

"Surely, surely."

"Here, before you depart together?"

"Here and now, if there is one to knot us."

"You know that a promise given under coercion does not hold?"

"I know it well, but the word of General Cromwell is enough for me, once it is passed, however given."

"Then take down your sword; I promise, and am well rid of you both."

With a deep sigh of relief Armstrong sheathed his sword and lifted his hat from the floor. Cromwell rose from his chair and paced twice up and down the long room between the great moonlit windows and the table. He paused in his march, looked up at the dim gallery, and said:

"Cobb, come down."

To Armstrong's amazement, who thought he had been alone with the General, he heard lurching heavy steps come clumping down the wooden stair, and a trooper, with primed musket in his hand, stood before his master.

"Cobb, why did you not shoot this man dead when you saw him draw his sword?"

"Because, Excellency, you did not give the signal."

"If I had, what then?"

"He was a dead man before he could move an arm, or your finger was on the table again."

"You have done well. That is what I like; exact obedience, and no panic. Keep your lips closed. Go and tell your colonel to come here."