

He spoke with purpose, to enrage his foe. And Frank flashed anger at him. Sotheran saw it.

"That old man in the woods," he said; "he is credited to my score, I think." Ellery was shaking. "Roger," said the captain, "went overboard last night."

"On guard!" cried Frank.

The captain raised his sword and prepared to take position. He looked about him. The deck was level, the sea was slight, the seamen had yielded space for the encounter. He met Frank's eye, and saw that the Whig was pale with eagerness. Trembling like that, he could not fight. Sotheran spoke again—his best taunt he had reserved.

"And Alice," he said; "she is mine."

What consciousness of failure rushed over him? Too long he had delayed to seize his prize; with forty rebels on the ship, Alice was now safe. A spasm of chagrin distorted his features, and Frank saw. All anger passed.

"It is not true!" he cried triumphantly.

"Die!" hissed Sotheran, lunging.

A warning cry from the rebels broke into a yell of admiration. Frank parried when the point was at his throat. He drew away.

"Once more," he said.

The positions were completely changed. Frank was self-possessed. Sotheran was furious. The Englishman called every device to his aid, and rushed upon the Whig.

He might as well have tried to pierce a wall. The slightly moving blade caught and turned aside his fiercest thrusts, his hottest lunges. Yet without pause Sotheran pressed his adversary. Springing, stooping, shifting his position, he sought a score of ways to find