

forebodings, miserable doubts, haunted her mind; she began to think her husband's conduct had been the result of Montbelliard's secret machinations; and her dislike to him now amounted to absolute abhorrence, which she vainly endeavored to conceal from him, who had so strangely become the arbiter of her destiny.

CHAPTER XIV.

"With heart of fire and feet of wind,
The fierce avenger is behind!
Fate judges of the rapid strife—
The forfeit death, the prize is life!"

SCOTT.

THE return of St. Amante to Tortuga, and the confusion that followed the disappearance of his child, determined Montbelliard to send Donna Victoria to St. Domingo, to prevent the possibility of any interview taking place between her and her unfortunate husband. To this plan she made no objection, since her child was to be her companion during her sojourn, and she now only lived for his sake. The short voyage, and still more the sight of her darling boy, restored the unhappy Spaniard to the possession of her mental faculties; but her miserable feelings were softened by the tears she could now shed over her ruined prospects and low laid hopes, unperceived and unforbidden by Montbelliard; and she remained in the solitude of the lonely habitation in which he had placed her, for several weeks, without either seeing or hearing anything of him.

The building, though made of wood, and boasting of no outward appearance of comfort, was conveniently, and even richly furnished within. Costly hangings concealed their regularities of the walls, which were also adorned by pictures, wrought in feathers, which rivalled almost the art of the painter; for the plunder of Mexico and Peru had contributed to embellish the apartment destined to Victoria's use. The meanness of the architecture was partly hidden from the eye by the foliage that shadowed the roof, whose flowery garlands attracted the brilliant tribe of humming birds, to sip the nectar they yielded; and the flashing of their wings, as they fluttered from blossom to blossom, gave them the appearance of flying gems of various gorgeous hues.

It was mid-day, and the beautiful but attenuated form of Donna Victoria was bending over her cherub boy, who was sleeping on a sofa beside her, hushed in that soft repose that only innocence can ever know. His gentle breathing and blooming features presented to his poor mother such a picture of purity and peace, as filled her eyes with

the deep overflowings of maternal love and anguish. A sad presage that her own death was near, flung its mournful shadow over her mind, and she sighed as she thought of the fate that perhaps awaited her unfortunate child; and bitter tears rolled down her cheeks. At this moment she heard the voice, the step of Montbelliard, and dreading to be seen by him in her sorrow, glided behind the tapestry to conceal herself from his scrutiny.

Montbelliard was followed by another person, with whom he seemed to be on terms of confidence and intimacy.

"She is not here!" cried he, "yet her nursing is sleeping in the chamber, and therefore, be sure, the mother is not far distant."

"By St. Geneviève! if the mother is half as lovely as the child, she must be a mine of beauty," replied the stranger.

"She was most beautiful, Edouard! ay, still is so, despite her madness; for her dark eye still boasts a magic charm, and witchcraft lurks within its haughty, melancholy glance. Yet I love her not—I never loved her—but she was the light of his existence, and therefore I thought her worth the winning. Revenge is my mistress, Lacroix; I never knew the passion that links hearts to hearts. No woman ever could win mine; and much I marvelled that her husband's fiery nature could become milder under her influence."

"'Twas passing strange, that you could so easily persuade him that she was false," replied Lacroix, since she possessed such power——"

"Ha! ha! had I not proof that would have maddened a cooler temper! The portrait, the glossy ringlet, told a tale of such true seeming as could not be discredited. Edouard! I have seen many die—have slain men before, nor felt remorse; yet when I saw that youthful Spaniard's life-blood ebb away, I thought myself a villain! However, 'twas a short-lived pang; for when I viewed the deceived husband's agonies, my compunction was changed to joy—deep, burning joy! Oh! then my heart swelled high with triumph and revenge, for never did fortune favor a bolder spirit, or more determined hand!"

"Hush, hush, methought I heard a sigh, a deep drawn sigh," said Lacroix.

"No; it was only the breeze wandering among the blossoms. This haughty Spanish lady," continued he, "loathes me, and yet perforce must aid my plans. Thou shalt see her, for to thy care I must entrust her and her child—for to-night, you say the European vessels will reach the coast."

"The wind is favorable," replied his comrade, "and they will not fail to take advantage of it."