

previously seen, had disappeared—there was not even a dog to bark at them.

"The lazy runnions!" cried the Leopard. "The Spaniards must have his *sicsta* whate'er be-tide!"

"We shall see them," replied his attendant, Balthasar, with a smile, "hold the side-ladders for us to mount on board."

"This calm is unnatural," said his master, his countenance becoming overcast.

"Of what are you thinking, master?" asked the attendant, after a pause.

"Did you not remark the sad and embarrassed air of the *Seigneuresse*?" returned the Leopard. "What should she fear from such an encounter as this would seem to promise?"

"Bah! the old witch loves us so much," said Balthasar. "It is natural, too, master! The good Margaret looks upon us as her family, and her heart is moved at the thought that the whole of our party will probably not return. We would feel as much for her; should danger threaten her, I am sure there is not one of us but would risk his neck to save her!"

The old buccaneer was still fixedly regarding the caravel.

"Away with all presentiments!" he cried at last. "You are right, Balthasar; these are but old women's fancies. Let us attend to our duty—and the more so that the caravel has roused itself, and seems willing to say two words to us in passing."

In fact, a few sailors now appeared grouped on the deck. Orders issued from the speaking trumpet of the captain, and two or three bullets immediately ricocheted along near them, as if warning the audacious fishermen to keep their distance. The sibilaters remained silently crouched down, and with Balthasar at the helm, the boat advanced rapidly towards the caravel, which however, seemed little disturbed by their approach. Glancing around, the Leopard saw that the other two boats were quickly approaching. Forgetting all his anxiety, he thought only of the approaching combat, and finding himself alongside the Spanish vessel, he uttered the cry of "Boarders, away!"

The shout was echoed by his companions, who rose, fusil in hand, and opened so close a fire that the few men on deck immediately dispersed, seeking shelter where best they could. The Leopard, who would have held himself disgraced had any one set foot on an enemy's deck before him, leaped on board, and was followed by his companions, brandishing their boarding-axes. No resistance was offered, and most of them threw down their fusils to prepare for the plunder they expected.

What, then, was their astonishment, when all at once a pile of planks, that rose in the middle of the vessel round the *chandeliers* we have mentioned, was thrown down with a loud crash, and gave to view the muzzles of six *pedereros* turned upon them, and the muskets of a hundred soldiers and sailors pointed at their breasts. In the midst of this troop stood Don Esteban.

"Surrender, pirates!" he shouted, waving his sword on high.

The Leopard had never known fear. He did not recoil, like many of his men, but he stood motionless with surprise.

"Joachim, at least, is not here," was his first rapid thought at this moment. "Have at the scoundrels!" he cried, in a voice of thunder, as he leaped on the barricade of planks that separated him from the Spaniards, a cutlass in one hand and a pistol in the other.

The Spaniards fired; the *pedereros* showered their iron contents among the sibilaters; eight of his companions fell round the Leopard. At this moment the crew of the other two boats leaped on board, but there also streamed from below new troops of soldiers and seamen, till then concealed.

"We must no longer look to conquer, but to die nobly!" cried the Leopard, as he saw his faithful attendant, Balthasar, struck down by his side.

He was himself wounded at the same instant in the left arm, and letting himself fall on the corpses of his brethren, he lay as if death-struck. The day was gained by the Spaniards, but a group of adventurers still fought desperately on the other side of the deck, and attracted all the attention of the conquerors.

The Leopard profited by this circumstance. His face stained with the blood of his companions, his eyes half closed, he dragged himself from body to body towards the ladder leading down to the powder room. When he reached it, he raised himself up with a dark smile, and looked round to ascertain if any of the enemy were near. About two paces from him, close beside the open gangway, he saw a woman—a pale, terrified, trembling girl, but still very lovely in spite of all. It was like some resplendent vision in the midst of the streams of blood, the rattle of musketry and the groans of the dying. The poor girl uttered a cry of alarm at sight of the grim and threatening figure that rose almost at her feet, and the Leopard at once recognized her.

"Donna Carmen here!" he muttered. "Ah! now I understand it all! We have been betrayed. Margaret! Margaret! what hast thou done with those who called thee their mother! It was for thee, unhappy girl!" he continued aloud,