

the very one, as the bosen is alus a talking about."

"I cannot understand you, Neddy," returned Desmoro. "On my life, I think the people here are all going mad! What have you seen?"

"What hev I heard, yer ought to ask, mister."

"Well, what have you heard?" laughed Desmoro.

Neddy look around, in order to assure himself that no one was near. "I'd better tell what I hev to tell in your cabin," he added, in under-tones.

Desmoro made no answer, but led the way into the cuddy, thence to his own state-room, whither his attendant followed him.

Shutting the door behind him, Neddy sank upon a seat, and dropped his head upon his breast. He was nearly fainting with terror.

"It aren't possible!" he exclaimed, gradually recovering himself. "I must hev been dreamin' that I heard the villain say them words."

"What words? Of whom are you speaking?" demanded Desmoro, wholly at a loss to comprehend the subject of his companion's speech.

Neddy gasped. His senses were in such a state of mizmaze, that he could not sufficiently command himself to answer at the moment.

Presently he spoke.

"Pidgers is aboard, mister!" uttered he.

"Pidgers!" echoed the listener, his color fading instantly at the mere mention of that terrible name. "You are surely demented to say so!"

"Demented, mister! Not a bit of it! I thought so at first, but now I feels that that wretch is aboard of the Mary Ann."

Desmoro took a seat silently and looked into Neddy's face.

"In the name of heaven, Neddy, explain yourself!" said he, in quivering syllables, his face of a deathly hue, his frame all shaking.

Here Neddy repeated to his master the particulars with which you have been already made acquainted.

Desmoro sat transfixed. All at once he seemed to understand who was the ghost of the fore-castle—who was the thief of whom the sailors and the steward had so often had reason to complain.

Yet how had the scoundrel got on board without the knowledge of the sailors, and for what purpose was he there?

"You are certain, Neddy, that you were wide awake when you were on deck just now?"

"As wide awake as I am at this moment, mister; I wish it had been fother ways, and that it had all been a dream."

Desmoro wrung his hands and bit his lips in silent but fearful trouble of mind. He knew not what to do in this new strait into which he had just fallen. Was his arch enemy really so near him—ready to pounce once more upon him?

He meditated for some moments. Presently he spoke again.

"Say nothing of this event to any one, Neddy; discreetly keep your own counsel," said he.

"All right, mister; yer may depend on me."

"I am aware that I may do so, my good fellow."

"What do yer intend to do?" inquired Neddy, in earnest, anxious syllables.

"I shall at once make the captain acquainted with the whole circumstance, as related to me by you," was the answer.

"An' what do yer think he will do?"

"I really cannot form the remotest idea. Heaven help me! my persecutions appear as if they would never come to an end! What have I done to this fellow, that he should thus hunt me all around the world? Neddy, Neddy, you must have been deceived in some way or other!" Desmoro added, quite excitedly; "for, rascal as he is, he would surely never have the temerity to venture here?"

"I only wish I had only been deceived," rejoined the man, in mournful accents. "I knowed the fellow's voice the moment I heard it."

"You knew it! How could you do so, since you had never before heard it?"

"I had heard it before, mister; but the fact had gone clean out of my mind: now it's all come back agin to me," answered Neddy.

"Not a word, mind, to any one!" warned Desmoro, unable to comprehend the man's speech.

"Of course the Captain will question you on the subject, after I have made it known to him; and to him you must be as explicit as you have been to me."

"I understand perfectly," nodded Neddy.

"I do not wish to make Colonel Symure at all uneasy on my account," pursued Desmoro. "I will spare him all the trouble I can, feeling how much he has already suffered for my sake. The sudden and unexpected appearance of this ruffian has filled me with a score of terrible apprehensions. I cannot express the fear that possesses me. I do not exaggerate my dangers at the present moment. I am completely in the power of this unscrupulous knave, who will not hesitate to betray me into the hands of the law—into the hands which will punish me according to my sad deserts."

Desmoro lost no time in seeking a private interview with the Captain, to whom he at once rehearsed the tale lately told him by Neddy, and the reason he had to fear.

Captain Williams was confounded, and, for a while, he sat staring at his informant, unable to credit the story he had heard.

"Do you think there is full dependance to be

placed in Neddy's report?" asked he, after a lengthened silence. "I have heard you say, that since his recent illness, his mind has not appeared to be so strong as before."

"Certainly; yet, in this case, I fancy Neddy is only too correct in his report."

"What did you say this rascal's name is?"

"Pidgers."

"Wait until I lay my hands on him, the thief; I'll make him remember the ship Mary Ann, and also her commander," cried the Captain. "He's the fore-castle ghost, the purloiner of the steward's dainties, eh! Now we can understand how the champagne and the eatables disappeared. Oh, but he shall smart for it as soon as we can catch him! We've a rat in the ship's-hold, have we? Ha, ha! Very well, we'll hunt him out of it, and then we'll cage him, and keep him where he can do no harm to any one."

"But he will proclaim my name aloud—he will publish my identity to all on board!" rejoined Desmoro, in great terror.

"Ah!"—and the Captain fell into a deep fit of musing. "I understand—I understand," he continued, by-and-by. "We must be careful, and leave matters alone for a time until we have concocted some sort of plan for tying the rat's tongue and extracting his teeth. Leave the affair entirely in my hands, and have you no fear for the result. I shall not carry you upwards of sixteen thousand miles across the sea, to see you fall into the shark's jaws at the last—that much you may depend on; so make your mind as easy as you can under present circumstances. The fellow's in the wrong box, as he shall soon discover to his sorrow, or my name is not Andrew Williams."

"You will not, then, take any notice of the discovery we have just made, eh, Captain?"

"Not the slightest. I'll hide my time patiently; I'll endeavor to catch the scoundrel in the very snare he has laid for another. Take you no further notice of this affair, and caution Neddy to be always on his guard lest he let slip a careless word that may betray our secret."

"I cannot imagine when or how the man got on board here," observed Desmoro. "Nay, I cannot understand his being here at all. I am lost in conjecture, and know not what to think. The whole affair is extraordinary and incomprehensible. Wherefore did he not make use of the information he had obtained, as to my whereabouts, before I sailed? I cannot comprehend him."

"We must have patience, Mr. Symure," answered the Captain. "By-and-by, I have no doubt, we shall learn all."

"My late feeling of security is entirely destroyed," Desmoro sighed. "For reasons I know not, this man is my deadliest foe, and he will not rest, I fear, until he has delivered me unto death itself."

"We'll see about that," returned the Captain, with a cheery, reassuring laugh. "We have, on board the Mary Ann, such things as irons, which, by my manhood, he shall feel the weight of, ere he leave the ship. Again I entreat you to put faith in me. I will stand by you in this affair as I would stand by my own brother. I cannot promise to do more than that," he added, feelingly.

Desmoro made no answer, but, seizing his companion's hand, wrung it tightly. He knew the Captain to be his sincere friend, and that he might place the utmost reliance on his word.

Nothing was said to any one respecting the recent event; Desmoro, the Captain, and Neddy, each and all, remained silent; and matters went on precisely as before, while the good ship steadily pursued her onward course.

But although Desmoro was mute, his manners betokened that he was ill at ease. He had become absent-minded and haggard-looking; and Marguerite, who had remarked his changed appearance, often heard him deeply sigh, as if he were oppressed by some mighty sorrow.

Feeling uneasy at these signs put forth by her lover, Marguerite questioned him about them. But he evaded her queries, loth to distress her mind with these new and unexpected troubles of his.

The ship had now passed through the severe and stormy latitudes, and sunshine and fair winds attended our voyagers, and they were wafted along over smooth seas quite pleasantly.

The steward daily grumbled about his missing stores; but the Captain appeared to turn a deaf ear upon all his complaints, and answered him never a word, and the pilfering still went on as before.

The steward shook his head and so did the sailors all, astonished and perplexed that their commander should thus neglect to inquire into this important matter.

Among the crew there was a sailor on board (a silent man, whom none affected) whom all the men forward suspected, and, suspecting, treated with harshness and general unkindness. Many of the crew even refused to speak to him, and he was rendered most unhappy in consequence of all this; and his mind soon became bitter and vindictive as well. He was being unjustly treated, and, unable to prove that he was so, his soul brimmed over with a hidden anguish. He made no complaint of his ship-mates' treatment of him, he only prayed that he might some day be enabled to prove to them how deeply they had wronged him, in deeming that he could be capable of committing such dishonest deeds as those now secretly laid to his charge.

The steward looked darkly on this man, who slunk about, avoiding rather than courting the companionship of his fellows, wishing that the Mary Ann had foundered ere he had shipped on board of her. He was in the boatswain's watch,

and he was none the more comfortable for that fact, as the old seaman was ever sending him aloft to perform dangerous tasks, a feeling of dislike prompting him to select Dodd (so the man was called) to do those offices over which he writhed and inwardly exclaimed.

Dodd's position on board the Mary Ann was altogether a painful one; and he felt it to be such in its keenest sense, and desired, if possible, to change it.

He was wishing that they might run short of water, or of some necessary article of food, that the Captain might be compelled to put into port somewhere, in order to recruit his stores. Then Dodd had resolved to run away from the ship, and leave his miseries behind him.

The man, one day complaining of giddiness in his head, was suspended from his accustomed duties, and suffered to remain below, where he lay in his hammock all the day, quiet and still, none of his shipmates caring whether he lived or died. On the following evening, the men, being all summoned on deck, to put the ship about, Dodd was left lying alone in a dark corner of the fore-castle. He was wide awake—for his malady, which was purely a nervous one, would not allow him to sleep much, and he could see all around him, without himself being seen.

While he was lying thus, watching the oil lamp as it swung to and fro from one of the beams of the deck, a plank in the partition, which divided the fore-castle from the hold, was gradually and noiselessly removed, and a face, half covered with hair, and most repulsive to behold, showed itself.

Dodd held his breath, and fastened his gaze upon the intruder, wondering whether he were one of mortal mould or whether he were one just risen from the shades below.

The stranger looked cautiously around, and then, creeping to the men's biscuit-bag, helped himself to some of its contents.

Dodd did not once remove his eyes from the stranger, but observed him narrowly, the perspiration oozing out of all his pores, as he did so. He understood now who was the thief, who it was that had so long stolen food and other things from the men in the fore-castle, and likewise from the steward's store-room, and he was resolved to punish him for what he had done.

Dodd was not so stupid as to imagine than an apparition required to comfort his vitals with food and drink. He remembered that spirits—if such were really permitted to visit the earth—could exist on air, being only airy shadows themselves. He then made up his mind that tangible flesh and blood were before him, and that, being such, it should be made to ache and smart for its many late misdeeds on board of the Mary Ann. He did not calculate upon being met with much resistance by a man whom he supposed to be some unhappy convict who had stolen on board of the ship, while she was lying in harbor, and was remaining in concealment during the voyage, until the vessel should reach her destined port.

Dodd slid out of his hammock, and, all undressed as he was, sprang upon the intruder, who turning suddenly, let go his spoil and clutched at the sailor's throat, with a grip like a vice.

Dodd, who was weak and ill, made only a feeble struggle, and then, losing all consciousness, dropped like a log on the deck, where he was left to recover as he might.

The vessel being put about, the men whose watch below it was, returned to the fore-castle, to find the sick sailor stretched in cold insensibility.

Well, Dodd was lifted up; and, restoratives being administered to him, he soon recovered his recollection. But he did not explain to any of his shipmates wherefore he had been found out of his hammock, in a deep swoon; he kept his late encounter a profound secret from all, and did not even allude to the advent of the fore-castle's late visitor. He did not exactly know why he maintained this secrecy; in doing so he merely obeyed an unaccountable impulse, nothing more.

In the course of a few days, having perfectly recovered from his recent attack of illness, the man resumed his accustomed duties.

Dodd was now ever on the alert, ever watching and waiting for the reappearance of the fore-castle thief. He had an account to settle with that individual, and sooner or later, he hoped to be able to punish him according to his deserts, and establish his own innocence in full.

Dodd was not an ignorant man, far from it; but he was one who, being injured, would sooner or later seek to avenge himself in some way.

All this while Desmoro pined, anxiety and terror preying upon him, and crushing all his happiness. He knew that his only enemy was near him, and, knowing that much, he quaked accordingly.

Of course you understand the length of this voyage; you are aware that a distance sixteen thousand miles cannot be performed in a week or two; certainly not, when you are wholly dependent on the ever-changeable winds, and your ship has no assistance from steam-engines.

Dodd kept a sharp look-out over matters; but, sharp as he was, he did not succeed in discovering anything further than he had already learned. And, in the meantime, the ship, favored by prosperous gales, pursued her onward course.

The sailor was almost beginning to despair, for the thief, who evidently watched his opportunities, had never once shown himself since Dodd had encountered him in the fore-castle. The steward had, as usual, been complaining of the constant raids committed on his store-room,

which room was between decks, and at no considerable distance from the crews' quarters; but no one, excepting Neddy and Dodd, had seen anything of the robber in question, his existence was a mystery to all, save four of our characters.

The wind now lulled, and the Mary Ann lay in a dead calm, her white sails idly flapping to and fro. And thus she had remained for several days when a light breeze sprang up, moving the ship lazily along, at about two knots an hour.

And thus sped away a whole week, and then another, and another.

Our passengers were in despair at the slow progress they were making. Yet what was to be done, since the Captain and the boatswain had both been whistling for wind, and it had refused to come?

Desmoro was most impatient and unhappy at this delay. And he had much reason to be so, knowing, as he did, how near to him his direct enemy was.

The Captain was on deck, whistling, as was his habit—whistling for the wind, which still refused to obey his coaxing call, when a man from aloft shouted, "Land O!"

"Ay, Pernambuco," said the Captain, aloud to Desmoro, who was standing looking over the vessel's side. "We shall run in there for a few days, I think; we are short of fresh-water, and our sheep are all gone; yes, decidedly it will be best for us to recruit our stores a little."

Desmoro looked up at this.

"You are intending to put into port, Captain?" he asked, his colour suddenly changing. "Do you think such a step would be prudent?"

"I have no choice left, Mr. Symure," the Captain answered. "We must have a fresh supply of water."

Desmoro was silent for some few seconds. "I am thinking of the fellow in the hold—of that rascal, Pidgers," he said, with a shudder.

"So likewise am I," returned the Captain. "Do not imagine that I am losing sight of your affairs. I have them in view at this very moment. Your foe will not trouble himself to denounce you here at Pernambuco. It would not be worth his while to do so. No; he is waiting until we touch British soil, before he will emerge from his present concealment. The scoundrel is a most resolute one, else he could not endure as he does the stifling atmosphere of the hold, and all the many horrible discomforts to which he is there condemned. No fear need you entertain on his account at present, and before we reach England I will devise some scheme or other which shall utterly frustrate all his evil machinations. Have you any trust in me now?"

"Every trust, my kind friend!" breathed Desmoro, gratefully.

"That's right!" responded the Captain, in a hearty manner. "You shall go ashore to-morrow, and stretch your legs a little in Pernambuco. You look at me as if you doubted my word; I promise (heaven willing) that you shall do as I say. Now are you contented?"

"I cannot help feeling a certain amount of dread, notwithstanding all your kindly assurances. I am aware of the bitter foe I have to contend against, and know that I can expect no mercy at his hands, if ever those hands are permitted to fall upon me," Desmoro added, with a deep sigh. "On board of a ship is not like the bush. In the latter place I could have defied this fellow; but here I am hemmed in on all sides, and thoroughly in his power."

"His power!" echoed the Captain, with a gay laugh. "I see you still lack confidence in me and my promises. Well, never mind, we shall see!"

And so saying he turned to one of his officers, and gave him certain directions respecting the vessel's course, and various other matters.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

On the following day, the Mary Ann was lying safely moored in Pernambuco Harbor, and the Captain's gig was lowered, and waiting to convey the master and the passengers to the shore.

Brave-hearted as Desmoro had hitherto been, he was feeling sadly depressed and fearful now. Marguerite remarked his altered manners, which were so different now from what they had ever been before, and pondered much on the alteration.

Captain Williams kept his word. Desmoro took a walk in the streets of Pernambuco, and with Marguerite on his arm.

And the whole party, including the Count d'Auvergne, Marguerite, Colonel Symure, Desmoro, and the Captain, dined at the principal hotel at Pernambuco.

Desmoro tried to put on a happy expression, but that endeavor cost him much trouble, so great was his anxiety and mental pain, so strong was the fear that had taken possession of him.

The weather was excessively hot, and, even when the sun went down, the stifling heat continued. Our friends had returned to the ship, and had retired to their several state-rooms, where, fatigued with the exertions of the past day, they now soundly slumbered. On board the Mary Ann all was peace; no sound could be heard but the slow pacing to and fro of the night-watch, and the bells, as they sounded at certain intervals during the fleeting hours.

Dodd was the man on watch on this occasion—"Surly Dodd," as his shipmates had all learned to designate him.

Dodd was thinking of the fore-castle thief, and wondering in what part of the vessel he managed to abide at this particular time, when scarcely a breath of air was stirring.

The night was beautifully bright; the heavens