

the bell dumb he tossed the clapper through one of the open slits in the cupola on to the rocks below, and, with one more triumphant glance at the galleys turned and ran down the winding stair.

A moment later he rushed into the room where his cousin Leonora was sitting at the window, waiting to wave a last adieu to her lover when he should appear on the causeway.

"We must shut the gates, cousin, and sound the alarm," he exclaimed excitedly. "There are two galleys full of Levantine scoundrels making for the causeway. I saw them but now from the south terrace, where I was walking, and they may round into view any minute. Why, what is this," starting with affected surprise. "Is Gervase Boscawen departed?"

Pale and trembling, Leonora rose, but ignored his question. "What waste of time is this? Why come prating to me of your pirates?" she cried. "Have you not lived in St. Michael's Mount long enough to know that the first duty when danger threatens from the sea is to ring the chapel bell, so that the poor fisher-folk below may fly hither for safety? Run, if your words be true, and bid Kenrick pull his hardest. Stay, I will go myself, for Gervase is below, and I trust not you to save him from peril."

She hurried from the room, followed by Clarence who had much ado to hide the ugly sneer that curled his lips as he thought of the fruitlessness of her errand. Her father being absent, Leonora took matters into her own hands, ordering the truant Kenrick to hasten to the bell, and instructing the male retainers to close the gates as soon as the fugitives from below should have found refuge. This was by no means the first alarm of which she had had experience, and in five minutes the citadel was rendered impregnable.

Having sent everyone to his post she returned to the window to watch for Gervase, wondering every moment why the bell did not ring out its timely warning. Clarence had sneaked back to the room at her heels, and having despatched him to hasten old Kenrick's lagging steps, she opened the casement and gazed anxiously to the foot of the steep. The few straggling huts lay in unconscious security, the upwreathing smoke telling of the evening meal; and the causeway, sloppy now with the rising tide, was guiltless of passengers; Gervase had not yet finished his descent of the Mount to enter upon that stage of his journey.

Still no peal of warning bell rang out, and the fair *chatelaine* fretted and fumed at the thought that any moment the prows of the corsairs might round the point, and those poor souls below unheeding of their danger. Even as she hesitated whether to leave her vigil to go and see what was amiss, old Kenrick burst into the room with the announcement that he had pulled his arms well-nigh from their sockets, but never a sound from the bell.

The words of amazed alarm that rose to Leonora's lips were never spoken, for at that instant she caught sight of her lover far below, turning to kiss his hand gaily from the causeway. And, away to the left, simultaneously, there was a gleam of oar-blades, as the two snake-like galleys rushed round the point, their small draught allowing them at this state of the tide to come right up to the rocks. Almost before Gervase realised the situation he was fighting with a score of red-girdled ruffians on the slippery pathway, while the rest swarmed among the huts and began scrambling up the steep to the castle.

Armed only with a light sword, the gallant youth made such good use of his weapon that three of the rovers went down before his deadly lunges, and Leonora began to breathe again on seeing that inch by inch he was fighting his way back to the rock. But her eyes were focussed upon the immediate combat, and she made no allowance for the pirates who were pillaging the houses on the fringe of shore. As Gervase sprang clear of the causeway, and turned towards the upward path, a crowd of the sea-robbers closed in upon him from behind, and had him on his back in a twinkling.

From that great height what passed at the foot of the Mount seemed to be done in dumb pantomime; but Leonora, sinking to her knees in prayer, saw one gigantic pirate level a pistol at the prostrate figure, and another, who by his gestures appeared to be in authority, strike it upwards so that it exploded in the air. Then, before she could grasp the full significance of the proceeding, and only thankful that her lover's life had been spared, she saw Gervase bound hand and foot with gaudy sashes, and tossed like a bale of goods into one of the galleys.

THE rest of that evening, aye, and many an evening to come, passed like a dreadful dream to Leonora Basset, and though the serving-men swore to their dying day that she behaved like a heroine

in the brief and successful defence of the Mount, she herself avowed that she remembered nothing of it. Only three of the fisher-folk managed to reach the summit before the gates had to be shut in face of the black-a-vised wretches who hurled themselves in vain against the fortifications, and then, recognising the fruitlessness of the attempt, went cursing down to the beach again.

To follow and attempt a rescue would have been madness, for there were but a dozen men in the Mount, and of the rovers at least two hundred, armed to the teeth. Yet it is on record that when they retired from the walls, Leonora ordered the gates to be opened, and a volley to be fired into the retreating mass, which tumbled three of their number down the slope headlong. And when all was over, she stole back to her apartment like a pale ghost, and strained her eyes through the gathering gloom after the galley which bore Gervase Boscawen to a fate worse than death.

After that dark days set in at St. Michael's Mount. The mystery of the damaged bell was never rightly cleared, though Leonora was moved to suspicion that Clarence Tresidder, having seen the approaching galleys, had removed the clapper so that Gervase might be taken unawares. But when she mooted this to her father on his return, he flew into a violent rage, and swore that it was only a baulked girl's fancy. Hugh Basset had ever favoured the suit of Clarence in preference to that of Gervase Boscawen, being influenced by the consideration of certain mortgages held by his nephew on the Mount.

In face of the terrible havoc wrought by the corsairs at Penzance on the night after their call at St. Michael's, and of the greater calamity of sixty young men and maidens carried into slavery, Leonora's trouble soon faded into insignificance, and she had no one to share it with her but Gervase's widowed mother at Gurlyn. But even sympathy was soon to be denied to her, for, throwing off all disguise, her father seized the opportunity to encourage Clarence to renew his suit, and he, nothing loth, warmly began to play the lover. On the girl refusing to show him anything but contempt, he put pressure on Hugh Basset to forbid further intercourse with the bereaved lady at Gurlyn, and a regular system of tyranny was inaugurated.

AT the end of two dreary years, Leonora, staunch as ever to the memory of her lost love, and as firm in her resistance, was summoned one day to her father's chamber, and found him pacing to and fro in evident agitation. He had only returned from London on the previous night, and she had not seen him since his arrival. Heartless as he had shown himself towards her, she could not but be shocked at his haggard looks and trembling hands.

"My daughter, you have withstood my commands for these two years past; it remains to be seen whether you will withstand my entreaties," he began. "I implore you—on my knees if you will—to wed your cousin Clarence, and so save me from ruin in my old age."

"You have been dicing again in London, father?" said Leonora sadly.

"Aye, and lost more than I could pay were St. Michael's ever so free from encumbrance," was the answer. "It comes to this—that Clarence alone can save me, but will only do so on his own terms. You know what they are."

"You have both taken care that I should not forget them, ever since Gervase was lost to me," replied Leonora bitterly. "Father," she went on in a softer tone, "I would do even this thing for you if it were not that I am persuaded that Gervase will one day return. It is because I have felt so assured of this that I have not grieved as other women might, with tears and wailings, but have held myself for him, waiting for the glad day when I shall see his dear face again."

Any finer susceptibilities which Hugh Basset may once have had, had long since been blunted by prodigal living and consequent difficulties. The ring of affectionate regard in his daughter's voice seemed to offer him a means to his end, and he stole a crafty look at her from the corner of his eye.

The sight of the fair girl gazing wistfully out upon the heaving sea that had borne her lover away should have quenched that which was in his mind, but with him the sign of weakening only strengthened his base intent.

"Leonora," he said softly.

"Yes, father."

"Are you strong enough and brave enough to hear that which in merciful pity I—that is we, Clarence and I—have been hiding from you for these six months? Well then, in my sore extremity, I will speak, and may Heaven soften the blow. Gervase Boscawen was slain on the evening of his capture while attempting to escape by swimming.

We had it from a shipman of Penzance, who was also taken that same night, but returned from bondage among the Moslems last Christmas."

The girl turned and looked at her father, as though she would read his inmost soul; but Hugh Basset, recognising with the gambler's spirit that this was his last throw, nerved himself for the ordeal, and came out victorious.

"Thank you, father," she said simply. "It was kind of you to keep this knowledge from me, though had I possessed it you might have had your way before. I care not now what befalls me. You may arrange whatever best suits your aims and pleasure." And with a wild cry of "Gervase!" she fell swooning to the ground.

HIS point once gained, Hugh Basset was not slow to exact the performance of the contract. Preparations were at once hurried on for the wedding, and Clarence Tresidder, in his delight at long-deferred success, made his uncle a present of the mortgages, and cleared his latest gambling debts. The chapel of St. Michael's, where the ceremony was to take place, was being swept and garnished for the occasion, when suddenly Basset remembered that the clapper of the bell had never been restored since it had been "lost" with such disastrous results. Perhaps its failure to do its duty that night had made him careless about the matter but now the wedding brought it to his mind. His daughter could not possibly depart so far from old tradition as to be married without a bell.

But when he informed Clarence that he had ordered the bell to be put in repair the young man visibly shuddered, and protested that he wanted none of such childish folly. A peal, he said, would be different, but the clangour of one solitary bell, high in that wind-swept turret, would make him downcast rather than merry. It was of ill omen.

Yet Hugh Basset, because of the dislike that made him regard his nephew with a cunning leer of comprehension, insisted on having his way, and the bell was duly put in order in time for the wedding by a workman of Truro. And so that, having served its prime purpose, it should also revert to its ancient uses, Hugh Basset appointed a new and more vigorous watchman, whose business it should be to ring the bell lustily on danger threatening the fastness.

So it was that, all things being ready a month after the bride's consent had been obtained, the wedding party gathered in the chapel on a grey October morning. Outside a low and fitful sea-fog rose and fell by turns, anon wrapping the Mount and all the sea around in drifting wreaths, then suddenly rolling clear of the granite pile and leaving the hoary pinnacles of the ancient building free to a few struggling rays of sun. Inside the chapel all was dark and sombre, so that faces looked dim and indistinct; and above in the turret the bell clanged with a ceaseless monotony more worthy of a funeral.

Leonora, entering with her father, was pleased by the fancy that the ceremony, which was the burial of her hopes, should be announced by that dirge-like knell. But as she approached the altar where the bridegroom was already waiting, the melancholy conceit was destroyed by a sudden access of vigour on the part of the ringer. From the regular strokes the bell broke into a wild and hurried jangle, growing louder and faster with each discordant crash, till it seemed as if the bell would split. The din pleased Hugh Basset's humour, and those present in the chapel—they were all of the household, for no guests had been invited—turned and smiled at each other, catching their cue from the master's face.

And though the service commenced, the bell still rang on, and there was thought of sending to stop the ringer, when the clamour suddenly ceased, and the man himself, bursting into the chapel, changed all their pleasantries to mortal fear.

"Oh, why was my warning not heeded?" he cried. "The Algerines are upon us—landed, and climbing the steep. I fear me it is now too late to bar the gates."

And before the blank dismay caused by his words could be followed by action, the tramp of many feet resounded on the corridor, and immediately the doorway was darkened by a ferocious throng. Headed by the priest the retainers fled in a mass through a door at the opposite end. Hugh Basset's sword was out in an instant, and Clarence Tresidder, with the courage of despair, drew also; but their fate was sealed by the show of resistance. The expectant bridegroom fell across the altar rails stabbed to the heart, just as the old gambler reeled into his daughter's arms, cloven to the chine by the yataghan of a coal black Nubian.

And presently Leonora, borne swiftly down

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