

nearer and a surer view and with a better light, of its moaning and feverish occupant, "there he lies, writhing in his last agony, the victim, and not the first, of this vile woman's schemes."

"Oh! an I were but a justice-o-peace," he added after a moment's pause, "I'd have her taken to the long Barrow-head and thrown into the deep, deep sea, and if she swam I'd burn her for a witch—and if she sank I would even leave her to her fate and let her drown,\* and be damned to her.

Poor Bella was completely mystified and bewildered. And not a little frightened withal.

The man, her guide, had stated, distinctly enough, that the story he had told about her lover having been shot and mortally wounded was all a mere invention to inveigle her away to old Matty's hut, a "black lie," as he called it, and yet 'twas all too true,—he had been shot, and what he possibly could mean she could not tell; and ere she could ask a single question, concerning these contradictory statements, or the judgment he talked so much about, he had left the cottage, and was gone, she did not know whither; old Matty however still was there and could easily clear up all.

The patient, on Bella's entering the hut, was a little easier than he had been, and had fallen into a sort of slumber, but so disturbed was it with constant meanings, as manifestly to prove, that he was by no means free from pain. Such at least, was her first impression, as she bent over him and kissed his burning brow, but on hearing her rough guide's story, disjointed and confused though it was, it naturally created some misgivings in her mind, as to the reality of the scene before her; and she more than half-suspected, that she had been the dupe and willing victim of some deep-laid scheme of villainy.

She thought too, from what her guide had said, that old Matty had a hand in it, and she consequently, had no faith in any explanation the old witch, as she had always been taught to consider her, could possibly have given, and therefore she made no attempt to obtain from her, a development of the mystery in which she was involved.

There might be danger in it too, the thought and the conviction, at that moment flashed for the

first time, across her mind that she had acted imprudently, if not rashly, in coming with an utter stranger, and certainly unprotected; and yet, she said to herself, "I am not unprotected either," and added after a moment's pause, during which a sense of her utter helplessness was still more deeply impressed upon her mind, "at least I need not be." And with that, heedless of the witch's presence, she fell upon her knees, by the bed side of him, whose sorrows and sufferings she came to soothe, and whose soul, like an angel messenger of Redeeming love, she came to save, and poured out her soul in fervent prayer to the blessed God to turn her lover from his wicked course of life and to shield and protect herself from the perils to which she might be exposed.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SEARCH.

"THEY sought her that night, and they sought her next day,  
And they sought her in vain till a week passed away."

THE MISLETOE BOUGH.

THE circumstances mentioned in the last chapter were of course not known, either to us or to Bella's own family at the time, nor for some days afterwards, and therefore we remitted not in our exertions to find her.

Young David Millway was indefatigable in searching for her. He had called, as he said afterwards, at every hut and cottage on all that coast, as he thought, for miles away, all at least but old Matty's and how he came to miss it, he could not tell, except from the thought, perhaps but half defined, that Bella would not, of her own accord, have set her foot within the witch's door.

His strongest hopes still rested on the lugger, and he persuaded the officer in command of the Revenue cutter, to hasten off, out of the inlet, to Whitehaven or Mary-Port, or any where else, some twenty or thirty miles away, as if satisfied, from the search he had made, that all was right, but to leave with him a boat, with a crew of half a dozen well-armed men, to watch, unseen, the lugger's future movements.

Ere two days after this elapsed, she had her cargo all aboard, and stood out to sea, and that so far, as to deceive all the watchers except David Millway himself, and led them to give her up, as gone for good and all.

"Wait," he said to his impatient companions "for the ebb of the tide and night-fall, and if by

\* This mode of trying persons accused of witchcraft, even within the last hundred years, was by no means uncommon. Several instances having occurred within that period both in England, and in the United States shortly before their separation from the Mother country. This rage against reputed witches was not, however, confined to England and her dependencies, but extended over all the Christian world as the blood-stained page of its early history will fully prove.