

"You are cold, good mother!" said the Leopard kindly, pressing her icy hands in his own.

"Keep your mind easy, Margaret!" added Pitrians, "we shall soon be alongside this caravel, and your share of the booty shall not be forgotten."

"My share!" she repeated in an under tone—"My share!"

Her share! how dearly would it be purchased! Her treachery presented itself more vividly than ever to her mind. These adventurers, so fierce to others, had such confidence in her; they looked upon her as their mother, their guardian angel. And it was this very confidence which was now leading them to destruction!

"Yes!" she repeated with a bitter smile; "my share shall not be forgotten."

An hour after this the adventurers embarked on board four boats, being all that M. du Rossey had left at Porto de la Yaca. They numbered only forty, but the troop of the Leopard and Pitrians was composed of the picked men of the association. Three of these boats dispersed, like fishermen pursuing their avocation, with orders gradually to form a large circle round the caravel; the fourth, under the command of Pitrians, remained a little behind the rest, as a reinforcement. The Leopard ordered such of the companions as were not employed in rowing, to lie flat at the bottom of the boats, as much of their success depended on a sudden and unexpected attack.

The caravel, on the other hand, having taken fifty *lanceros* on board at Cape Gracia a Dios, had continued under way all night. Thus, at the end of two hours, the Leopard, whose barque was coasting along, half hid among the projecting mangoes, discovered the vessel by the aid of his telescope. As she drew near he examined her attentively, whilst Margaret, standing by his side, anxiously watched the expression of his countenance.

"You were right, mother!" he said, turning to her with an air of satisfaction; "the caravel has lost her wings, and creeps along like a wounded snail. The deck is completely deserted—she looks like a floating hospital. We shall have an easy prize of it, Margaret! and you shall have a double portion."

At this moment the increasing agony and remorse of the Seigneuresse almost brought a confession to her lips. She felt happy in thinking that there was still time to speak. Queen-like, she could by a single word save the lives of all these men, condemned to death by her deed. But whilst she thus reflected, the Leopard had again examined the caravel, and suddenly exclaimed:

"If I am not deceived, Margaret, I see upon the deck the flutter of female drapery. Have we amazons to dispute the prize with us? Or do they think themselves so safe from danger that they make the deck of their caravel a promenade for ladies? You did not tell us of this addition to their force," he added with a smile.

"He smiles, unhappy man!" she thought; "he smiles—and death so near! Indeed," she added aloud, "I had forgotten. Yes! it is, I believe, the daughter of the captain—Don Esteban."

"You jest, surely," replied the Leopard. "Don Esteban is a young man."

"A young man!" she repeated. "Pardon me, Leopard! You know that at times my memory wanders. The daughter of the captain! what a fool I was! It is his sister who is returning to Spain—to Cadiz."

"'Tis strange," interrupted the Leopard; "her only attendants are two sailors, whose eyes never seem to quit her."

"Two sailors!" echoed Margaret.

"Quite a new style of cavaliers, mother! One would rather fancy them two turnkeys watching a prisoner."

A slight shudder ran through the frame of the Seigneuresse, but she made no answer.

## XI.VL

### THE CONFLICT.

FROM this moment the fate of the filibustiers was decided. Margaret recalled the days of Carmen's childhood, when she cradled the little creature on her knees; she remembered how Carmen, when recovering from a severe fever, would never lay her burning head upon the pillow, unless soothed by the mill of her good Adelaide, and unless her eyes were closed by her tender kiss. From that time she remained silent and motionless. The voice of remorse was stifled in her heart; she made not the least effort to avert the approaching destruction of the buccaniers.

"We must board the caravel, Margaret," said the Leopard; "let us put you ashore that you may not run needless risk."

Margaret pressed his hand in silence, and stepped ashore among the thick mangoes. The boat put off, and the Seigneuresse, kneeling down, seemed engaged in prayer, only interrupted by broken sobs, and by the troubled glance which she from time to time cast over the sea.

The caravel took no notice of the approaching boats. She appeared to be dismasted, for the Spaniards had laid the light masts on the *chandeliers*, a kind of iron fork placed on the middle of the deck. All was still on board; the figures