all sides; and cheer after cheer was given, until Dudley was glad to escape to the cottage, where he made known all that had happened to him, since he left home, a year and a half before, to attend college.

"And now you are to leave us again, boy? Well, it is doubtless best; but, Gabie and myself will often think of you, cruising about the seas, and pray for your safe return."

"And I'll ask Patience to pray for you too. She knows all sorts of prayers—won't you, Patience?"

"Yas, chile; I'll pray to de goo' Lor' ebery night an' mornin', and He will hear my prayer, ef I be on'y a poor ole cullud pusson."

Swiftly the afternoon passed, and toward sunset Dudley and Carter Hayes rowed out to the frigate to ask Commodore Duncan to the cottage to supper.

Willingly the commodore accepted the invitation, and late at night, when he went down to the beach to take his boat back to the frigate, he told Gabrielle he had never enjoyed a more delightful evening.

The following morning Dudley went aboard the Sentinel and reported for duty, and shortly after the two frigates stood out to sea, the Dare-Devil Middy, as the sailors had dubbed him, when they learned of his most adventurous career, at the helm of the American, and Carter Hayes at the wheel of the Iron Duke, for Commodore Duncan had engaged the old fisherman to pilot his prize out to sea.

Gaining an offing Carter Hayes left the Iron Duke, and returned in his own boat homeward, while the two frigates stood down the coast toward Portland, where they were going for repairs, which they sorely needed.

Standing at the wheel, Dudley gazed astern until the snow-white cottage faded from his sight in the distance, and then with a deep sigh he turned away: his career as a midshipman had begun.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DARE-DEVIL MIDDY AT WORK.

SEVERAL months after the scenes related in the last chapter, a large vessel of war was cruising slowly along the southern coast, in the waters of the great inland sea, known as the Gulf of Mexico.

In her fore, main, and mizzen top were stationed look-outs with glasses, who were earnestly searching the many indentures and inlets along the shores.

Upon the vessel's deck both officers and men were all glancing landward, as if searching for some object.

Upon the quarter-deck of the sea-warrior, which the reader will recognize at a glance as the American frigate Sentinel, stood the well known form of Commodore Duncan, surrounded by his officers, among whom the slender, graceful figure, clad in full uniform, and the handsome, daring face of Dudley Dash was visible.

"Mr. Wheeler," and the commodore turned to his lieutenant, "should we discover the schooner, I wish to take her with the boats, for we dare not venture within two leagues of the shore in the frigate."

"Ay, ay, sir! What officers shall I take, and how many men?" promptly answered the officer.

"She cannot possibly have more than sixty men, I think. Take four boat's crews with you, and I'll give the midshipmen a chance. Let Mr. Dash go as second in command, to you, and Midshipmen Trevor and Roy go in charge of the other boats."

"Yes. Ho! the mizzen-top! What is it you say?"

"I see the top-masts of a schooner over the point of land which lies just off the starboard bow, sir."

"Ay, ay! Watch her closely! Mr. Wheeler, I think that must be the schooner."

All was excitement now on board the frigate, which was brought a point in nearer shore, and Lieutenant Wheeler went forward to give his orders to call the boats away.

"Ho the deck!" suddenly came from the fore-top.

"Ay ay!"

"It is the English privateer we have been chasing, sir. I can see her now, with my naked eye."

"Ay, ay! Quartermaster, bring her a point further in shore. There, steady as you are! Now, Mr. Harlow, we will come to anchor here, for from this spot we can blockade the little Englishman," and Commodore Duncan turned to his second lieutenant.

A few moments more and the frigate came to anchor, just as the sun went down, and about two leagues off the inlet in which lay the schooner, the raking masts of which could now be seen from the deck, over a low point of land.

A mile upon either side of the frigate two elbows of land jutted far out into the gulf, so that the privateer could not escape to sea without coming under the fire of the American's guns.

Just as darkness rested upon the waters, the four boats selected for the expedition were called away, and the picked crews soon filled them.

"Let fall! give way!" came the stern order from Lieutenant Wheeler, and the boats moved slowly off in a line heading shoreward.

After a row of a mile they pulled more swiftly, and in an hour's time approached the narrow inlet, in which the fleet little privateer had taken refuge, for the frigate had been in pursuit of her several days, always to be distanced by the superior speed of the schooner, which had been doing considerable damage to American shipping in southern waters.

Presently the leading boat stopped, and the others came alongside.

"Mr. Dash, you will take the schooner over her bows; Mr. Trevor, you will attack upon the starboard quarter, and Mr. Roy on the port. I will board over the stern and go first.

"When I have struck the craft, you will attack, Mr. Dash, and then the other two boats must follow. Do you understand, gentlemen?" asked Lieutenant Wheeler.

"Ay, ay! sir!" answered the three midshipmen.

"Good! Now row to your respective positions, and success attend you.

The four boats then separated, each taking a different course, and moving slowly over the dark waters.

A half mile away the schooner lay dark and threatening. No light was visible on board; no sound came from her decks across the waters.

It was evident that those on board expected an attack, and were lying in ambush, as it were, to meet it with determined and deadly resistance.

Proud of an opportunity to again display his courage, Dudley Dash steered his boat to the spot best suited for his attack, and then the men rested on their oars, quietly awaiting the signal for the daring charge over the waters.

Half an hour dragged its weary length along, and there was heard the sound of rapid rowing; the ringing voice of Lieutenant Wheeler broke over the waters; a cheer from his boat's crew followed, and the charge upon the schooner had begun.

"Give way, men! with a will!" and the voice of Dudley Dash rung out, clear and strong

But, as the oars broke the waters there came suddenly a bright red light, flashed up from the schooner's decks; a roar of cannon and musketry followed; and then was heard a crashing of timbers, shrieks of pain, and yells of triumph; the combat was begun in deadly earnest.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ATTACK AND ITS RESULT.

"ON, men! Pull for your lives, or we'll feel the weight of their heavy metal," cried Dudley Dash, as he heard the iron crashing through the boat of Lieutenant Wheeler.

With a yell the oarsmen bent to their oars, and the boat fairly flew through the water.

But, keen eyes watched its progress, and again a red glare lit up the scene, and with a deafening roar, a torrent of grape swept above the heads of the crew.

"By Jove! that would have ended us. Cease rowing," rung out in the voice of Dudley Dash.

Instantly the boat glided noiselessly on, and every ear was strained to catch the sound of combat.

"My God! can they have sunk Lieutenant Wheeler?" cried Dudley, and as he spoke a distant hail was heard coming from the water.

"Put back for the love of God! they have sunk us."

"Give way, men, with a will, and lay aboard yonder schooner!" sternly ordered the Dare-Devil Middy.

He would not go back now! He would on and avenge his comrades!

"Way enough! Ward her off there!" and with the order the cutter was under the bows of the schooner.

There was a bright flash above their heads, a deafening roar, a rattle of small arms, and several men fell back dead in the boat.

But the Dare-Devil Middy sprung upon the schooner's deck, his pistol flashing before him, and his cutlass sweeping around him, and at his back came a dozen bold seamen.

"At them, lads, at them!" and the handful of gallant tars pressed forward with a cheer, and their inevitable onslaught drove the English crew backward into the waist of the schooner.

But here they rallied, and, trebling their adversaries in number, would have swept the Americans into the sea, had not Norvel Trevor and his crew just then clambered over the high bulwarks and gallantly supported Dudley.

Still the schooner's crew far outnumbered the attacking party, and would have again driven them back, had not a yell resounded behind them, and Audley Roy and his men boarded over the stern.

This reinforcement, which was considerable, for Midshipman Roy had picked up the crew from the sunken boat, completely turned the tide of affairs, for the English were between two fires.

Still they were in larger force, and fought with stubborn desperation, as became British seamen, and it was for a long time a desperate hand-to-hand conflict, with English and Americans mixed together in a confused melee.

At length, Audley Roy, with one arm hanging limp at his side, from a pistol-shot wound, reached the side of Dudley, and said, hastily:

Mr. Dash, you are in command; Lieutenant Wheeler was mortally wounded, and his boat wrecked; he is now in my boat astern, and dying."

"God knows I am sorry to hear this; but, Roy, we must beat them. Ho, Trevor! Ho, men! Lieutenant Wheeler is dying! On! and avenge him!"

With renewed cries, and desperate courage, the seamen pressed forward; and, led by Dudley and his fellow-midshipmen, their charge was irresistible. Slowly the English crew were driven back, and at length they could go no further; they were fighting on their quarter-deck.

Here they made a dogged stand for a few moments, and hot and cruel was the combat; but at length they dwindled down to a gallant few, whose commander at length felt that it was his duty not to sacrifice more lives.

"Hold! I surrender my vessel," he cried, in choking tones, and he lowered the point of his sword; and then, turning it around, held the hilt toward Dudley Dash.

The light of the battle lantern fell full upon the youth, and the Englishman gazed upon his handsome, boyish face with surprise.

"I would surrender my sword, sir, to the officer in command."

"I am that officer, sir!"

"*You! a midshipman* by your uniform?"

"Yes, sir! but keep your sword. I am sorry you did not surrender sooner—it would have saved many valuable lives."

"To whom do I surrender, sir?"

"To Midshipman Dudley Dash, of the American frigate Sentinel. What schooner is this?"

"The English privateer Dreadnaught—seven guns and ninety men," professionally replied the English commander.

"Captain, if yourself and officers give me their word not to attempt to escape, I will not confine you. Now we will look after the wounded." and Dudley Dash stepped to the stern and sprung over into the boat tied there.

In the stern-sheets lay the form of Lieutenant Wheeler.

Placing his hand upon his pulse the youth started; it was forever stilled; the gallant officer, his first acquaintance on board the frigate, and his warm friend, was dead; his spirit had sailed away to cruise through an unknown realm.

Returning on board the schooner, Dudley set to work with a will to look after the wounded, who were numerous, and it was some time ere they were all attended to.

Then he called his own men to their posts, the anchor was hauled up, the sails set, and the schooner moved swiftly out of the inlet.

Heading for the spot where they had left the frigate, the schooner dashed on for half an hour; but to the surprise of all, the Sentinel was not discovered.

Keen eyes and night-glasses swept the sea for miles around, and searched closely along the shores for a sight of the frigate, but no sail greeted them—the schooner was alone upon the waters, and the frigate nowhere in sight! Whither she had gone, or what had become of her was a mystery to all.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DUDLEY DASH PLAYS A BOLD GAME.

When morning at length broke over the sea, it found the captured schooner still cruising off the inlet, with all on board scanning the wide waste of water for a glimpse of the frigate

But the sun illumined the sea, and nowhere was there a sail in sight.

"The frigate cannot be seen, Mr. Dash," said Audley Roy, coming into the cabin, where Dudley sat in conversation with the English officer.

"I am sorry, for it places me in an awkward situation. Keep the lookouts aloft, Mr. Trevor, and I will stand off and on here until I am certain the frigate will not return. How is Mr. Roy?"

"Much better, sir; it was but a flesh wound he received, and now that the surgeon has dressed it, he has reported for duty."

"He is a brave fellow. Mr. Trevor, you will act as my first officer, and Mr. Roy as my second, until we find the frigate."

"Ay, ay, sir," and with that etiquette which is demanded on a well disciplined vessel, Norvel Trevor politely saluted his boy commander and left the cabin to attend to his duties.

But a long and weary week of anxious watching passed away and no frigate came in sight.

Then Dudley Dash called his brother midshipmen to a council, and it was decided to run to Havana in search of the missing Sentinel, for it was known that she intended going there.

"She doubtless gave chase to some strange sail and ran so far away that she concluded to put into Havana and await us, taking it for granted that we would capture the schooner and follow her there," said Mr. Roy.

"It may be that Lieutenant Wheeler had some orders that we did not know," returned Dudley.

"That must have been the case, sir. I would advise starting for Havana," remarked Norvel Trevor.

"And I," joined in Midshipman Roy.

"Then to Havana we go. We can at least get rid of our prisoners there, and procure a supply of stores, of which we are in need, and then we can go on a cruise after the frigate."

"Or turn the schooner over to some American vessel-of-war that may be in port."

"No, Mr. Roy; I do not intend to do that. We captured this schooner after a hard fight, and I will report only to Commodore Duncan. If I cannot find him, why we will serve our country on our own account as a privateer."

Both midshipmen looked at their young commander with surprise. He was a daring officer, they both knew, for they had seen him tried; but would he dare do what he threatened?

Fearless as he was, they almost feared he would not—I say they feared he would not, for such a reckless adventure just chimed in with their own spirits; but Audley Roy said, quietly:

"You have no commission as a privateer, sir."

"I seized this schooner, and I need no commission. With the stars and stripes at the peak, I care for none.

"What will the men say, sir?" asked Norvel Trevor.

"I shall not ask them. If they mutiny, they do so at their peril. Mr. Trevor, put the schooner away for Havana," and the Dare-Devil midshipman spoke in a tone that proved he was in deadly earnest.

After a rapid run the Dreadnaught anchored under the frowning guns of the Moro Castle, and Dudley Dash swept the harbor with his glass in search of the missing frigate. She was nowhere in sight, and inquiry proved that she had not put into Havana at all.

Here was a quandary; but Dudley Dash proved himself equal to it, and at once acted with promptness and decision.

His first move was to parole the English commander and his crew, and send them on board a British sloop of war anchored near him.

This done, he sent Audley Roy ashore to purchase all supplies needed, for with the schooner he had captured a large quantity of gold.

Soon the stores were on board, and the schooner's bow boldly turned seaward.

"Is not that craft a beauty?" asked Audley Roy, as the schooner was gliding out of the harbor, and he pointed to a rakish-looking craft that was lying under the guns of the English sloop of war.

"I never saw a more beautiful vessel. She's as saucy as a pirate, and can sail like the wind," replied Dudley, with enthusiasm.

"She's a prize to the English sloop, sir," said the man at the wheel, politely touching his cap.

"An American, then?"

"Yes, sir; she was built by a rich gentleman to go privateering in on his own hook; but the sloop captured her by running afoul of her in a fog. This I learned when I went aboard with the prisoners yesterday, sir."

"I'd like to recapture her," said Dudley, quietly; but he turned his eyes away from the beautiful vessel and ordered:

"Mr. Trevor, call the men aft. I would speak with them."

"Ay, ay, sir."

As the schooner gained the open sea threescore of hardy tars stood in line before their young commander, who, after eying them for a moment, said, in his frank, cheery tones:

"Lads, the unfortunate death of Lieutenant Wheeler placed me in command of this schooner.

"What *his* orders were, I do not know; but, certain it is, that after accomplishing the duty we were sent upon, we found our frigate gone.

"You well know that I waited more than a week for her off the inlet where we left her, and have now just left Havana, where we came in search of her, but without success.

"It is still my intention to search for the frigate; but also to cruise as a privateer until we find her. In this determination my officers have supported me, and I have called you aft to know if there is one man in this schooner who fears to sail under the command of the Dare-Devil Middy?"

The wild cheer that greeted his words was certainly most gratifying to Dudley Dash, who doffed his cap, and replied:

"Lads, I thank you; from my heart I thank you. I am but a boy in years, but you have all seen me tried, and I see in your midst the gallant tar, Dirk Harding, who gave the name by which you are pleased to call me. Mr. Harding, until we find the frigate, or it finds us, I appoint you my acting third lieutenant."

Again a rousing cheer greeted the boy commander, and he felt, come what might, he could wholly rely upon his officers and men.

"What course shall we steer, sir?" and Dirk Harding, an honest, brave old sailor, who had once been captain of a merchantman, and afterward boatswain on the Sentinel, came aft, and politely saluted.

"Head for Abaco, in the Bahamas, Mr. Harding. My first duty will be to pay an old piratical friend a visit—one he will little like," and the young adventurer descended into his cabin, while the fleet schooner bounded swiftly along on her course.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CAPTAIN WINWOOD AT HOME.

My readers certainly have not forgotten Captain Winwood, the buccaneer chief, whose premeditated attack on the villa of Judge Raynor, had proven so opportune to Dudley Dash.

Now, Captain Winwood had a double motive in this raid upon the villa; he not only desired to possess himself of the judge's gold, but also to run off with the fair Louise, whom he had met several years before, when he was an officer of the navy of the United States, and dearly loved her.

But the captain was a very fast man, and his wild life led him into difficulties which caused him to take life to extricate himself, and then he was compelled to fly the country to save his neck from the hangman's noose.

After his flight, he wrote to the fair Louise, and begged her to become his bride, and received from her an indignant reply, while the judge intimated in a letter to him, that it would be a serious thing for him to again cross his path.

Having cruised against the buccaneers in southern waters, Captain Winwood knew where to find a place of refuge, and accordingly cast his lot with a horde of pirates, who soon after made him their chief, for, to say the least of him, he was a brave and skillful officer.

After his narrow escape from capture by the Iron Duke, Captain Winwood left Dudley and his boat's crew to their fate, and stood away for that part of the coast upon which dwelt Judge Raynor and his lovely daughter.

Entering the little bay, not far from the university, he selected a score of his best men and moved slowly toward the villa.

But his coming had already been discovered, and instead of gold he got lead and steel, from a party of worthy citizens, who drove him rapidly to his boats with a loss of half his men.

Putting to sea again with all dispatch, Captain Winwood, the following morning, sighted a small sloop that was standing rapidly toward him.

At first he believed it to be a party coming from the shore to attack him: but a closer observation through his glass proved that the sloop was manned, and carried only half a dozen men upon her decks.

Shortly after a signal was displayed, and, coming to, the schooner awaited the approach of the sloop.

It was soon alongside and two men sprung on the deck of the buccaneer.

The one was Paul Dunstan, pale and excited—the other Loyd Newton, reckless and indifferent.

"Paul Dunstan—do I see aright?" exclaimed the buccaneer captain with surprise.

"Yes, Winwood; I am, like you, a fugitive—we little thought when we were rivals for the love of the fair Louise, that we would one day be outlaws; but so it is."

"And you are an outlaw then?"

"Yes; things went wrong with me ashore. I got into some trouble. A fellow I had in my pay blabbed, and I had to clear out. Thank Satan for looking after his own, I saw and recognized your schooner, and put out to her; but, let me introduce my particular friend, Loyd Newton. We are both open for a berth aboard your vessel, and I have four men here who will join you."

"Good! I am short of both officers and men; I have had bad luck of late. Is this your sloop?"

"Yes; I bought her months ago, to kidnap the judge's daughter; but my plans miscarried, as did yours last night: but what in the name of Satan did you do with that boy you cut down after Newton had hung him up?"

"Took him to sea with me and tried to make a pirate of him: but it did no good; yet he was doubtless hung for a buccaneer, as I sent him aboard a vessel one night that I thought was a supply ship, and which proved to be an English frigate, that very nearly caught my schooner. The boy wounded you in a duel, I believe?"

"Yes, and I came near dying, curse him. I hope he is hung; but, come, captain, set the sloop on fire and let us get away from this neighborhood, for I don't like to be so near shore."

Captain Winwood gave an order to one of his under officers, and the sloop was set on fire and turned adrift, while the Sea Lance at once set sail, heading on a southerly course.

With the cruise of the Sea Lance I have little to do; but will state that it turned out a most unsuccessful one, and with a mutinous crew Captain Winwood was at length compelled to stand away for his island rendezvous in the Bahamas.

He had been there but a few days, and was thinking of putting to sea again, when one day a vessel was reported approaching the island.

Taking his glass he left his cabin on shore, and walked to a high hill, commanding the entrance to the little bay in which his schooner was anchored.

Landward, the view was certainly uninviting, for a succession of sand-hills and rocky gorges met the eye, dotted here and there, close to the beach of the little bay, with rude cabins, the homes of the buccaneers when on shore.

In the little land-sheltered bay lay the Sea Lance at anchor, and with her topmasts down, to prevent being seen by any vessels passing near the island.

On the high point of land jutting into the sea, was a masked battery of three eighteen-pounders, that commanded fully the approach to the bay.

It was at this point that a lookout was constantly kept, and upon his report that a vessel was in sight, Captain Winwood had ascended the hill, and turned his glass upon the strange sail.

"She is a large schooner, and armed, and she heads direct for the entrance to the bay. She means mischief, and I must see to it; but what traitor can be at her helm to bring her here? Ha! she flies the American flag! By heaven! there is to be warm work here, for yonder craft comes on no errand of peace."

So saying, Captain Winwood hastily descended the hill, and his stern voice soon called his men to busy action.

"Into the fort there, a score of you, and man those guns! Mr. Dunstan, you and Newton take charge of the fort, and Valdos and myself will go aboard the schooner and prepare for action. If the stranger comes directly on, open a hot fire upon him, and if he runs the gantlet of the fort, I will lay him aboard with the Sea Lance."

The officers and men at once set out for their respective posts, and when Paul Dunstan reached the fort he found the strange schooner within a mile of the shore, and standing rapidly in toward the entrance under fighting canvas, and with her men at the guns.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BUCCANEER AND THE MIDDY.

HAVING reached the masked battery, or fort, as Captain Winwood was pleased to call it, Paul Dunstan and Loyd Newtown set about preparations for firing upon the schooner, which was standing swiftly in, evidently under the guidance of an experienced pilot, for no vessel would otherwise dare run in so boldly upon an unknown shore.

"She is near enough to fire upon; blaze away!" cried Paul Dunstan.

He evidently did not like to see the flag of his country coming so near, with hostile intent.

The canvas screen, made to resemble a bank of sand, was instantly removed from before the grinning muzzles of the long eighteens; then the burst of artillery fairly shook the hill, as the three guns poured forth their fire.

Two of the iron messengers sped wide of the mark; the third struck the schooner somewhere in the waist, and it was evident hit her hard.

But the fleet vessel still stood on, disdaining to reply, and in spite of the rapid and well-aimed fire from the hill, soon ran in under the land where she would be out of the range of the fort.

But she had passed through a severe ordeal, for the point of her long bowsprit was shot away, the main-topmast was hanging by the rigging, and several ugly looking holes were in her decks, which were blood-stained, and here and there dotted with the dead.

Once into the channel, and the schooner stood on, as fast as her shattered condition would admit, and soon glided into the little bay, where the Sea Lance came in sight.

Instantly the buccaneer craft stood across the harbor to meet her, and luffing quickly, gave her a terrible broadside, which again did considerable damage.

Upon the schooner's quarter-deck stood Midshipman Dash, his eagle eyes taking in the whole scene—his face pale, but calm.

When the broadside of the Sea Lance struck his vessel, the order to fire trembled upon his lips; but suddenly checking himself, he cried:

"Men, we are hurt too bad for the schooner to be of much further use; let us take yonder craft unhurt. Boarders, ahoy!"

A wild cheer broke from the men, and with an order to the helmsman, Dudley Dash sprung forward to lead the boarders.

But again came a broadside from the Sea Lance; fortunately it cut away the rigging, and human life was spared.

As the mainmast tumbled to the deck, dragging the foremast with it, the Sea Lance was skillfully laid alongside, and with maddening yells the buccaneers sprung on board the almost wrecked schooner.

Dudley Dash had formed his men in a solid line, just under the shelter of the quarter-deck, and as the mass of buccaneers hurled themselves upon the American vessel, there came the stern order:

"Together, men—fire!"

It was a telling volley, for one half the buccaneers went down, and ere they could recover from their surprise, for they had deemed victory in their grasp, the cheering voice of the Dare-Devil Middy rung out.

"Up and at them, lads!"

With ringing cries the irresistible mass moved forward, and the remaining buccaneers were swept into the sea.

"Boarders, ahoy! on their own decks we'll fight them now," and Dudley Dash sprung upon the Sea Lance, followed by his three officers and two score of men.

There he was met by Captain Winwood himself, and his remaining buccaneers.

But the onslaught of the Americans drove them back, and Dudley Dash and the buccaneer chief were face to face.

"You here? You were not hung then?"

"No, Captain Winwood. Lay down your arms and *your* life shall be spared, for what you once did for me."

"Never! I saved you, to make a tool of you—through you to rob Judge Raynor. Curse you, boy, you owe me nothing," savagely said the buccaneer chief, and drawing a pistol quickly, he leveled it at Dudley Dash and pulled the trigger.

But the powder flashed in the pan,* and Captain Winwood, with a bitter curse, sprung forward, with drawn cutlass.

"So be it, then! Now, I will take your life," and the two blades crossed.

Though a mere youth, Dudley Dash was a fine swordsman, for an old coast-fisherman, who had once been a British sailor, had taught him the use of all kinds of swords, and constant practice had made him proficient in the art of self-defense, and offense.

Therefore Captain Winwood found that he had met his match, for he did not cut down, as he had expected, his brave young adversary.

Then followed a hard-fought combat—the buccaneer chief fighting for the death of his enemy, and for his own life. Dudley Dash determined to slay the man before him, and thereby rid the seas of a fearful scourge.

With flashing eyes, hard-drawn breath, and muscles severely strained, they fought on, until at length Captain Winwood seemed to feel that his hour had come, for his men had surrendered, and the Sea Lance was won by the Americans.

Once his eyes glanced upward—but whether in prayer or not, none knew; then his face became pallid and his lips white, while his nerve seemed leaving him.

"Will you surrender now?" sternly said Dudley Dash.

"If I slay you shall my life be spared?" hissed the chief.

"Yes, you shall go free. Mr. Roy, you see to it."

"This is madness, Mr. Dash," said that officer impatiently.

"I promise him his life if he kill me; see to it, Mr. Roy," repeated Dudley Dash.

"If I surrender—what then?"

"You shall be hung."

"To the death then be it; *your life or mine, boy.*"

With fierce determination Captain Winwood again pressed forward, to be met with calmness and skill which his fury could not destroy.

A few moments longer the combat went on, and then Dudley Dash seemed to suddenly nerve himself to greater exertion; the result followed almost immediately, for Captain Winwood, the buccaneer chief, received his death-blow at the hands of the Dare-Devil Middy.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN EXECUTION.

As Dudley Dash struck Captain Winwood to the deck, there came a sudden shout from the men; but it was not altogether a cheer—for a cry of alarm mingled with it—as a terrific yell answered the cry of the Americans, and two boats dashed alongside the Sea Lance, filled with men.

Interested as they were with the duel between their boy commander and the pirate chief, the seamen had not noticed the coming boats until they were just aboard; but they met the attack with a volley that momentarily checked them, and the buccaneers seemed as if about to retreat.

But, suddenly, Paul Dunstan and Loyd Newton sprung upon the deck, and their comrades quickly followed.

There was a rattle of fire-arms, a clash of blades, and Paul Dunstan fell to the deck, mortally wounded, by a pistol shot from Audley Roy.

At the same moment Dudley Dash rushed forward and struck the sword from the grasp of Loyd Newton; but, instantly, he started back, crying:

"Am I right—you are Loyd Newton?"

"Yes," sullenly replied the young man, as he held forth his hands to be ironed, while the buccaneers, seeing their leaders beyond all resistance, lustily cried for quarter.

"And Paul Dunstan, too, leagued with pirates," and Dudley Dash turned his gaze upon the dying man.

Slowly the eyes of Paul Dunstan opened, and then met the gaze of the young midshipman.

"Ha! you are victor in the end. Thank God! I'll not be hung," and then as his eyes fell upon his friend in irons, he said, recklessly: "Newton, you'll be hung. Our life of piracy was a short life, and—a—merry—merry—cruise—God—have mercy—upon—my poor—mother—too late!—too—late!"

Again the eyes closed; but he still breathed, and Dudley Dash knelt beside him and said, softly:

"Your mother shall never know how died her son. I will send her word that he fell in action with *an enemy.*"

The eyes again opened, and the right hand felt for the grasp of Dudley, who quickly took it.

Then their gaze met, and a smile came upon the face of the dying pirate, while his lips parted with the simple words:

"Thank you."

They were the last words ever spoken by Paul Dunstan; a moment after he was dead.

"You'll hang me, I suppose?"

Dudley started. It was Loyd Newton who spoke, and whose eyes glared upon him.

"Piracy upon the high seas is punishable with death. You were taken on a pirate deck, in the uniform of an officer, and resisting American seamen; yes, Loyd Newton, you shall die," and Dudley Dash turned away.

"Have you no mercy?" groaned the condemned man.

"Such mercy as you once showed to me, Loyd Newton, just such mercy will I show to you. Mr. Roy, get together these buccaneers, and let us have their execution over. We have much to do, for our schooner is in a sinking condition."

"Ay, ay, sir."

An hour afterward the stores and best arms of the sinking schooner were transferred to the Sea Lance, which ran in alongside of a small pier, built out from the shore.

Then on the beach the prisoners were drawn up in line—thirty-five in number, and five of whom were wounded.

Glancing keenly down the line, Dudley Dash said, sternly:

"Men, my experience on board your vessel some time since, convinced me that many of you were buccaneers against your will, various circumstances, which, perhaps, you could not control, having caused you, as I can well understand, to enlist under the flag of the pirate.

"By the laws of nations you have forfeited your lives, and though I do not promise you freedom from all punishment, I pledge myself to intercede for you, and beg that you may be pardoned, excepting your three officers now remaining—Mr. Newton, and the Spanish Lieutenants, Valdos and Pedro. For those three there is no excuse; *they must die!*

"But my clemency toward you is on one condition—that you enlist as seamen under my command—that you do all the work assigned you, and upon your good conduct depends my report to my commodore. Should one act of yours cause me to feel that I am disappointed in you, the man who commits that act shall be hung five minutes after. Do you agree to my terms?"

If a hearty cheer was an indication, Dudley should certainly have been satisfied, for the redeemed buccaneers fairly made their throats sore with yelling, while one hardened old sinner, anxious to gain favor, cried out:

"And I'll tell yer, captain, w'har yer kin git a dozen more likely lads—they was tuck from a wreck some weeks ago, an' is prisoners in yonder cabin for ther same that they would not jine our bloody band o' cut-throats."

"Go and bring those men here, sir."

The ex-buccaneer departed with alacrity, and in ten minutes returned with a haggard-looking band, thirteen in all.

* At that time—1812—flint lock pistols and guns were in use. AUTHOR.

Their story was soon told—they were all that remained of an American privateer, which had been wrecked in a storm, and washed ashore on the pirate island.

With this addition to his crew, for the privateersmen willingly enlisted under the gallant midshipman, and his buccaneer recruits, Dudley Dash found himself in command of a hundred seamen.

"All hands ahoy! to witness execution!" then loudly called out old Dirk Harding, the acting third lieutenant of the amateur privateer, and the seamen, ex-buccaneers and all ranged themselves in line amidships, on the Lea Lance.

A platform was then erected over the starboard bulwark, and a dozen weather-beaten tars detailed to act as the executioners, and armed with muskets.

Then the three prisoners were brought up, and mounted upon the platform—Loyd Newton, pallid and shaking as if with ague: the two Spaniards, with livid faces, but a stubborn, indifferent manner.

"Dash, for God's sake, show *me* mercy. Remember, we were students together. Do not have me killed," cried Loyd Newton, wringing his manacled hands in agony.

Dudley Dash was very pale; but his face was very firm, and his eye unflinching, as he replied:

"No, Loyd Newton; there is no hope for you; you must die. Mr. Harding, is all in readiness?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then do your duty, sir."

Immediately the squad of executioners were called to attention, and at that instant Loyd Newton dropped upon his knees, and his hands were stretched out in supplication—perhaps in a prayer to his offended God—perhaps in entreaty to the stern youth whom he had once so deeply wronged, and who stood with folded arms, and stern face, gazing far out over the waters.

"Fire!"

With the ominous word, twelve guns flashed forth their death-knells and the three buccaneer officers fell dead upon the platform. Their evil lives had ended in gloom and despair.

CHAPTER XXVII.

UNDER ARREST.

THE morning after the capture of the pirate stronghold by Dudley Dash, that gallant young officer called a council of his officers in the luxuriously-furnished cabin of the Sea Lance, for his own schooner had been completely used up in the fight.

"I send for you, gentlemen, to make known my plans," he said, as the three officers seated themselves. "You are aware," he continued, "that my two visits to this island, when on board this vessel, under Captain Winwood, enabled me to come here and attack the buccaneer stronghold! Unexpectedly I found Winwood and his vessel here, which gave us harder work than we had anticipated, for I expected to capture the island, and await his return, and surprise him; but, as it is, we are successful, and though we lost our own vessel, have captured one nearly as good; but I am determined to have a better craft, and I learn from several of the buccaneers that the schooner captured by the English sloop, and which we saw in Havana, was chased by Winwood on three occasions, and ran away from him with ease—as the schooner is larger than the Sea Lance, and was thoroughly armed, it was doubtless the desire of the owner and captain not to fight unless compelled to, and to grow rich off of merchant prizes. Now, I am determined to have that schooner, and shall sail to-day for Havana. If the schooner is there I shall watch my chance, and cut it out, having it understood through reports spread ashore that Captain Winwood did it, and thus avoid trouble between our government and Spain. If the schooner has gone on a cruise, so much the better, for we can take her on the high seas. If we find our frigate, in the meantime, why our cruise will be at an end. Am I seconded by you in my plans?"

An affirmative answer was at once given, for all now felt the most perfect confidence in their young commander, and his wish was then law—where he dared lead, they dared to follow.

One week after leaving the island rendezvous, the Sea Lance dropped anchor in the harbor of Havana, the stars and stripes flying from her peak.

With joy Dudley Dash beheld the coveted schooner still at anchor; but the sloop-of-war, her captor, was nowhere visible; she had gone off in search of other prizes.

Selecting several of his most trustworthy seamen to ai l him ashore, and giving strict orders that no one else should leave the vessel, Dudley Dash landed, at an isolated pier, and went to an inn, to which he had been directed by an old seaman, who had been often in Havana.

Here he obtained temporary quarters for his men, and the several sailors who were to aid him by shipping on board the captured schooner, and then he sallied forth to glean what news he could.

He had discarded his uniform for a citizen's suit, and was strolling slowly along, when he was attracted by some articles for sale in a shop window.

As he turned to walk on he beheld a pair of gleaming black eyes gazing at him from within the shop.

Somewhere before he had seen that face—but where?

That was what puzzled him, and in vain he strove to forget the unpleasant impression they left upon him as he walked along.

He had gone on slowly for half a dozen blocks, when he heard quick steps behind him, and turning quickly he beheld the shopman and two soldiers approaching him.

"That is he; I know him well," said the shopman, in Spanish, and the two guards stepped forward, one of them saying sternly:

"I arrest you, senor; resistance is useless."

"And why am I arrested?" asked Dudley Dash in the best Spanish he could command.

"That you will soon know. Come, I must iron you."

At first Dudley Dash seemed as if about to resist; but then, thinking there must be some mistake, he held forth his hands, and iron manacles at once clasped his wrists.

He was then marched off to the guard-house, where the shopman, and several other citizens, whom he had collected on the way, held an earnest conversation with the officer of the guard.

What that conversation was Dudley did not know; but at its termination the officer said:

"Well, young sir, I shall have to carry you to the moro for safe keeping."

"And why? I am an American officer," indignantly said the youth, while his brain was whirling with conflicting thoughts.

Had his men already betrayed his intended cutting out of the schooner?

Was the Sea Lance known as a pirate vessel, and he arrested as a buccaneer?

But these questions were not answered, and he was placed in between a file of soldiers and marched off to the gloomy Moro Castle.

Soon the frowning, misery-holding Moro was reached, and the guard and their prisoner drew up at the massive gateway, as several gentlemen, in brilliant uniforms, and accompanied by elegantly dressed, and parly vailed ladies, passed out.

In front walked a man of noble form and *distingue* air, while his face was darkly bronzed, fine looking and stern.

Upon his breast glittered a dozen brilliant decorations, and he was clad in the uniform of a Spanish general.

Hanging upon his arm was a form of rare grace and beauty, while the half-hidden face was sufficient to show that, seen entire, it was wondrously lovely.

As they passed out, the eyes of the maiden fell upon the face of Dudley Dash.

At once she started, stopped and gazed more intently upon the prisoner, and then turned and said something in a low tone to the gentleman, who at once turned toward the guard.

"Whom have you there, senor?" he asked of the officer in charge.

"A young pirate officer, Senor Eccellenza. He was arrested upon the charge of several citizens who knew him as one of the buccaneer Winwood's crew."

"Is he the same, Carmalita?" asked the general, turning to the maiden, who answered quickly:

"He is the same, father."

Then throwing back her vail, she stepped forward and said, addressing Dudley:

"Senor, where have we met before?"

"Upon the high seas, when I boarded the vessel on which you were a passenger; you then gave me this ring," and Dudley Dash held forth his hand.

"I have been told of your kindness, senor, to my daughter—nay, to all who were with her on that eventful occasion; but you stand but now confessed of a crime for which there is no pardon—piracy.

"It had been better had you never dared to enter Havana. Then I would not have had to pass the death sentence upon one to whom I am under great obligations; but you have seen fit to venture here and you must look for no mercy from me."

"Father! Eccellenza! would you thus condemn him to death? Remember, he saved my life, my honor!" and the maiden spoke with rising indignation.

"It must be so. I regret it; but he must die. Senor officer, place the prisoner in the Moro, and tell the commandant to see to his safe keeping."

"Si, Senor Eccellenza," and the officer moved into the prison yard with Dudley, who felt that all hope was not yet gone; he had caught sight of a glance from the beautiful Carmalita that bade him hope, for *she* was his friend.

Ten minutes after Dudley Dash found himself alone in a dark, damp, and gloomy cell, against the outer wall of which he could hear the surf beating with ominous roar.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A WOMAN'S PLOT.

As night fell upon the town and harbor of Havana, following the day on which Dudley Dash was arrested, a carriage rolled up to the closed gate of the Moro, and was challenged by the sentinel.

The driver responded satisfactorily, and the vehicle was admitted and drew up in front of the commandant's door.

"I would see the senor commandant. Ask him to come hither," said a sweet voice, and a moment after a gray-haired, dark-faced officer approached the carriage, his hat in hand.

"Good-evening, senor commandant. You have a prisoner here that I would see."

"The Senorita Carmalita! How can I serve you, sweet lady?" and the officer bowed low.

"I have just said, senor, that you have a prisoner here that I would see. Need I show you the order from my father?" and the maiden half held forth her hand, containing a small paper.

"By no means, lady. Your sweet face would pass you anywhere—whom would you see? I will have him ordered to your fair presence."

"No; I would see him in his cell. It is the young American who is held as a pirate. He once saved more than my life; now he is condemned to die and I would speak with him."

"I remember, lady—a mere boy, and a splendid looking fellow, too. It is a great pity that he should have become a pirate. Here, Ramero, escort the senorita to the cell of the young pirate—his cell is the first in the water row."

A young page came forward, and under his escort the beautiful girl wended her way down into the gloom of the fortress.

"Here, jailer, the senorita would see the pirate," and the page addressed the man in charge, who recognizing the fair visitor, bowed low and hastily threw open the door of a cell.

"You can retire along the corridor. I will call you when I need you," said Carmalita, shuddering at the chill that pervaded the place.

The jailer and page withdrew, and Carmalita stood face to face with Dudley Dash.

"Lady, this was noble of you to come hither," said the youth, arising.

"I have sought you for one purpose—to save your life. You will certainly die if you remain here. Why did you come hither?"

For an instant Dudley Dash determined to tell the lovely girl all—that he was no pirate; then, he changed his mind and said, quietly:

"An important duty called me here, lady; but, I swear to you that I am no pirate. Appearances are against me; but yet I could clear myself, were I given a trial, which under Spanish laws I will not be granted. Spain shows no mercy to an enemy."

The maiden's face flushed, but she replied, quietly:

"This is no time to talk of what you are, or are not. You are doomed to die. To-night I will send a priest to you. Dress yourself in his clothing and escape; he will take your place here, and—"

"Be punished on my account. No, senorita, I will not gain my freedom through the suffering of another," proudly replied the youth.

"Nobly said; but he whom I send will meet with no punishment, I pledge you."

"Then I will do as you wish."

"In two hours' time he will be here, and he will tell you how to get out of this prison. Then, for the love of God! leave Havana."

"I will, lady."

"It is well. *Adios*—" and the lovely girl turned away, and a moment after the iron door closed upon Dudley Dash once more.

But with hope in his heart he paced his narrow cell—to and fro, to and fro, until again he heard steps approaching.

Nearer and nearer they came; then a light flashed through the grating, and once more his door was thrown open.

Before him stood the jailer, and a person in priestly robes.

"Senor, the good father would hold converse with thee for the welfare of thy soul," said the jailer, and closing the door he withdrew.

"Senor American, I have come to save you. Here, take this priestly garment, and throw it around you."

Dudley Dash started. It was the voice of Carmalita that addressed him.

Her tall, elegant form was concealed beneath the dress of a priest, and the cowl hid completely the beautiful face and raven curls.

As she spoke she took from beneath her robe a dress similar to her own.

"No, senorita; I will not leave you here," said Dudley Dash, firmly.

"Nonsense, boy. The jailer knows me well, and I have bribed him. As soon as you pass out and are free, he will return and take me to his rooms, where I will remain until you have time to get out of Havana, or conceal yourself in some way; then he will bring me back to this cell, and go and report to the commandant, that in going his nightly rounds he found a *woman* in the cell of the young pirate.

"The senor commandant will then come hither, and escort me in all honor to my home."

"Ah! my lady, I fear you will have to suffer on my account."

"Foolish boy! Here, let me whisper one little secret in your ear: *I am the daughter of the Governor-General.*"

Dudley Dash was almost overcome with surprise. He had believed her to be the daughter of some one in power; but the secret he then learned surprised him.

"Now, do you not see, senor, that the jailer will keep the secret on account of his own head? The commandante will never tell, and my august father will scold a little and there the matter will end. Come, I will call the jailer and prove that he knows my plot."

"I believe you, lady, and I thank you more than I can express in words; yet I hate to leave you here, in this fearful cell."

"Then I will go with you to the jailer's quarters. Come."

Dudley arrayed himself quickly in his borrowed plumage and left the cell.

At the end of the corridor the jailer met them.

"Aguero, I will await your return here. Come as soon as you have seen the youth safely out."

"Si, senorita."

"Lady, farewell! May God forever bless you, and may I ask that you may do me one favor?"

"Name it."

Dudley hastily wrote something on a slip of paper, handed it to her, and said:

"Write to this address and tell me the result of your brave sacrifice to-night for me."

"I will do it, senor."

"Ere I leave Havana, lady, I will address to you a letter, telling you whom you have this night saved. Farewell."

Dudley Dash bent low over the tiny hand and then followed the jailer along the gloomy passageway which led to life and freedom.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A PRIZE!

AUDLEY ROY and Norvel Trevor sat in the cabin of the Sea Lance, engaged in earnest conversation, for the men who had gone ashore in the morning with Dudley Dash, had returned and reported that he had been arrested and thrown into the Moro.

All day long they had hoped for some word from him in explanation, and none came.

At sunset Dirk Harding had gone ashore alone to see if he could learn anything regarding the absent midshipman, and while awaiting his return the two young officers engaged in a conversation, the purport of which was to devise some means of escape for their commander.

At length there was a challenge on deck, and a boat came alongside; a moment after two men entered the cabin. One was Dirk Harding, the other was clad in friendly garb.

"Mr. Roy, this gentleman came to the pier as I was leaving and begged to come on board. He says he has news of Mr. Dash."

Both midshipmen were on their feet in an instant, to suddenly utter a cry of delight, as the cowl was thrown back and the daring, handsome face of Dudley Dash was revealed.

But ere a word could be said Dudley remarked, quickly:

"I have no time to explain now. I have just escaped from the Moro, and in this disguise. Tell me, where are the men who went ashore with me this morning?"

"All aboard, sir. The schooner needed no men now; she is awaiting the return of the English sloop-of-war, and will then be manned," said Norvel Trevor.

"Good! How many men are on board?"

"A Lieutenant, a midshipman, and twelve seamen."

"Better still. Mr. Harding, call away the long boat, and put in it twenty men dressed as Spanish soldiers, all well armed. I will pay a visit to the English officer."

As Dudley spoke he took from a locker a false beard and fitted it upon his face, and then donned the uniform of a Spanish captain, for Captain Winwood was a man that always kept plenty of disguises about his vessel.

In a few moments he walked on deck, and found the men in the boat, and all attired in their disguise as Spanish soldiers.

"Now, Mr. Roy, I wish you to don the uniform of a Spanish midshipman, and come aboard with twelve men attired as Spanish seamen; half an hour after I leave, come on board the English schooner.

"And, Mr. Trevor, all valuables that we care to remove from the Sea Lance have put in the other boats and let the men all be ready to leave at a moment's notice."

Thus giving his directions, and without making known his plan of action, Dudley Dash entered the waiting boat, and sternly ordered:

"Coxswain, pull for the English schooner, and remember you are all Spanish soldiers."

A row of ten minutes brought the boat near the schooner, where Dudley hailed and begged permission to come alongside.

It was at once granted, and he was met at the gangway by the midshipman.

"I would see your commander on important business," said the Dare-Devil Middy, with an accent that was perfect.

"Walk into the cabin, senor; he is about to retire, but will see you," and the young man led the way.

A moment after Dudley Dash stood before the English officer—a man of middle age, with a brave, kindly face.

"Senor, I am sorry to disturb you; but there is a rumor that the buccaneer Winwood intends to make an attack on your vessel to-night, cut it out, and escape to sea, and I came from the Moro, only a short while since, to ask you to aid me in capturing this noted pirate?"

"Willingly, senor; but I have only half a dozen men, for half of my men are ashore to-night. You say that such a bold act as you describe is contemplated in the harbor of Havana, under the very guns of the Moro?"

"Yes, senor; but I do not care for your men to aid me. In fact, I would rather have them keep out of sight. I have with me a score of men of my own command, and a midshipman and a dozen seamen will soon be on board; so hear my plan."

"Willingly, captain."

"It is that you remain in your state-room, with your young officer, and give me permission to send your men into the hold.

"Then I will conceal my men, and those that are coming, about the schooner, and when the boats of Winwood come aboard I will meet this noted pirate at the gangway, ask him into the cabin, and in that way we can capture him and his crew."

All this was spoken in a very earnest tone and in admirably affected broken English.

"The very thing, captain, and I will be happy when we have that sea monster safe."

The arrangements were soon made, and by the time that midshipman Roy came alongside in his boat the six English sailors were crouching down in the hold of the schooner, and around them were the twenty bold seamen, clad as Spanish soldiers.

"All works well, Roy. Now come with me into the cabin and bring two men," and Dudley Dash met his young comrade at the gangway.

"Lieutenant, will you and your young officer come here a minute?"

At the request of Dudley Dash the two officers came from the state-room, to suddenly find themselves under the muzzles of muskets and pistols.

"Gentlemen, you are my prisoners. One move and you die. Surrender quietly, and within the hour you shall be free."

Dudley Dash spoke in a low, stern tone that told the two Englishmen that he was in terrible earnest.

To move was death, and though brave men, they had but one alternative—to submit.

"We submit; but, what means this outrage?"

"It means that your vessel is in the hands of a crew from the celebrated buccaneer schooner, Sea Lance."

"Ha! *you* are then—"

"The commander of the Sea Lance. Mr. Roy, see that these gentlemen are securely confined in yonder state-room. I have work on deck."

So saying Dudley Dash went forward, and, descending into the hold, said simply:

"Coxswain, do your duty; but on your life, harm none of them."

Ere the six unsuspecting seamen were aware, they were seized, gagged and bound, for resistance was useless.

Seeing that all were secured Dudley Dash called midshipman Roy.

"Return at once on board the Sea Lance, towing two of the schooner's boats, and bring off all the men and baggage. Leave the Lance at anchor just as she is."

"Ay, ay, sir," and delighted at their success so far Audley Roy departed upon his mission.

Half an hour after the entire crew of the Sea Lance were safely on board the captured vessel, which at once presented a scene of busy life.

"Get sail on the schooner at once, Mr. Harding; we have yet work ahead of us," calmly said Dudley Dash, and then he added, "Let that boat of the Sea Lance tow astern; we shall need her when we get an offing."

Ten minutes more and the schooner was swiftly gliding out of the harbor of Havana, and in half an hour more luffed up, out of range of the guns of the Moro, the officers of which little suspected the daring game that a fearless boy had played beneath their very eyes.

"Bring up the prisoners, Mr. Trevor."

In obedience to the order the English officers and their men were brought on deck.

"Lieutenant, though I have taken from you your new and beautiful schooner, I leave one for you in fair exchange, which is a fleet schooner, and one that has spread terror upon the sea.

"I refer to the Sea Lance. You will find her anchored just off the harbor stairs of the Moro. No one is on board of her, and the vessel and all she contains is at your service. There, sir, is the long boat of the Sea Lance. In it you can return to Havana, and should you wish to find this schooner, you will have to hunt her up on the high seas. A pleasant trip back to Havana, senores."

The Englishman gave one look into the beardless face, and said sternly:

"You shall repent this night's work, sir pirate."

Dudley Dash laughed, a light, boyish laugh, and replied pleasantly:

"Adios, senor."

The Englishman sprung into the boat, whither his men had preceded him, and said almost savagely:

"Give way, men!"

And as the boat darted away, the schooner fell off before the wind, and under all the canvas she could carry, sped over the dark waters.

"Head for the island rendezvous, Mr. Harding. Once there, we will paint this beautiful vessel snow-white, and then cruise against the enemies of our country. From this night, she shall spread the stars and stripes upon the waters, and win a name far and wide as the *Winged Witch of the Sea.*

CHAPTER XXX.

FOUND!

MORE than two years have passed away since the Winged Witch fled from the gun-guarded harbor of Havana, leaving behind the wildest excitement at the news that Winwood, the buccaneer, had boldly cut a vessel out under half a thousand Spanish guns.

Then it became known why the young pirate officer, then supposed to be in the Moro, had visited Havana, and many excitement-loving denizens of the town anticipated a rare pleasure in seeing him hung.

But for reasons best known to himself, and which the reader may easily guess at, the governor-general held his own counsel. A pirate captured some weeks before was masked and secretly executed, and then the rumor circulated that the youthful buccaneer lieutenant had been *garoted;* the populace were glad of this, but dreadfully sorry that they had missed the dramatic scene of death.

As for this supposed pirate, he was cruising the seas, and his Winged Witch soon became the terror of English merchant vessels, and British privateers that infested the American coast from Maine to Texas, for the Dare-Devil Middy was ever ready to try his strength with any small cruiser afloat.

As the time passed on, prize after prize was taken and sent into the nearest port until the Winged Witch was considered almost a phantom vessel, so numerous were her captures, so remarkable her speed, so wonderful her success in escaping capture, and so deep the mystery that hung over her officers and crew.

Sometimes it was whispered that she was commanded by a notorious pirate, who, an American by birth, had espoused the cause of his country, and that her decks were manned by a hundred heavily-bearded buccaneers—men of all nations, trained to deeds of daring upon an outlaw craft.

Again, 'twas said that her commander was a slaver, with a crew of African negroes disciplined to obey his orders, while still more asserted that her commander was a mere youth and his crew a band of heroic boys.

And there were a few, of the superstitious kind, who boldly said, and believed, that the Winged Witch had the devil for a captain and lost-spirits for a crew.

But the reader knows that the Winged Witch was controlled by Dudley Dash, the Dare-Devil Middy, who, for more than two years, escaped the English cruisers sent after him, and served his country most nobly.

Toward the close of the war with Great Britain, the Winged Witch was cruising slowly along under a four-knot breeze, in latitude twenty-five degrees north latitude, and heading northward, when the lookout hailed the deck from the mast-head.

Upon the deck stood two persons well known to the reader—Dudley Dash and Audley Roy, both rapidly maturing into splendid specimens of manhood.

As for Dudley, he looked older, sterner, and his face had lost its boyish expression and sunny smile, for the cares upon his young shoulders had been enough to mold his nature into one of iron.

"Ho! the mast-head! What do you see?" he called out in a voice that rung with metallic clearness.

"A drifting boat; I make her out now, sir—five points off the weather bow."

"Head for that boat, quartermaster," simply said Dudley, and he began again to pace the deck with monotonous tread.

In an hour's time the Winged Witch luffed into the wind, and a boat was sent after the one that was drifting.

"An oarless barque upon the sea."

"Are they alive?" asked Dudley, as the coxswain called out that it contained two persons.

It was some time before the reply came.

"One of them, sir; but he's mighty weak."

"Bring them aboard at once."

A moment after Dudley Dash started back.

The limp, haggard, wasted form that was handed up the gangway by tender hands, was known to him: it was Rafael the Smuggler—he, whom, nearly three years before, the youth had made a prisoner in the sloop Pretty Girl.

The other man in the boat was a common seaman.

"Bury him in the sea. Take this man into my cabin, and send the surgeon to him," ordered the young commodore, and again he paced the deck.

An hour passed, and the surgeon came on deck.

"The gentleman would see you, sir; I fear there is no hope for him."

Dudley Dash descended into the cabin, and there beheld Rafael, the pirate, as he had afterward become, reclining upon a silken divan—his face as white as marble, his eyes beaming brightly.

"Am I mistaken—are you not—?"

"Dudley Dash—yes; we have met before, but you must keep quiet, and not talk: you shall have every attention," said Dudley kindly.

"It is too late—I am dying. If I lived, it would be but to end my life on the gallows: it is better as it is, far better.

"What vessel is this?"

"The American privateer, Winged Witch."

The man started, and again looked earnestly at the youth, while he said:

"And you are—"

"Her commander—a midshipman in the United States navy."

"Boy, you have won a great name—one of honor, while I—I have won a name of dishonor. But, let me not hesitate now; I have a confession to make ere I die, and to you I would make it. Will you listen to me?"

"Yes."

"My name is Rafael Gaston—"

The man paused for he noticed Dudley start, but then he went on:

"I was born a gentleman, but my devilish love of mischief would not let me remain one, and I was dismissed from the English navy for a wild *escapade*, and at once came to America.

"In the United States I met a lovely girl, whom I learned to love most dearly, and for a while I changed my evil life, and returning my love she became my wife.

"Yet, strange to say, her pure love did not keep me from returning to my old life of dissipation, and one night, in a drunken frolic, I shot one of my comrades and fled for my life—fled from my wife and little baby, then but ten months old.

"Of my after career it is needless to speak, except to say that I drifted from bad to worse, until I became the leader of a band of smugglers, who had their retreat on one of the islands off the Maine coast.

"One day I went further than smuggling, and attacked a large vessel that I had reason to believe would be a rich prize.

After a desperate resistance I captured the vessel, boarded her, and in the cabin found—*my wife and child!*

"Oh God! the horror of that moment. Did I live a hundred years, I could never forget—for my wife was dead, killed by a shot from my own vessel, and upon her lay my poor little girl, weeping bitterly for her mother. My wife was on her way to the Mediterranean, where her father, a naval officer was then stationed, and thus sadly did her voyage terminate.

"Well, I took my child with me to my island retreat, and my poor wife I buried where the roar of the surf would be her only requiem.

"Had my poor little daughter ever been near me, my life would have been far different: but, one day, I returned from a cruise, to find her gone, none knew whither.

"I searched the island and found the dead body of a ruffian, whom I had several times punished for misdemeanor, and by his side were the tracks of my little Gabrielle—but nothing else could I ever learn of—"

"Let me tell you all that you would know," said Dudley, softly; and in a low, earnest voice, he went on to tell of his visit to the island, rescue of Gabrielle, and that she was then living on the coast of Maine.

For some moments the man could not speak, but covered his thin face with his thinner hands.

"Thank God! I thank God! If she is happy, I can die content. How glad I am that I did not die in that open boat!"

"How was it you were in that boat?" asked Dudley.

"We had a severe combat with an English cruiser. My schooner was terribly cut up, but I managed to escape in the darkness, and then a storm came on, my vessel sprung a leak, and we took to our boats. There were nine men in my boat, and I was the only one who lived through the horrors we had to undergo, and I am dying; but, let me tell you that in this sachel you will find—will find papers proving the truth of what I tell you about myself, and my wife's likeness and mine; take them, and keep—"

"Sail ho!"

The cry startled Dudley Dash, who at once said:

"Try and get some sleep, for you need it. After awhile I will see you again, and I trust you may recover and yet see little Gabrielle, for I am bound home now."

A smile covered the thin face, but the lips did not move; and Dudley Dash went on deck.

"I called down into the cabin, sir, as you did not seem to hear my first hail. She is a large frigate, evidently of the largest class," said Audley Roy, handing the glass to Dudley, who said:

"And she looks American in build. Bring her up, helmsman, and we'll have a closer look at her. If English, we must keep the Witch out of range of her terrible broadside."

Nearer and nearer the two vessels came to each other, until only a league divided them, and then the Winged Witch ran up the stars and stripes, and fired a gun to leeward, as if in defiance of her huge enemy.

"Ha! there goes up the American flag; and see! they are signaling us."

"She asks what schooner is that?" said Audley Roy, referring to his book of signals.

"Run up our flag to the fore, and signal our name."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Instantly there was run up to the fore-topmast, a roll of bunting, which, when shaken out to the wind, proved to be a mass of green and blue, representing the waves of the sea, and the skies, while in the center was a white, gaunt, terrible-looking form, impersonating an old witch.

"What does she signal now, Roy?"

"The American frigate Ticonderoga—*Admiral Duncan's Flag Ship.*"

The yell that answered this reply was deafening. The Dare-Devil Middy had found his long-lost commodore.

"What does he signal now?"

"Come on board; the admiral would speak with you."

"Helmsmen, stand away for yonder frigate. Mr. Roy, have a full crew ready to row me aboard the frigate," and Dudley Dash descended into the cabin to dress himself in his best.

At first he stepped lightly, for he believed that Rafael Gaston was asleep; but a second glance told him that it was the sleep of death.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MEETING.

As Dudley Dash went over the gangway of the frigate, darkness had settled upon the waters, and he failed to recognize any familiar faces among those that peered into his own, to catch sight of the famous commander of the Winged Witch.

"I will conduct you to the cabin, sir. Was not the commander able to come on board?" asked an officer, meeting him.

"I am the commander of the Winged Witch, sir."

The officer gazed upon the youthful face with marked surprise, and led the way into the cabin.

At a table, covered with papers, sat Admiral Duncan, for he had won that rank by gallant service.

He was looking older, and grayer; but still possessed the same noble, kindly face as of yore.

"The commander of the Winged Witch, admiral," said the officer, and he immediately withdrew.

Admiral Duncan arose and stepped forward, his hand extended, and a genial smile upon his face; but suddenly he started back, for before him stood a slender form, clad in a midshipman's uniform, and with a boyish face.

"Great Heavens! has the sea given up its dead, or do I see aright?"

"I am Midshipman Dudley Dash, Admiral Duncan, commander of the Winged Witch."

"Boy, my brave, noble boy, let me embrace you, ere I ask you any questions. You, you my boy midshipman, the famous rover!" and the old admiral greeted Dudley with a warmth that was certainly most flattering.

Then the two sat down, and Dudley told his chief all that had occurred, even to his cutting out the schooner, and leaving the Havanese to believe that it was done by Winwood, the buccaneer.

"It was a bold act, and if known, would cause us trouble with Spain; but, let it rest as it is," and the admiral gazed admiringly upon his young midshipman, and said:

"And you still call yourself Midshipman Dudley Dash?"

"Yes, sir; except by strangers, I have never allowed myself to be called captain."

"But, *captain* it shall be, sir, and the President will approve my appointment when he knows all. Now, *Captain* Dash, I would like to explain my running off from you on that memorable occasion which lost us poor Wheeler.

"An English sloop of war came near us and we gave chase, and unable to overhaul her, I put back, when another sail was sighted.

"This proved to be a dispatch vessel sent in search of me, with orders to proceed at once to the Mediterranean.

"My orders admitted of no delay, so I directed the dispatch vessel to go to my station and await your return; if you came back unsuccessful, to take you on board and carry you to port, from whence you could join the frigate at some future time; if you were successful, to order you to follow me in the schooner to the Mediterranean.

"Until a few months ago, I heard nothing of the result, until I learned that the dispatch vessel had been captured shortly after parting with the frigate, and of your fate nothing was known, so that we came to look upon you all as dead, or in an English prison—thank God, neither was correct.

"As for myself, I was made admiral of the fleet, and transferred to this elegant frigate, the Ticonderoga; but you will find a number of familiar faces among her officers and crew. But of Roy, and Trevor, what of them?"

"Midshipman Roy is my acting first lieutenant; poor Norvel Trevor, and Dirk Harding, who was my acting third officer, we lost in battle some time since," said Dudley Dash, sadly.

"And where bound now, Captain Dash?"

"To the Maine coast, sir. I have not seen my friends there since I left in the frigate. I wished to win a name before I returned; but, admiral, let me make known to you a strange circumstance," and Dudley Dash went on to tell of his picking up the drifting boat.

"Good God! you say that his name was Rafael Gaston?" and Admiral Duncan seemed deeply moved.

"Yes, sir."

"Dudley Dash, Rafael Gaston was my son-in-law! *He married my only child, Gabrielle Duncan*," and the admiral, deeply moved, passed to and fro the cabin for some moments, communing with a bitter past.

At length he said:

"And he lies dead in your cabin. Well, my chaplain shall give him honored burial. None need know who he was; and poor little Gabrielle, my darling grand-daughter, must never know that her father was *a pirate*.

"And now," continued the admiral, after a pause of some moments, "now you must continue on your course, and as soon as I have anchored in the Potomac, and reported all that has occurred, I will post across country to Maine and join you there. I wish to claim my little Gabrielle, and have her mother's body moved to my own family burying-ground, near my home on the Chesapeake; but, first, let me go aboard with you and see your wonderful vessel; I wish to make the acquaintance of the Winged Witch of the Sea."

Midshipman Roy beheld the boats leave the frigate's side, and expecting a visit from the admiral, he called the men to quarters, and as he stepped on board gave him a most royal salute with his guns.

Half an hour after, with the honors of war, the form of Rafael Gaston was consigned to a grave in the sea.

Then Admiral Duncan wrung the hand of Dudley Dash in parting, and returned on board the frigate, where the drums rolled, calling the men to quarters, and from huge oaken sides burst forth a salute to the Winged Witch that would have done honor to a king.

The two vessels then slowly drifted apart, and when the morning sun illumined the sea, the frigate was nowhere visible to those on the decks of the Winged Witch, which, under a ten-knot breeze drove onward in swift haste to drop anchor under the lee of Crescent Island, and in full view of the cottage home of Carter Hayes.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONCLUSION.

CARTER HAYES, whose once erect and powerful form had begun to droop with age, was seated upon his cottage porch, quietly smoking his pipe.

Near him sat two other persons, one a middle-aged lady, with a pleasant, intelligent face, and who was the sister of the old fisherman, who had passed her life in teaching, until sent for by her brother, three years before, to superintend the training and education of Gabrielle Gaston.

The other person was that young lady herself—a child no longer, but a beautiful maiden of seventeen—whose character was as lovely as her face and form.

Sitting in the shade of a pine tree, and piously puffing away at a long-stemmed pipe, was old Patience, over whose honest face and form not a shadow of change had fallen.

"I tell you, Gabie, yonder schooner stands off and on, as though she wanted a pilot. If she was an American I would go out and bring her in," and Carter Hayes pointed out beyond the reefs where was visible a long, low, rakish-looking craft, painted white, and carrying a cloud of canvas.

"By Jupiter! she is putting in *without* a pilot! No, see how she luffed up there to avoid the sunken reef, and now stands across the channel. I tell you, folks, there *is* a man on board who knows this coast. See, he comes in through the north cut. Only two persons that I know of, ever knew that channel, and—"

"Those are?" said Gabrielle, rising quickly.

"Myself, and—"

"Dudley?"

"*Yes.*"

In an instant Gabrielle bounded into the house, to return the next instant with a spy-glass, which she adjusted and leveled at the strange schooner.

"Father Hayes," she said, impressively, while her face flushed and paled with excitement—"Father Hayes, *Dudley stands at the wheel of yonder vessel.*"

"Praise God!" ejaculated Carter Hayes, springing up as nimbly as a boy of twelve.

"Praise de Lor'! ef de boy hain't comed back arter all—de goo' Lor' God ha' answer de prayers o' de ole nigger—sartin"—and old Patience waltzed about with amazing celerity.

Those officers were Dudley Dash and Audley Roy.

A few moments more and Dudley Dash sprung ashore, and received a welcome that made his heart glad, after which, dismissing his boat, and presenting Audley Roy, the party set off for the cottage, Patience skipping on ahead like a young girl, as she said:

"To git a bunkum supper for de young ossifers."

* * * * * *

Without a word, Carter Hayes arose, and unlocking a large chest, took from it an old portmanteau, that seemed exceedingly heavy.

"Here, Dudley, this I took from the boat in which I found you. It contains considerable money—a bag of trinkets, and rings, and a watch I took from the dead bodies I found in the boat—and important papers. By those papers you will find that your parents took passage many years ago in a packet-ship bound from Liverpool, to Halifax, but the vessel was lost in a storm, and all on board took to the boats. Of that entire number, *you*, I believe, alone survive.

"Wait, hear me: these papers furthermore tell you that your father was an English general, and was coming out as governor to Canada when wrecked; his name was Dudley, Earl of Dashwood."



"CURSE YOU, BOY, YOU OWE ME NOTHING," SAVAGELY SAID THE BUCCANEER CHIEF, AND DRAWING A PISTOL, HE LEVELED IT AT DUDLEY DASH AND PULLED THE TRIGGER.—Page 17

In the meantime Gabrielle had rushed swiftly down toward the beach and thither the other three followed her as rapidly as they could.

Then a few moments of impatient waiting, and a boat put off from the schooner, which had come to anchor under the lee of Crescent Island.

In that boat were eight oarsmen, a coxswain, and two officers seated in the stern-sheets.

That night, when all had retired but the old fisherman and Dudley, the youth told of his discovery of Gabrielle's father, and how the admiral was to come soon, and make known to her that her parent had died on board ship at sea, and that he had come to claim her.

"And now, Father Hayes," continued Dudley, "I would learn something of myself—for I know that you picked me up in an open boat at sea!"

The youth stood like one in a dream. When he recovered himself Carter Hayes had gone.

Then he looked over the papers with respectful touch, and gazed upon the miniatures of those whom he now knew to be his parents.

Among the papers he found one addressed to him. It was in the hand-writing of Carter Hayes and read:

"DUDLEY: If I am dead, when your eyes meet these lines, forgive me for keeping this secret from you.

"But I was an old, lonely man, and I could not give you up.

"May your life ever be happy, is the wish of your ADOPTED FATHER."

For an hour, or more, Dudley mused on all he had heard, and then, with a sigh, turned and took from the mantel a letter which Gabrielle had told him, came for him, two years before.

It was addressed in a lady's hand:

"TO DUDLEY DASH,
Bath, Maine,
United States of America."

Breaking the seal the youth read the contents, which were as follows:

"Havana. Dec, 10th, 18—.

"SENOR: That your mind may be at rest I keep my promise and address you this letter, and especially glad am I to be able to write that you may know how rejoiced I was to find by your note, that you were not, after all, a terrible pirate, and that circumstances you could not control only made you appear so.

"May your future be a bright one, and one of these days may we meet again. Should you wish to find me, ask for the Countess Castello, for, after Christmas coming, I will no longer be *Senorita*, but ever your friend, CARMALITA.

"P. S.—Oh! senor, I like to have forgotten that I promised to tell you if I suffered by releasing you.

"A surprised commandant's frown, a scolding from my august father, were all the inconveniences that followed. Again, CARMALITA.

"N. B.—Do you know that I in some way connect *you* with the daring capture of the English schooner in our harbor?—and my woman's wit will insist that you have converted her into an American privateer. Anyhow, success to you, and believe me, I will not betray your secret.

"For the last time I sign myself, senor,
"CARMALITA."

True to his word Admiral Duncan arrived at the cottage, and brought joy to the heart of Gabrielle. She had found one of her own flesh and blood, and she was happy.

Nay, more; the admiral brought news that the war was over, yet handed Dudley his commission as captain in the navy of his country.

After a month's rest the whole party sailed in the Winged Witch for England, when Dudley at once proved his right and title to the name of Dashwood, and was installed in the princely home of his fathers, so long deserted and lonely.

One year after the declaration of peace between the United States and England, Lord Dudley, Earl of Dashwood, was married to Gabrielle Gaston, grand-daughter of Admiral Harvey Duncan.

Though a youthful couple, none handsomer ever stood before an altar; so said all who witnessed the impressive ceremony of tying two loving hearts together until "Death should them part."

Audley Roy was Dudley's groomsman, and shortly after married the young girl who was the bridesmaid of Gabrielle.

While on their bridal tour, Lord Dudley met, at a grand ball given him in London, two faces that were familiar, and he sought an opportunity to speak with them.

They greeted him most warmly, for one was the Countess Cavallo, once the lovely Carmalita, who had rescued him from the Moro's dungeon; and the other was Mrs. Fred Granger, *nee* Louise Raynor, the aiding of whom had so singularly led to the adventurous career of The Dare-Devil Middy.

THE END.

Among the Mangroves.

A WILD ADVENTURE IN CUBA.

BY CAPTAIN MAYNE REID.

"ON the south side of the island, beyond Batabano. *Mia casa a disposicion de V.*" Thus spoke to me a fellow-passenger on the R. M. Steamer Osprey, as we were running into the harbor of Havana.

From Southampton to St. Thomas we had voyaged together—thence to the chief seaport and capital of Cuba.

Crossing the Atlantic in a West India steampacket, it is not possible to escape making new acquaintances. A man must be of morose temperament who does not meet some one of disposition congenial. Belong to what nation he may, or speaking whatever language, there will be those who can converse with him in his own language, and sympathize on the score of a common nationality. John Bull, bound to Barbadoes or Jamaica, can drink Bass's beer with gentlemen in tweed coats and wide-awake hats; Johnny Crapaud, seeking Guadalupe or Martinique, may sip absinthe, and smoke paper cigarettes, with half a score compatriots; while Don Diego, over his "copita," of Xeres, may hob-nob with numbers of sallow-faced individuals, who can talk to him in the soft language of Andalusia.

There will be a Dane or two destined for St. Thomas; a Dutchman to Guazana or the diminutive island of Curacoa; a Mexican making for the port of Vera Cruz—in all likelihood a political refugee returning to lead a new revolution; a Caraquin going to La Guayra; with other odd waifs from Costa Rica, Nicaragua, New Granada, Ecuador and Peru, returning from cold European climes to their sunny homes on the shores of Equatorial America.

He, who had so generously placed his home at my disposal, belonged to none of the above-named nationalities, though speaking the language of the last. He was a native of the "ever-faithful island"—a Creole of Cuba.

But one who looked with no favoring eye on its fidelity being continued. On the contrary, as I had already become aware, he had a strong bearing toward "Cuba Libre."

It was, indeed, this had brought about the *rapprochement* between, that led to his proffers of hospitality. Just then was coming up and beginning to agitate his native land that question, which has since devastated some of its fairest provinces, bathing them in blood. The steamer was packed with Spanish officers, *en route* to join their regiments at Havana; with scores of Canarios and Catalans, base curs loyal to the backbone, like all such, bloodthirsty. They have since given proof of their sanguinary spirit, in deeds to make humanity mourn.

And such a man showing sympathy with the cause of Cuban independence, stood little chance of other than scurvy treatment; and having taken sides with the Creole, at times severely put upon, a pleasant acquaintanceship had been established between us; which, before the end of the voyage, became ripened to cordial friendship. A fine young fellow my new friend, handsome in person as proud in spirit, high-hearted and open-handed, I could not help liking him. So much that I felt pain at the prospect of our approaching separation. We were steaming into the harbor of Havana, past Moro Castle, its guns grinning down upon us, a standing threat to "Cuba Libre." Passengers were hurrying to and fro, sorting their baggage for the dread ordeal of the *duana*. In another hour he and I would be mutually bidding "adios!" perhaps never more to meet, save by such chances as are cast in the kaleidoscope of Fate. Alas! true hearts are scarce, and loyal ones too rarely encountered in the conflict of life. All the more did I dislike losing the one I had found.

It was some compensation to discover that my regret was reciprocated by Don Mariano Aguera; for such was the name of my respected fellow-passenger. I had proof of it, as coming up to me he said:

"*Caballero!* I hope we are not going to separate as soon as we set foot ashore. I can't think of its being so, and if possible won't permit it. You've been kind to me—something more indeed—and must give me an opportunity of showing my gratitude. I know of only one way, which is, indeed, exacting a further favor. I hope, however, you will grant it by accepting such hospitality as I can offer."

I bowed thanks, but before I could give a response the Creole continued:

"Unfortunately I have no establishment in Havana, my poor patrimony lying at some distance from the city."

Then followed the speech already reported, ending with the phrase, "*Mia casa a disposicion de V.*"

Among Spaniards a mere formulary, meaning nothing, as I knew; but from the Cuban, as I also knew, an invitation extended was in all sincerity, and meant for acceptance.

"Pressing it upon me, Don Mariano said, in continuance:

"We have now a railroad to Batabano, and the journey is short. There's nothing to hinder you making my house your headquarters during your stay in the island. Only that I fear it may be too dull, and I can offer no inducement to tempt you away from the city. You will find Havana rather a gay place. However, if you're fond of field-sports, as I fancy you are, perhaps I can treat you to some that may be new."

Field-sports promised to a man in a shooting-coat with six pockets appertaining! And with the additional lure of their being of a novel kind! Need I say what were my feelings?

I only hesitated to declare them, reflecting how far it would interfere with my plans, and the business that had brought me to the island.

"Beyond that," persevered the Cuban, "and showing you some of our scenery, I can promise but little in the way of entertainment. I am a bachelor, living in a lonely bahio, with a sister who keeps house for me. An untutored Creole girl whose manners won't much remind you of the fashionable ladies of London and Paris. But I can answer for her having a warm heart, and making welcome the friend of her brother. Now, caballero! say you will come?"

The field-sports had already half-determined me to accept the invitation. At mention of the "untutored Creole girl," so unlike the ladies of London and Paris, my mind was made up.

"*Con mucho gusto*," was the answer I gave Don Mariano.

"*Mil gracios*," rejoined the polite Cuban. "And now, senor, consider yourself in my keeping as long as you stay in Cuba.

"My sister," he said, in continuance, "is at present staying with our aunt, who lives a little way outside the city. She has been there during my absence in Europe. Soon as we have cleared our things through the custom-house, we shall run out there, pick her up—then on to Batabano."

The formidable *duana* done and our impedimenta placed in charge of a *comisario*, to be forwarded to the railway station, we leaped into a "volante," and between its two huge wheels were soon rolling through the suburbs of Havana.

Once out into the open country the subject of field-sports again came up, the rural scenery suggesting it.

"I can promise no big game," said the Creole. "As you are doubtless aware we have neither bear or deer upon the island. Indeed, our only indigenous quadrupeds are the harmless little agonti, and a small animal of the carnivorous kind. But the Spanish pig has gone wild in our woods, and you may meet boars as fierce as those of your European forests, or the Indian jungles. In the absence of nobler quarry we can attack the scaly alligator, or the crocodile. We have both species in the swamps of the southern shore. And in Batabano bay there are manatees, the mermaids of the old navigators, to whom you can make love with your breech-loader. If that be too tame I could treat you to a chase more exciting. What say you to a man-hunt?

"A man-hunt! Your meaning, Don Mariano?"

"Exactly as I say, without changing my words, or in any way altering their sense. A veritable *bona fide* man-hunt."

Had the revolution already broken out, and was my host expecting me to take part in it?

Before I could further interrogate him, he continued:

"Yes; a chase with blood-hounds, the game human beings if negroes be so considered."

Now I understood, and I may say felt somewhat shocked at the proposal. I should not have expected it from the republican patriot—the advocate of "Cuba Libre."

I was relieved, as he laughingly continued:

"I see you don't feel inclined for such sport as that; nor would I wish to indulge you in it. I only said I *could;* and am sorry it is so. My agent in town has just told me that several of my slaves have absconded during my absence. Though it is the custom among some of the neighbors to employ dogs in recapturing these runaways, I never did, and never intend doing it. I prefer letting the poor fellows, who are not contented with my rule have their freedom in that way if they wish it. But here we are at my aunt's, and there is my sister."

A handsome country home, with flowered parterres in front, and a grand portaled entrance, the gate open. Inside this a young lady, standing as if on the look-out for some one expected. Then as the volante turned in, running toward it with arms outstretched, these soon after enfolded around Don Mariano's neck, his cheeks saluted with a shower of kisses that would have given pleasure to Sardanapalus.

This, then, was the untutored Creole girl so different from the damsels of Europe, and not up to their standard. For my part, I liked her style of training, and envied Don Mariano the first exhibition I had of it.

When he said, introducing us, "My sister; Juanita, this is a friend who is going to be our guest, give him welcome," and she artlessly took hold of my hand, I trembled at the touch. For my heart told me, "This is the ideal for whom I have been searching—the woman whose wishes must rule mine for happiness or misery, for good or for evil. I felt I was in the presence of my Fate.

Before me stood what seemed a very Venus; not like her of Cyprus poised upon the shell, with tresses of that hue which the auricomous dye of modern days can easily counterfeit. But Cytherea as she should be in a southern clime, with the complexion becoming; skin with a tinge of golden brown, cheeks as red as grenadines, teeth like strings of pearls picked up from her native seas, and hair as the plumage of the tropic bird that soars proudly over them. Idle to attempt describing the charms of Juanita Aguera. Jealous of them, I would not if I could. Gazing upon them, I no longer thought of the chase, or the sort of game frequenting Cuban covers. I would not now have given up that shooting excursion to Batabano for all

the grand quadrupeds that roamed around our American prairies, or African karoo—not to bag all the buffaloes, elands, and elephants in the world.

We spent the remainder of that day, with the night following, under the roof of the *tia*, a hospitable old lady of the brocaded type, who carried a bunch of keyes *a la chatelaine*.

Next morning we were driven to the railway terminus at Havana, and there booking for Batabano, were soon gliding along the *camino de hierro*, amid scenes which made it worth while keeping the curtains drawn aside.

To a native of Northern lands a railway train running through tropical scenery is suggestive, giving rise to singular trains of thought, indeed almost ludicrous. Steam, the symbol of modern civilization, appears altogether out of place among palm trees. And as its smoke curls up through these feathery fronds, one cannot help an idea of something like desecration. It is as if Nature's fairest forms, and choicest handiwork, were being sacrificed to the spirit of utilitarianism—put to a baser purpose than was originally intended.

Some incongruity, also, in seeing railway officials, with purely Spanish features, and hearing a guard interrogate as he draws open the carriage door.

"Por Guines, senores?" Then as he clangs it to, adding, "*Todos por Batabano—nos vamos!*"

After clearing the *barrios* of Havana, we passed many pretty villas—the rural retreats of the city aristocracy. Then succeeded coffee plantations, and tobacco farms, with here and there an *ingenio*, its tall steam chimney telling where sugar-cane is crushed and its sweet sap boiled to crystallization. Beside each the *casa grande* of the planter, its avenue of approach shaded by rows of loyal palms—the *oreodoxa regia*.

Passing Guines station we crossed the dividing ridge or backbone of the island; the *terrain* thence gradually descending to the shore of the Caribbean sea. Here the evidences of agricultural industry are rarer, plantations further apart; till at length the iron horse gallops on through thick primeval forest, the smoke from his nostrils ascending among the branches of great fig trees, *cedrelas* and *caobas*, better known as mahogany. Inside, the carriage is obscured, as though the train were passing through a tunnel. Looking out you behold huge trunks, each with its array of parasitical plants roped together like the rigging of a ship. Many are magnificent orchids, with flowers fully expanded; often hanging so close to the carriage windows you may hook them with the handle of your umbrella, or reaching forth gather roses.

We made a short stay in the place; only long enough to see our trunks out of the railway-station and into a carreta, having a couple of mules attached. Don Mariano had taken the precaution to send on instructions the day before; hence the wheeled vehicle for our luggage, with three saddle-horses for ourselves, found awaiting us.

Mounting, we rode away, and were soon again amidst the wildest wood scenery. A virgin forest, scarce defiled by the stroke of the woodman's ax. For the path we were pursuing did not deserve the name of a road—only an open track between the trees, arcaded over with palms, whose smooth trunks looked like the supporting columns of some grand temple, their curving fronds forming the concavity of its dome.

As we cantered along through the sweet silvan scene, I could not help thinking how the Creole girl became it; or, rather, how it became her, for she seemed the primary object, its divinity, the scene designed for her decoration.

Such was my thought—the reflection formed in my heart. Yes, it had come to this.

At intervals the forest flashed open and we caught glimpses of the sea and its shore. Bits of beach with sand that looked like silver filings, mixed with the dust of gold, strown with shells that showed all the iridescence of the opal. There were corals, red, like Juanita's lips, bivalves of pearly hue, bleached to the whiteness of her teeth. Then the path would suddenly plunge into shadow, dark as her hair, with fireflies—great *cocuyos*—flitting about to symbolize the flames of her eyes.

Our road lay along the shore of Batabano Bay, south-eastward from the town. Some ten miles to travel before we could arrive at our destination—the house of Don Mariano. Long before reaching it, we were riding through land that was his; dense forests, here and there alternating with savannas.

At length an opening appeared before us, showing cultivation. Vast fields covered with bushes, set in quincunx and shaded by tall trees. The bushes bore berries, which gave out an aromatic odor; they were those that, when burnt and ground, furnish the beverage of our breakfast-table.

We had entered a *cafetal*, and were riding among its rows.

Soon a house came in sight; the dwelling-place of its proprietor. Not an humble hut—a *bahio*—as Don Mariano had modestly characterized it—but a mansion of imposing appearance, with grand gate entrance, and avenue leading up, the latter arcaded by double rows of the *palma real*.

Clearly an establishment of the first class of *cafetales*, with hundreds of slaves at work in the fields, and at least a score of household servants inside and around the *casa grande;* at the head of these a *major-domo;* waiting to receive us, with a staff of stable-grooms standing ready to relieve us of the horses.

Inside a large dining-room, with table set, the dinner served as soon as we could change toilettes to sit down to it.

A repast followed, proving Don Mariano's words, when he spoke of a poor hospitality, wide away from the truth. Instead of the starved and stinted bachelor he had proclaimed himself, the viands on his dinner-table, with the various vintages interspersed, showed him to be a sort of Cuban Lucullus.

Six days spent as in Paradise, shooting excursions through the tropical forest, and along the shell-strewn shores of a southern sea—the beautiful Caribbean; these varied by rides around the *cafetal*, accompanied by its owner, eloquent on the qualities of his crops; more pleasantly varied by strolls afoot with a fair companion, under the shade of orange trees and corozo palms; listening to the cooing of doves, the song of the Cuban thrush, and the cries of the red cardinal, listening to that sweeter than all, the voice of Juanita Aguera.

Never sweeter than on that day, when at eve we two were straying through a copse of cactus



THUS INSPIRED, I RUSHED IN AMONG THE MANGROVES, AND COMMENCED CLIMBING OVER THEIR AERIAL ROOTS.—Page 23.

tos. I was now in love with her to the deepest depths of my soul—a passion that unreciprocated would consume. That day I intended to declare it despite all fear for the issue. Soon I must return to Havana. Was I to go back happy, or bearing a broken heart? I must now know.

The hour appeared propitious, and just then there chanced a circumstance that looked like the foreshadowing of a favorable fate. From our path sprung two *palomitas*, the beautiful little doves of the Antilles—very mannikins among the *Columbidæ*. They flew only a short distance, then settled down on the branch, where they sat, side by side, close together, cooing and kissing. They did not seem at all scared at our intrusion nor attempt to flit further away, but still continued their caresses till we came almost near enough to touch them. They appeared to know that we too were wooing!

We stopped and stood gazing at the pretty love-birds—types of the fondest, purest affection—for their behavior was emblematical of what we felt. I was sure of it on my own side, though it was not till after some words had been exchanged between us, I could answer for both. They were:

"You see those doves, senorita?"

"I do."

"Have you any thought concerning them?"

"Have you?"

"Yes."

"What is your thought, senor?"

"That I should like to be one of them."

"What a singular fancy! To wish yourself a palomita! What a singular fancy!"

"Only on condition of somebody else being the same."

"Who else?"

"The Dona Juanita Aguera."

Not receiving any response from her, whose cheek flushed red at the speech, I was compelled to continue, which I did in bold interrogative. It was not the time to talk longer in enigmas. I simply said:

"*Juanita, tu me amas?*"

"*Yo te amo,*" came the answer, without faltering or reserve.

Then were our hands joined, the flushed cheek fell over on my breast, permitting me to press lips sweeter than the honey of Hybla.

The seventh day of my sojourn at the cafetal was to be the last; business I had too long neglected requiring my return to Havana. On that day I would have preferred leaving field-sports alone, but my host tempted me with an offer to go flamingo-shooting. Some two miles off, in the swamp, was a breeding-place of these singular birds, of which I had heard much, though during our several excursions had not seen any of them. I was naturally desirous to get a shot at game which rarely falls to the gun of the sportsman. Besides, I wished to procure some skins of these gigantic curlews in their full, flame-colored plumage—good specimens of which are rare in the shops of the taxidermists, as on the shelves of natural history collections. Perhaps, also, some ambition to see my name inscribed on a plinth below the mounted bird in a public museum.

For these reasons I, with less reluctance, yielded to Don Mariano's proposal to spend my last day doing havoc among the flamingoes.

As the roost was but a short ride from the cafetal, we could do all the damage intended and be back for an early dinner. In the evening I should make amends for absenting myself from her whose company was now far more pleasant than any field-sports.

Bidding the mistress of the mansion "adios," with the more cheerful tag, "hasta la tarde," we were about setting forth, when a horseman rode up to the house, and drawing Don Mariano aside, engaged him in conversation. Though in *sotto voce*, it was of an earnest and serious nature, as I could tell by the excited looks and gesturing of both.

Their dialogue ended, the horseman rode rapidly away as he had come, when Don Mariano, rejoining me, said:

"Senor, I am very sorry I shall not be able to go with you. A summons unexpected calls me elsewhere. But do not let it interfere with your day's sport. Gaspardo will guide you to the flamingoes, and you can slaughter them to your heart's content without any help from me. I shall be back before evening, in good time to join you at the dinner-table. So now, *adios*, and as we've both just said to sister, *hasta la tarde!*"

Courtesy forbade me asking any explanation of my host. Indeed, he seemed as if he had no time to give it. Soon as saying good-day, he sprung into his saddle, and rode hastily off, as if intending to overtake the strange horseman, already out of sight.

The change of programme, with Don Mariano's abrupt departure, did not seem to me at all extraordinary. I could even conjecture the cause. It was not the first time I had seen strange horsemen at the house coming and going hurriedly, as couriers. In my own mind I had set them down as messengers who brought communications important as they were mysterious. The former they must have been, judging by their effect upon my host. I noticed several times they disturbed his equanimity of temper, and knew that nothing could do this save some grave cause. What should it be but Cuba Libre?

Indeed, he had as good as confessed to me it was this. In return I gave him my heartfelt sympathy. Nothing more could I at the time. It was no affair of mine, and even had I wished to embroil myself in the political troubles of the island, the business that had taken me hither would have been a bar to my wishes.

Of my host's seemingly eccentric behavior, I thought no more on that morning than on any other, only as he rode away, something whispered me that there was danger drawing nigh—an electricity in the moral atmosphere of the "ever faithful island" that would soon burst over it in a terrible storm, its lightning the flame of burning houses and plantations, its thunder the roaring of cannon, its rain red blood.

I had mounted my horse, as my host took to his. But chilled with a presentiment of peril I could not account for, I lost all ardor for sport, and hesitated about proceeding further with the flamingo-shooting. To stay at home promised pastime more attractive.

I sat reflecting, irresolute as to which course I should pursue. Then it occurred to me that Don Mariano might think it strange, my remaining at the house in his absence, more especially after having seen me in the saddle, ready to ride off. He was not yet aware of the tender relations established between his sister and myself.

The sentiment of delicacy decided me; and giving heel to my horse, I set forward, Gaspardo first following, then spurring ahead to guide me to the shooting-ground.

An original was this Gaspardo, worthy a word or two of description. No common slave he; either field hand or house-domestic; but the *cazador* of the establishment, whose *metra* it was to supply the table with game, combining the hunter calling with that of the pescudor, when fish were to form part of the *menu*. In his own physical and moral man, even more of a complex character. A big, broad-shouldered mulatto, having in his veins at least three separate streams of blood—European, African and Indian—with a dash of the devil to give spice to the compound. For all, a good fellow at bottom, fearing God after a fashion, but without the slightest fear of man. Of his courage and prowess I already had proof. By this time he and I had ceased to be strangers, and it was not the first occasion of our having gone hunting without my host, suddenly summoned away, as on that morning.

The cazador well knew the ground we designed quartering; and familiar with the nesting-place of the flamingoes, conducted me straight toward it.

As it was past the season of incubation, we might or might not find the birds at home. At night they returned to their roost, but our intended visit being by day, there was a chance of our getting disappointed.

So Gaspardo said.

This was a damper. Still, I should have an opportunity of examining the nests of these curious, long-legged waders, and so adding a chapter to my knowledge of their natural history and habits.

While getting some new hints from the hunter, who, like most gamekeepers, was a very Audubon in ornithology, the lesson was cut short at sight of a horseman riding in the same direction as ourselves.

We did not overtake him. Before we could come up, he sheered off into a side-path, and was almost instantly out of sight, disappearing behind the trees.

A singular personage, judging by the glance I had got of him. Stylishly dressed in an embroidered jacket of velveteen, with trowsers of the same, slashed along the seams; a scarf of scarlet-colored silk wound around his waist, its ends hanging down over his hip. Alongside them, a sword that dangled, its scabbard-tip clanking against spurs that sparkled on his heels; on his back a short gun, carried *a la bandolier*, and in one hand what appeared to be a guitar, in its case.

All this I saw at a glance; the same taking in his features, as turning out of the road, he looked back over his shoulder.

They were not such as to give a favorable impression of him, but the contrary. Swarth and sinister, their expression was not improved by the shadow of a broad-brimmed hat pulled slouchingly over them.

"Who is he, Gaspardo?"

"Only a goajiro, senor."

"A *goajiro!* What is that?"

"A fellow who drinks all day, and dances all night; yet don't own any thing but the clothes on his back, and the *andante* between his legs. Sometimes both horse and saddle are stolen, the which is likely enough in his case. I'd lay a wager Rafael Carrasco never came by his in an honest way."

"Rafael Carrasco, you call him?"

"Si, senor; and a bigger rascal isn't to be met with around Batabano. *Don* Rafael he styles himself, with the conceit of Don the Devil. He used to come swaggering about our cafetal, till the master forbade him."

"Why did he forbid him?"

"*Caballero!* if you promise not to betray confidence, I'll tell you."

"I promise it. You may speak without fear."

"Well, then, it was because Carrasco had the impudence—only think of it—to make pretensions to the Na Juanita."

"Indeed!"

I was deeply interested now.

"In what way?" I asked. "Tell me the particulars, good Gaspardo."

"Well, senor, once at a *fiesta* we had, he was called on for a song. I will say that, scoundrel though he be, he can sing well, and play the *bandolin* to perfection. Most goajiros can do that, and make their own songs, too, if they don't the tunes. So what does my gentleman try but some verses he had composed himself, or said he had, in praise of the senorita, describing her charms, as people said, too freely; then winding up with words to tell her how much he admired her. It was all up with him after that. Don Mariano was very angry about it, and told him never to come near the house again."

"Was the senorita herself angry?" I asked, making an effort to conceal my emotion, as I listened for the answer.

"Ah, caballero! that I can't say. Women are such queer creatures. There are not many of them who don't like being praised, especially in poetry. Be sure the best of them can stomach a goodish deal of that. There was the Dona Eusebia Gomez, the daughter of one of our grandees, who went away with a goajiro, and actually got married to him—all because he sung *canciones* praising her beauty and bright eyes, and that sort of thing. Oh, yes; in their vanity, the *muchachos* are pretty much the same, whether they be poor girls or rich ladies."

I confess that Gaspardo's ungallant sentiments gave me pain, suggesting thoughts I should not have entertained. Something more than mere curiosity counseled me to question him further:

"When did all this occur?"

"As I've said, senor, at the fiesta. We have one every year after the gathering in of the *cosecha*. When the coffee-crop is all stored, the custom is to give a feast in honor of the event, with grand doings and dances, to which everybody is asked. The one I've spoken of was the last we had, just before Don Mariano went away to travel in your country. All the time he was gone, the *nina*, as you may know, has been staying with her aunt at Havana, and of course, nothing has happened since."

"Then, I presume, Master Carrasco has by this time relinquished his aspirations?"

"*Quen saber?* For that matter, he might as well. Such as he to think of matching with a grand lady like the Dona Juanita Aguera! It would be as modest in me aspiring to be the alcalde mayor of Batabano. But for all that, one can't tell what Rafael Carrasco may be up to. He's got brass for any thing, and besides, the deceit of Satan himself. I don't believe there's a greater *picaro* along all this coast; and if report speaks true, he's in secret league with contrabandistos, slave-dealers, and all such sorts. 'Twas only last week one of our people saw him in the company of El Cocodrilo."

"*El Cocodrilo!* Who may he be?"

"What, senor! you don't know El Cocodrilo?"

"Indeed I don't."

"And have you never heard of him?"

"No—never."

"*Ay Dios!* that's strange. I thought everybody had."

"You see. I'm an exception."

"Well, I'll tell you. He's a runaway slave—a black man, who once belonged to master. But as he was a bad sort, Don Mariano sold him to another planter, a neighbor, from whom he soon after absconded. That was several years ago, and ever since he's a *cimmarin*, not one of them able to catch him. Yet he gives them every chance, as you might think. There isn't a week passes without his being heard of on some of the plantations making love to the negro wenches and robbing their masters right and left. Several times they've got up hunting-parties, and set their hounds upon his track—their very best bloodhounds. Still he continues to baffle them all."

"He must be a clever scamp, this Cocodrilo. But why is he so-called?"

"Ah! that's partly on account of his being pock-pitted; which, as you may suppose, makes his skin look a little like that of a cayman, or crocodile. Besides, he's a big, ungainly fellow, as they are. But I think he's got the name more from his hiding in the *crenigas*, where the animals have their haunts. By the way, senor, this is the very swamp where they say he secretes himself. It is called La Zapata, and extends for ever so far along the shore. We are just now passing the place where he was last seen by one of the field-hands of our plantation. It was where the goajiro was seen along with him, the two talking earnestly together. That was last Sunday night—less than a week ago."

"Suppose you and I should come across him now. Would you be afraid, Gaspardo?"

"Not I, senor. I hope you don't rate my courage so cheaply. Afraid of El Cocodrilo! On the contrary, I'd just like to set my eyes upon his ugly image, and if I do, I'll soon after have my hands on him. I've myself some old scores to settle with that scaly gentleman; and if ever he comes into my clutches, they'll have no need afterward to put bloodhounds upon his trail. He'll make no more tracks except those between where I get hold of him and the jail of Batabano—*carajo*, no!"

"Well, if we should fall in with the formidable fellow, you may depend on me, Gaspardo. I'll do what I can to assist you in carrying out your intentions. Not because of his being a runaway slave, but the wicked character you describe him. Besides, as you say, he is your personal enemy."

"*Mil gracios, senor.*"

We reached the roosting-place of the flamingoes, and, as half-apprehended, found no birds about. They were absent, no doubt, on some other part of the shore, where shell-fish and the small-fry on which they feed were more plentiful.

I saw scores of their curious nests, truncated cones, on which they sit, or rather stand, with their long legs straddled, during the period of incubation. They were empty now, but around lay the shells of the hatched eggs, and many feathers cast at molting; I observed much, besides, that should have interested me, and doubtless would, had I been in the humor for ornithological inquiry. But I was not. The fear felt in the morning was still upon me—a shadow over my spirits I could not shake off.

It forced me away from the memory of the long-legged waders, without staying their return.

While riding along the swamp edge, on our way back to the cafetal, Gaspardo parted company with me. He begged permission on the plea of visiting a friend, who had his dwelling near by, and expected him on some business between themselves.

As I now knew the way, there was no longer need for his guiding me, and he said he would be at the cafetal almost as soon as myself—certainly before his master, Don Mariano.

I had become attached to the yellow-skinned cazador, and was only too glad at being able to oblige him, by granting the leave solicited. So we separated with a mutual "*hasted luego*," as I moved on, Gaspardo shouted after, "Va con Dios!"

I had barely lost sight of him, his voice still ringing in my ears, when another sound saluted them. At first I fancied it to be the sough of the sea, caused by the breaking of the surf along the shore. I had heard this at intervals while riding along. But it was now at too great a distance, and could not be that. It was not, though in some respects similar. The noise I heard was softer, and more smoothly resonant.

Besides, it came from above. Turning my eyes upward, I saw what was causing it. The blue sky was enameled by scarlet spots—great birds, with their wings extended in flight—the flamingoes! No doubt the flock we had failed to find at their roost, to which they were now on return.

They were right over my head, and at least a hundred yards vertically distant. But my breech-loader was charged with swan-shot, and suddenly checking my horse, I raised the gun to my shoulder and let bang both barrels into the thick of the flock. A shrill scream was the response, continued as the flamingoes flew on faster than before. Considering the great distance, I took it for granted I had missed them, and again grasping the reins, was about to ride on. Just then I saw that one had separated from the rest, and was gradually going down. With some experience as a sportsman, I knew from this that some of my No. 1 shot must have penetrated the body of the bird, touching it in a vital part.

The place where I had pulled up was a strip of open ground, on one side a forest of wild mangoes, on the other the mangrove swamp. Two very different kinds of trees, especially detested by the Cuban planter, as he thinks of his cimmarin slaves. For in the fruit of the former the runaway finds sufficient sustenance, while the latter gives him a refuge beyond the reach of the bloodhounds.

The flamingo fell among the mangroves; and having carefully marked it down, I slipped out of the saddle, tied my horse to a tree, and started to retrieve it.

The disappointment of the day made me all the more anxious to get the game I had shot—not liking to return with an empty bag. Besides, the flamingo that had fallen was evidently an old gander, of a deep scarlet to the tips of his tail-feathers, not a white one visible in all his fiery plumage. What a grand trophy his skin would be mounted in a museum with my name underneath: *Presented by Captain ——; shot on the shore of Batabano Bay, Cuba.*

Thus inspired, I rushed in among the mangroves, and commenced climbing over their aerial roots.

A singular forest form these trees of the genus *rhizapora*. In their growth bearing some resemblance to the banyan, except that you see no large trunks—only stems of several inches thickness, not springing directly from the ground, but supported on a tangled trestle of roots, gnarled and pointed like the legs of rustic chairs or the limbs of gigantic spiders. These penetrating the mud leave open spaces under the overshadowing trunks; a labyrinth of aisles and avenues, through which crawl countless crabs and hideous creatures of saurian shape; among others, the cayman and crocodile—for both species of these gigantic reptiles are indigenous to the island of Cuba. The trees of the order *rhizapora* are not all of one kind. There are many species of mangrove along the coast of tropical countries, all performing the same office in the economy of nature, reclaiming the land from the grasp of the surging sea, and staying the latter in its continual attempts at encroachment. Along their outer selvedge, where the mud becomes exposed at ebb tide, they fling out roots from seeds still within the pericarp, and adherent to the branches like the tentacula of an octopod, grasping a victim at each influx of the tide.

The mangroves, thus constantly adding to the ground they have already gained, in time form a forest belt often miles in breadth, standing in the soft mud over which man can not make way except as a monkey, by swinging himself from tree to tree.

Into such a jungle had I entered to retrieve the shot flamingo.

Clutching the stems, and springing from root to root, I kept on, in hopes soon to rest eyes on the beautiful bird.

I had not gone far when I heard a rustling noise, as of some one moving off before me. Guided by the sound, and drawing toward it, I caught sight of a man, like myself making way among the mangroves. A huge negro, naked from head to foot, not so much as a rag covering his jet-black skin.

I did not at first think it so strange; supposing him to be some slave from the cafetal, who had been taking a dip in the sea—the water of which I could just perceive shining through the bushes beyond. But, on advancing toward and hailing him, I was surprised at his behavior. He neither answered the hail nor showed any disposition to await my coming up. On the contrary, he went off like a wild animal startled from its lair; and gliding over the roots, far faster than I, soon disappeared from my sight. From the glimpse I had of his face, as once or twice he looked back, I could see it was hideously scarred, as by some cutaneous disease—the worst kind of varioloid. Remembering Gaspardo's description of El Cocodrilo, I could not doubt but that chance had given me a peep at the formidable *cimmarin*. Having no desire to come up with him, I turned back and took the direction I had hitherto been following in search of the flamingo.

By good fortune, I found the bird, though it was the merest accident. For, after losing sight of the water, and again getting into the thick of the trees, I lost all bearing of the place where I had seen it settle down. Screams which I presumed to proceed from its throat guided me to the spot. Instead, they proved to be the cries of the *caracara* eagle, two of which were in the act of quarreling over a quarry they had not killed.

The flamingo was quite dead, lying with its wings extended, like a scarlet shawl spread over the branches, while its long neck, weighted with the huge, curving mandibles, dangled down beneath the body.

Fortunately, it had not fallen into the slime, so as to spoil its plumage for the taxidermist. Carefully packing it for transport, I commenced returning on my tracks.

Tracks! There were none. What mattered it? I could make my way to the shore in the shortest direction.

So thought I at starting to go back. But my confidence quickly changed to uncertainty, and soon after to apprehension. In less than five minutes after bagging my bird, I was wandering amid the maze of mangroves, helpless as would have been the finding of Fair Rosamond without the silken clue. And in five more I came to a stop, with a dead heaviness at my heart as one feels on becoming sensible that he has strayed from the path and got lost. Not as one on a common highway, or amid fields of corn, but in the shadow of a trackless forest or the open expanse of a pathless prairie. Lost not for an hour, or a day, or a night, but in all probability for days, nights, and hours that may end in death.

I did not at first fully realize the seriousness of the situation, so little did it affect me. I made no attempt to call out or in any way summon assistance.

Indeed, to have done this would have been idle, as I afterward learned when the full fear came over me. Then I called loud enough to frighten the *caracaras*, with no response save their screams. These, resounding through the mangroves, resembled the laughter of maniacs mocking my despair.

For this was now on me. I had made every effort to reach *terra firma*, first tacking one way, then another, as appearances promised better, like a sloth, swinging myself from branch to branch and root to root, all in vain. I came upon places where the bark showed abrasions, which on scrutiny proved to have been made by my shooting boots. I was but returning on my own tracks, swinging round the circle. With a clouded sky, there was no sun to give the direction. I could not have taken it if there had been. For, before entering the jungle, I had not taken note how the shore trended.

For several hours I kept clambering about, till the increasing gloom amid the umbrageous branches of the mangroves warned me that night was near.

Just then a dark object attracted my attention, and I turned toward it. Drawing near, I saw what looked like a haystack set upon piles. Advancing toward it, I discovered it to be a shed or arbor; no freak of vegetable nature, but the work of human hands. There was a floor of wicker llianos, warped and twined among the tree roots; above, a canopy of leaves, the broad blades of the wild tamana. Three sides were inclosed with the hattle of *sipos;* the fourth open, giving admission to the interior.

Springing up to the wicker stage, I found myself amid objects that told of human occupation, though the occupant was not at home. There was a hammock swung between the stems, supporters of the roof; and from the last depended strips of Chili peppers, onions, and clusters of ripe plantains; while in one corner stood a basket of sweet potatoes, and a second containing oranges, mangoes, cherimoyas, alligator pears, and a variety of other fruit—a *cornucopia* of tropical productions.

Suspended from a limb outside was a huge guano-lizard, skinned, disemboweled, ready for the spit. That it could be broiled there was evident, from the embers of a fire smoldering on a mud hearth, in the center of the staging.

I had no need to conjecture as to what all this meant. Soon as seeing the hut so strangely situated I could tell it to be the refuge of some runaway slave—the home of some hunted maroon.

And who else could its owner be than him I had seen scampering off—the dreaded Cocodrilo! I was as sure of this as if I had met the pock-marked man upon his own hearth, and been invited to partake of his hospitality.

Vividly recalling his character, as Gaspardo had given it, I had no desire to. Under the circumstances, an interview with him might not end amicably. Perhaps he would resent intrusion on his solitary domain and be disposed to punish the intruder.

Reflecting thus, with my eyes on the saurian suspended outside, its form fearfully suggestive of a human being hanged and flayed, I remained not an instant longer under the roof of the runaway.

I had now better hopes of being able to regain the shore; for, although the daylight had nearly gone, still in the dim twilight I could distinguish something like a path along the tangle of roots. Whitish spots showed where their bark had been trodden off by the hard, horny soles of a negro's feet.

Along this I started, continuing on for several hundred yards. Then the night came down, dark as a pot of pitch; and I could no more make out the place. To proceed further would only be to get strayed again—perhaps with less chance of ultimate success.

At thought of this, I desisted from any further attempts, and resolved to stay among the mangroves till morning.

To make myself as comfortable as the circumstances would permit, I selected a spot where the roots were thickly matted, and there laid myself along like a steak upon a gridiron. But before courting sleep, I took the precaution to buckle my hunting-belt around a branch at the same time attaching it to my body. Otherwise I might roll over into the mud, and furnish the caymans with a midnight meal. The position was irksome enough, to say nothing of being stung by the musketoes that swarmed in myriads around me. A mangrove swamp is the place to find these noxious insects in their most venemous vigor.

But the fatigue consequent on over two hours of constant tree-climbing, along with a strain of mental anxiety throughout all the day, had quite overcome me, and I at length yielded to irresistible slumber. How long I was unconscious I could not tell till afterward. Then, on taking stock of time, I knew it must have been an hour. During it, I was the prey to horrid dreams, and had fearful visions presented to my slumbering senses. In these figured my host, Don Mariano Aguera, and his fair sister, now my *fiancee*, she like an angel, with a luminous aureole over her brow, but beneath a countenance seemingly distressed and sad. Beside her were two devils, one splendidly appareled, with a look of Lucifer, the other bigger and blacker, a sort of Vulcan, with skin charred and spotted, as by sparks from his Tartarian forge. Of course my fancy of the first must have come from what I had seen of the gay goajiro—the second suggested by Gaspardo's description of the runaway slave.

With these two demons-in-chief were lesser ones, their satellites. Besides, my betrothed appeared to be threatened and in danger. I could hear her crying out: by name calling me to come to her rescue.

But I felt that I could not. I was fast bound, unable to stir hand or foot.

Still I struggled, and this, with her continued cries, awoke me. Certainly I was bound, as I found on awaking—buckled to the branch of a tree. In that there was no imagination nor in the cries either. Only that they came, not from Juanita Aguera, but from the great *grulla*, a species of gigantic crane which frequents the *cienegas* of Cuba.

Released from the spell of my dream, yet scarce recovered from its unpleasantness, I lay listening. For the cry of the crane had something in it different from its ordinary call. During the week I had several times encountered the bird, stalked and shot it, so becoming tolerably well acquainted with its habits.

In a second or two, it gave note again, clearly a signal of alarm.

But now I no longer listened to it, for other sounds, far more significant, had fallen upon my ears; beyond doubt human voices! At the same time I heard a scraping and scratching among the trees—the swish of bent branches in rebound. Was it Cocodrilo returning to his lair accompanied by a confederate? The moon had meanwhile arisen, lighting up open spaces among the mangroves. One of these was close to where I sat; for I had now unbuckled and raised myself to a sitting posture; and when the silvery beams slanted down, I saw two dark forms. Human shapes both, however devilish their doings. For it was evident to me they were engaged in something a Scotchman would call "uncanny."

Clambering over the tangle of roots, they bore a burden between them. It was a thing of oblong shape that might be a coffin or a corpse, looking more like the latter.

Some piece of plunder abstracted from a neighboring plantation, which the Crocodile is dragging to his lair, so heavy as to need help.

On seeing the two men I did not think of what they were carrying, or care. My thought was whether they might see me. If they did, I should certainly be in some danger.

An encounter with the runaway were enough of itself. Too much to meet him in the company of another—perhaps also a cimmarin like himself. These fugitives from justice, or it may be injustice, are often desperate men, very Ishmaelites, whose hands are against every man who chances to have a white skin; and as mine was of this color, caught just where I was, they might take me for a hunter of them and treat me accordingly.

A quick survey of the surroundings satisfied me that I was safe, at least for the time. The spot I had chosen for my uncomfortable couch was canopied by spreading branches thickly beset with leaves. This placed me in shadow, so obscure that a man might be within six feet without seeing me. Assured of this, I sat still and watched them as they made way. Their progress was slow and apparently toilsome. The thing they were transporting must have been heavy indeed, and requiring delicate handling; some article of value easily damaged or broken.

While I was thus reflecting, they had advanced to within ten paces of me. Then I saw their arms more distinctly, while for a moment the moonlight shining through a break in the foliage, fell upon their faces. Of these I caught only a glimpse; but enough to make me imagine I was still asleep and dreaming, for their faces were exactly those that had figured in the phantasmagoria just disturbed—the two chief demons!

Engrossed in the endeavor to identify them, I took no note of aught else till they were nearly out of sight. Then I saw what startled me, causing my heart to beat doubly quick, while the blood ran cold in my veins. Something whitish draped down below their burden. It looked like a shawl or the skirt of a woman's dress. Was it a woman they were carrying? And if so, was she living? or a corpse, and the white drapery its shroud—its winding-sheet?

I had an impulse to stalk after them and see; it was more than mere curiosity. Indeed a very different sentiment; with something of fear or apprehension as I recalled the scenes that had afflicted me in my dream. Could it be possible that any of the other personages who had appeared—that one—Juanita Aguera—

No—no! The supposition was absurd—too impossible. But for the excited state I was in I should not have entertained it for an instant.

And scarce a second did I, returning to my former belief, that the Crocodile and his confederate were engaged in the last act of a burglary, about to secrete the stolen goods, or it might be a bit of contraband. Recalling Gaspardo's account of the goajiro, the last seemed the more probable.

On reflection, I concluded to leave the robbers to themselves, at least for that night. Chance had conducted me to their hiding-place, and if property had been abstracted I should know where it was stowed and could take steps for recovering it in the morning.

With the moon now shining clear, I fancied I might find my way out of the mangrove swamp, all the easier from having noticed the direction from which the two men had approached me coming from the land side.

Any thing was better than staying there to be eaten by the *zancudos*.

I started, and for a time succeeded in keeping the track. Slowly, as I had to examine the roots with great care in order to discover the spots where the bark had been abraded.

Withal, I again got off it, becoming wildered and finally lost as before.

I was looking for another place fit to repose upon, when, glancing a little upward I beheld an illuminated spot in the sky. It was not the moon nor any of her satellite stars. The light was of that reddish yellow easily distinguishable as the glare of a conflagration.

Since it was not probable this would be in the midst of the mangroves, nor possible on the sea, outside them, the fire, whatever it was, must be on shore.

Making it my beacon, I started off afresh, and keeping on toward it, soon sprung down from the network of aerial roots and stood on *terra firma*.

Scanning around me, I saw I had come out on known ground—almost the very spot I had fired at the flamingo.

Near by was the tree to which I had tied my horse; and entering under its shadow I found the animal still there just as I had left him; only, like myself, terribly impatient, and badly bitten by the musketoes. A soft, satisfied neigh expressed his delight as I drew the bridle from the branch, and flinging the reins over his neck, vaulted into the saddle. I now knew the way well, and in the clear moonlight could not again get strayed.

Putting the horse to his best speed, in less than twenty minutes after, I had entered the gate of the *cafetal*, and was riding up to the house.

No, not to the house. There was none there now—only the walls of one, with the roof in red blaze ascending to the skies. As I entered the outer gate and looked up the avenue between the rows of royal palms, the space at their further end was lit up as in daylight, only with the red rays of a conflagration.

I did not need telling that the torch of the incendiary had been at work. Instinctively I knew it, with a boding of misfortune far worse than fire.

My own heart felt aflame, as I struck my heels against my horse's flanks, and galloped on for the burning house. As I drew near, I could see figures flitting about—men and women, their dark forms seen in silhouette against the blazing background. I could hear their shouts and ejaculations, all in tones of terror and distress. In a moment more I was in their midst, scanning their faces, in search of two that were white—the master of the burning mansion and his young mistress.

No white faces there—only black and yellow—the slaves and retainers of the plantation.

A man rushing up, stood before me. In the fire-glow I recognized the cazador.

Without waiting to hear what he had to say, I cried out:

"Where are they, your master, your mistress?"

"Gone! both gone! Oh, senor, isn't it sad!"

"Gone! Whither? The fire! What does it all mean? Tell me, Gaspardo—quick!"

"*Por Dios, caballero;* I cannot. I don't myself know. I got home only half an hour ago. Then I found things just as you see them, only that the fire wasn't so far on. We tried to stop it, but couldn't. The old house must go now."

"Who has done it?" I asked mechanically. Something whispered me I knew the man.

"Well, the people say that soldiers came from Batabano to arrest the master. It's because his being one of the *patriotas*. By good luck he's got away, and they had to go back without him. Then later, after it had got to be night, some others came who wasn't soldiers at all, but men in masks. It was them that carried off the senorita, and set fire to the *casa grande*. It's been burning over since; and the *pobrecita!* Nobody knows where they've taken or what's being done to her."

I knew the first, of the last ignorant though tortured with terrible apprehension. I had no doubt now that what I had seen between the Crocodile and Carrasco was the body of my betrothed. Was she still living, or had they killed her, and what they carried was her corpse?

"Oh, God! oh, God!" I groaned in agony as the fell fear swept through my soul.

"Gaspardo, you are brave. You would risk your life to save that of the *nina*—would you not?"

"Ten times over. Only tell me how. Try me, senor, you shall see."

"Get your gun and horse!"

"They are there."

He pointed to the horse, that with saddle still on, stood tied to a rail.

"Your machete?"

"Here on my hip."

"Mount, then, and follow me!"

The cazador leaped into his saddle—I had not left mine—and we rode off, leaving the red flames behind us.

Back for the swamp, La Zapata.

In less than twenty minutes after we were upon its edge, at the place where I had lately left it.

Dismounting, we made our horses secure, tying them to the same tree where mine had passed most of the afternoon and night. We muffled them to prevent them neighing. The work we had to do called for caution, silence, the stealthy tread of tigers.

On the way I had told my companion all, and communicated my plan of action; which he approved.

We were going to engage in a conflict with two men strong as ourselves, to attempt the rescue of a captive, and capture them as well. They were not likely to surrender without showing fight. On both sides the struggle would be for life, hand-to-hand, and therefore desperate. My brown-skinned comrade knew this, but quailed not. I saw he was game to the backbone, almost as eager as myself to enter upon action. Besides the desire to rescue his young mistress he had an additional sentiment to inspire him—the old standing spite against the runaway; as also a fresh feud with Carrasco, who had in some way insulted him. The double *vendetta* would have secured me his co-operation, with nothing besides. But I believe he would have gone into the fight through sheer love of it. He was addicted to deeds of daring—seemed to court them for sake of the danger.

I had, therefore, no uneasiness about his flinching, or failing me. My only fear was our not being able to get face to face with the enemy.

Would it be possible to retrace my steps to the hiding-place of the runaway?

This was the question that gave the most concern. Less now that the cazador was by my side. After I had told him all, he made light of finding the way. He spoke as if he was acquainted with it. In my zig-zag through the tangle I had observed a tree taller than those around it; not a mangrove though growing among them. It was close to the refuge of the runaway. I had made special note of this, with some vague anticipation it might afterward stand me in stead, if I needed it for a landmark. The need had come sooner than I expected. It was now.

I spoke of it to Gaspardo.

"I know that tree well," said the hunter. "It's a *mahagua* that's grown from a seed some bird has dropped among the mangroves. I remember from having shot a bird from it—a big harpy eagle that had perched on one of its branches. If that's the place, I can go straight to it, though it's now many years since I shot the harpy. Not so much matter about the tree either, if you can only put me on the path you speak of. When a man has scrambled over these roots, trust me for finding his footmarks, even if it's only moonlight. Have no fear, caballero! Lead on; and show me where you came out of the swamp."

Looking to our guns to see that they were in shooting condition, then slinging them over our shoulders, we entered among the mangroves.

Soon as I set the cazador on the track, he took the lead, leaving me to come after.

He did not go fast. It was more important to make sure of not getting strayed. Besides there was the necessity of not making noise—even the slightest. To guard against this we had kicked off our boots, before taking to the trees; and trod the roots in our stockings.

We went well for some three hundred yards; when, in spite of the cazador's wonderful skill, we were compelled to pause.

The moon had suddenly dropped under a cloud, leaving us in darkness so dense that we could no more make out the scratches on the roots. They were too slight to be distinguished in the obscurity.

It was maddening to be thus baffled. To me every second seemed a minute, every minute an hour. For at such a time and on such a matter every moment was fraught with fearful consequences.

My fancy pictured Juanita, as she had appeared in my dreams, struggling to escape from the embrace of the fiendish brutes. Oh! that she could have called out; for now I might have heard, and her cries guided me to the spot where she was captive.

We listened, but could hear no sounds of human voice; only the noises of the night, such as meet the ear in the midst of a mangrove swamp, the groans of the great southern owl, the melancholy cry of the *quabird*, the "gluck-gluck" of gigantic bull-frogs, and the bellowing of alligators. All sounds consonant to our situation, seeming to mock me in my misery. For I was now wretched, despairing, in the belief that after all we should be beaten, and have to go back leaving the captive unreleased. And the thought of such captivity. It was too fearful to bear reflection. I turned to my companion in hopes of hearing some word to cheer me. But no, he only whispered:

"There's no help for it, caballero, but to wait till that cloud drives past. If we attempt to go on without— Ha! What's that, yonder!

light! Carramba! I hope it isn't the *Farrol de Diablo!*"

I looked in the direction pointed out. Sure enough, there was a light, gleaming through the leaves. And as I could tell by the red glare, coming from a reed-fire, and not an *ignis fatuus* as the mulatto meant, calling it the "Devil's Lamp."

Gazing at it, we became satisfied of its true character; and as soon as resolved, we stole toward it.

Gliding silently on we got within less than ten paces of the spot, then stopped to take breath for the final spring, now near. For by this we understood all, and knew, to a certainty, what was before us.

It was the shed of the fugitive slave.

We had approached it by its open side, and could see everything within.

A fire, freshly kindled, was burning on the hearth, beside which crouched the Crocodile, himself. He had the iguan in his grasp, and was almost impaling it on the spit. Evidently the lizard was to be the *piece de resistance* of their supper.

On the bamboo bench were two forms seated side by side; one erect, the other drooping. The upright figure was that of the gay goajiro, the bent one Juanita Aguera. I could see that her hair hung dishevelled, and that her dress was torn to shreds. Also that her countenance was sad, the cheeks wan, the lips pallid, the eyes streaming with tears.

Seeing all this, I had a difficulty to restrain myself from springing forward, and at once effecting the rescue.

Prudence kept me back, an intuitive perception that her peril was, for the time, past, and that it might return if I acted rashly.

We were still some distance from the stage where the last act of this drama would have to be enacted, beyond the bounds of a single spring. We must get nearer before attempting to bring about its *denouement*.

While stealing closer, stepping from root to root, Gaspardo by my side, both silent as ocelots approaching their prey, I heard the speech:

"So, senorita! What think you of things now! Aha, Dona Juanita Aguera! I have you in my power and mean to keep you so—as the cayman keeps the prey he has clutched; this night you and I shall sleep on the same couch."

"No!" I cried, bounding upon the platform, unable any longer to hold back. Then, grasping the throat of the ruffian, Gaspardo simultaneously tackling the runaway, I continued: "Surrender, Rafael Carrasco! If you resist, your couch will be a bed of death!"

Never in all my life was I so surprised at the effect of a speech. It was more ludicrous than tragical—like a farce following bad melodrama. Anticipating a desperate fight with the ferocious maroon and the gay goajiro, it almost made me laugh to see the latter upon his knees, and hear his piteous appeal to me for mercy; while the former was praying in the same strain to Gaspardo.

I left both to the tender mercies of the cazador, who proceeded to bind them hand and foot, neither offering the slightest resistance.

Then turning, I took the rescued captive in my arms.

As she lay upon my breast, her heart beating time to mine, I knew she was safe, pure as when the day before, our lips meeting, she received her first love-kiss.

We left the two criminals in the shed securely tied, to be sent back for and brought to justice, by the *alguazils* of Batabano.

Then, returning over the trestle of roots—my affianced more tenderly conducted than when she went the opposite way—we regained the shore, remounted our horses, she sharing my saddle.

Back to the cafetal, but not there to stay. The *casa grande* was still ablaze, but the flames were less bright, subdued for lack of fuel to feed them. The roof was fast falling in, the red rafters crashing down one after the other. To remain would have been to behold a smoking, smoldering ruin.

We did not, or but for a moment—only to take a last look at the scene of desolation.

Then turning our horses' heads, we rode on for Batabano.

Next morning, the first train of the *camino de hierro* carried us across the island to Havana; and before the hour of *almerzo*, Juanita Aguera was safely lodged in the house of her *tia*, I, too, sharing its hospitality.

Before letting fall the curtain on this little drama of Cuban life, it must needs be told what afterward became of the characters who have figured in it.

Taking the thieves first, left tied as told, they were sent for as promised, and found as we had left them.

Transferred from the frail, palm-thatched shed to a strong-walled prison—the calabozo of Batabano—they were taken out of this, tried, and condemned to death; returned to the jail, and again brought forth, the second and last time for execution on the scaffold.

The after fate of the honest people is yet in abeyance; though it may be said the untutored Creole girl is still a girl, under the protection of her *tia*, in that pretty suburban villa, outside the city of Havana, and her brother is a general in the Republican army, fighting the battles of "Cuba Libre," the brave Gaspardo by his side.

For myself—well, perhaps the less said the better; though I hope, at some day not distant, to revisit Havana, and possibly Batabano, though I may not so much care again to go flamingo-shooting among the mangroves.

A Conjurer's Illusion.

It was announced a few days ago that Hartz, the conjurer, had promised to perform an illusion more marvelous than anything which had ever been done by any sleight-of-hand performer or exhibiter of so-called spiritual phenomena. The performer stepped forward, carrying a thick green rug, probably ten feet square. The semi-circular stage was covered with a heavy Brussels carpet, and at the back between the pillars were hung crimson curtains. The professor said that he had heard it alleged that he had a confederate underneath the stage, and to show that this was not true, he spread the rug upon the carpet, satisfying the spectators that it was uncut.

An unpainted box, about two feet long and seventeen inches deep and wide, was then carried upon the stage and put down in the center of the rug. It had a turnover lid, fastened at the back with three common iron hinges, and two stout iron hasps fitted to two staples driven into the front of the box. A few air-holes had been bored through the top and sides. The box had been put together with clinched nails, the ends being bound with sheet-iron. Three gentlemen from the audience stepped upon the stage at the professor's request, and having given the box a thorough examination, bound it round and round in expert fashion, tying a multiplicity of curious knots at every possible place. Even the rope handles were made use of, and the hasps, after being placed over the staples, were securely fastened by taking a turn through the latter. A narrow red ribbon was tied tightly about the first knot, and sealed with sealing-wax. A canvas cover in the shape of a Roman cross was placed around the box, and the committee bound this around with another rope, sealing the knot as in the other case. The professor's assistant, a full grown man, divested himself of his coat and waistcoat, and submitted to have a long tight-fitting sack of thin muslin drawn over his head and body.

Then, lying upon the box on his back, he drew in his legs so as to enable the professor to get a good grip on the open end. One of the committee tied this tightly with his own handkerchief, and it was further secured by another piece of ribbon, which was sealed. Three common screens were then placed around the box, and the professor and his other assistant and the committee stepped aside. This was at 9:30 exactly. Two minutes later a tapping was heard, the screens were removed, and the muslin sack was seen lying empty upon the box. All the seals were unbroken. The committee untied the ropes and lifted the lid of the box, and the man who had been tied in the sack stepped out, looking none the worse, except for a flushed face, of his close quarters. The sack having been untied, his handkerchief was found in it. The professor had in vain offered $1,000 to anyone who could take it out without breaking the seal, cutting the material, or ripping the seams. He disclaimed any spiritualistic aid.

Khivan Proverbs.

He who steadies himself between two ships will certainly be drowned.

Shame is worse than death.

He who weeps from his heart will provoke tears even from the blind.

A lean horse and a hero in a strange country each look amiss.

When you go to law against the Emperor, God Himself should be the judge.

The wise man strikes twice against one and the same stone.

You may praise the Russian a thousand times, but his eyes will still be blue (the reverse of handsome, according to Usbeg taste).

Young men may die; old men must.

The over-licking (flattering) tongue soon makes a wound.

He who fears the sparrow will never sow a millet.

When the ass bears too light a load he wants to lie down.

The spoken word cannot again be swallowed.

He whose heart is full soon finds a loose tongue.

Smoke rises only from large blocks of wood.

A living mouse is better than a dead lion.

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