

in the hands of a bold, bad man, who continually excited her feelings to a pitch of intensity; yet at the same time regulated the mental torture he inflicted by the health of the sufferer, as the officers of the Inquisition are said to feel the pulse of the wretch upon the rack, to ascertain the pain he is capable of bearing, without giving up the ghost. Donna Victoria at length only wished to live for revenge, and nursed that gloomy and destructive passion in her heart, till it consumed every softer feeling but maternal love, which lingered like a lonely flower in the desert of the mind, surrounded by ruin and desolation.

Montbelliard took advantage of her frenzy; she became his slave—his victim—yet though he treated her with deep homage, and avowed the most passionate love, no maniac wretch ever dreaded his keeper, as the dishonored wife of the Buccaneer Chief feared her betrayer. The very sound of his step made her tremble; she shrank from his glance with terror, and felt relieved whenever he quitted her to follow his lawless profession.

Montbelliard perceived her abhorrence; but with refined art, affected not to see it, although it excited the evil passions of his heart, and made him regard her with hatred only second to that he cherished for her lord. Still he determined to marry her, because he intended to make her the stepping stone of his ambition, as well as of his revenge; and he needed her co-operation in the dark conspiracy he was forming against the life and fortune of St. Amande. Master of the human passions, intimately acquainted with all the inconsistencies and weaknesses of the human heart, he knew that Donna Victoria, notwithstanding her thirst for revenge, would stop short and repent of her purpose before it was half executed. Nevertheless, his desire of torturing St. Amande led him to permit her to assume the complexion and dress of a Black, and appear on the island, that she might occasionally haunt him in his hours of triumph and revelry, to gratify his own malice, as well as to confirm her in the belief of his guilt.

Often, very often, Donna Victoria had wandered for hours round the lonely hut that contained her child, like a perturbed and restless spirit. The fatal night dews steeped her burning brow and uncovered head, without injuring her, or having any pernicious effect on her frame. They even failed to cool the fever that throbbled in every vein. Sleep had deserted her, with peace and sanity; and her scorching eye-balls were seldom moistened by a tear, excepting when the sound of St. Amande's voice, or the cry of her babe, pierced her ear; and then, heavy drops would fill them,

and her falling tears would relieve the anguish of her breast.

In spite of her projected vengeance, she cherished a passionate and jealous fondness for her husband, that had led her to conceal herself in the chapel, and become a spectator of his nuptials, unknown to Montbelliard, and she had availed herself of the confusion that followed Almeria's swoon, to escape unperceived by any of the spectators of that extraordinary scene.

The death of Almeria frustrated the hopes of Montbelliard, and disconcerted all his plans; but fruitful in expedients, he resolved to work on the mind of Victoria by means of her maternal feelings; since, he plainly perceived that she loved St. Amande too well to consent to his death, unless to save the life of her child, whom he determined to steal, and persuade his mother that he was commissioned by his father to murder him—whose anxious enquiries and search he should represent as a refined piece of art.

He had long entered into a secret negotiation with the Viceroy of Mexico, to betray the island into his hands, on condition that he bestowed his daughter upon him, with a suitable dowry; but the Spaniard, who doubted the fact of Victoria's existence, demanded an authentic record to that purpose, under her own hand and seal; and to obtain that document, was the purpose of his present machinations, and he resolved to fling off the mask which his late intemperate language had already partially removed, and dictate to the agonized mother what he no longer hoped to obtain by working on the jealous feelings of the deserted wife.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Tears of grief
Dim her sad gaze; for, lo! a vista dark
Frowns in the distance!"

DURING the absence of St. Amande in the island of St. Domingo, his treacherous associate easily succeeded in carrying off the infant Victor and his nurse, the Indian woman, before mentioned, who was devoted to his service, and secured by his bribes, to enter into his views; and when the pirate chief returned, he was filled with consternation and affliction for the loss of his son, and commenced the most anxious and diligent search for him, in which he was aided by Montbelliard, who appeared to think his disappearance most mysterious and inexplicable.

"Victoria," said Montbelliard, as he entered the apartment of the Spanish lady, the very night he had stolen the infant; "I come to give you intel-