

PRISONERS OF THE SEA

used to visit the island. I had little hope that my message would ever fall into the hands of those to whom it was addressed. It did ; but alas, too late !

“ De Miguel betrayed us to the French government just as our plans were ripe—for I know not how much gold, and one dreadful day saw a French frigate anchored to our leeward. We were seized without an instant's warning, every soul on the island, great and small, and carried aboard the vessel. All were gagged and bound, but upon the face of the king was forced a mask of black velvet, secured behind by a band and lock of iron. At sight of this outrage on the sacred person of him whom she loved with all the intensity of a mother, my wife fell down in strong convulsions ; when they lifted her it was found that she was dead. I was glad when I saw it. If only it might have been for us all !

“ I never saw the king again. I was confined closely on board ship, being never permitted to speak, and upon landing I was thrust into a foul dungeon of the Bastille, where I languished for many months. How it happened that I was ever again suffered to see the light of the sun I do not know, but certain it is that I was one day taken out and placed aboard a vessel bound for America. I have since thought that it was some strange blunder on the part of my jailors. Be that as it may, our vessel was shipwrecked, and after days of suffering during which I prayed in vain for death, I was rescued in the manner which is already known to you. Heaven willed that this tale must be told. But now my soul can pass in peace.”

The speaker's voice died away into silence ; his head sank upon his breast. Baillot sprang forward in