

the joyous song shall no more be heard, but the silence of death prevail!"

At last she approached gently to a group of adventurers who had just left their hammocks, and were now tossing off a cup of hollands. She trembled as she recognised them, and—whether it were the effect of the doubtful glimmer of the dawn, or a wandering of her excited fancy—it seemed as if she were separated from them by a sort of transparent veil, a barrier which she could not overpass. Her feet seemed fixed to the ground; her voice died away in her throat, and she hid her forehead in her trembling hands, fearing lest the joyous companions should read her treason there.

At this moment Pitrians perceived her.

"Hurrah! comrades! here is Margaret!" he cried. "Come away, mother! there is always room for you amongst us."

The Seigneuresse moved not; the tears rose to her eyes, but by a vigorous effort she repressed them.

"What is the matter?" resumed Pitrians. "She is as gay as a starless night and as lively as a thunder-storm."

"Whence can she have come with such a woo-begone countenance as that!" exclaimed Jean David.

"Whence do I come! whence do I come!" she muttered with a shudder. "Can they have guessed it already?"

"Why! she looks a very ghost," said Pitrians.

"Leave her alone! she is in one of her black clouds," interposed the Leopard. "You know she loves not such pleasantries."

"Come! a cup of hollands, Seigneuresse!" said Pitrians, advancing towards her; "it will warm your heart."

He raised the goblet to her lips, but she gazed on him with so grave and sad an expression, that he recoiled in surprise.

"Something has really grieved you, mother?" he enquired in a tone of kindly sympathy.

"I am sad, because a presentiment forewarns me that many of your brethren shall soon perish."

These words escaped her almost in spite of herself; and yet she half hoped that they might be thus warned to avoid the danger that she knew awaited them.

"No more of these prophecies, Margaret!" returned the Leopard; "they only serve to weaken the soul. Rather wish us a good opportunity for a prize. For some time the scoundrels have been on their guard, and we can find neither hutto nor galleon to capture."

"Two days shall not pass, Leopard! without much bloodshed," she said gloomily.

"What mean ye, Margaret? Speak more clearly," replied the Leopard.

"I have learned good news by the way," she replied, her cheeks growing yet more pallid as she spoke.

"Good news!" repeated the adventurers, rising and surrounding the Seigneuresse.

Before continuing, Margaret cast a hurried glance around.

"Where is—where is Michel le Basque?" she asked.

"He went out a-hunting the day of the earthquake," replied Jean David, "and Baptiste, the negro, the only one of the party who has returned, thinks he must have perished."

"Then Joachim Montbars has not returned?" she again enquired.

"No!" was the reply. "Baptiste could tell us nothing of him."

Margaret breathed more freely. Should her treachery involve that generous young man, to whom she felt bound by some inexplicable sympathy, she could scarcely have resolved upon it, even to save her beloved Carmen.

"But your news, Margaret!" urged Pitrians.

"Well, my children!" she resumed with more freedom, "yesterday evening a galleon doubled Cape Gracia à Dios, and is now creeping slowly along the coast, on account of some damage she has met with."

"A galleon! are you certain, Margaret?" cried Pitrians joyfully. "Thunder and lightning! did you say a galleon?"

"I should rather have said," replied Margaret with hesitation, "that to escape you the better, the Spaniards have laden with specie one of their large caravels."

"A caravel!" repeated Pitrians with an air of regret: "I doubt there are not enough of us to attack it."

These words inspired the Seigneuresse with some fear as to the success of her enterprise. Her thoughts reverted to Carmen, and she continued coldly, but with an accent of irony;

"Not enough of you, Pitrians! This is the first time I have heard you speak so. But reassured yourself—this terrible caravel is damaged. She encountered a dreadful tempest which has forced her to return to port; the scurvy has carried off two-thirds of her crew; they have lost their sails, and can only proceed by rowing. Their pedereros were thrown overboard during the storm, as well as most of their ammunition, and unless they load their fore-castle guns with bags of dollars they can scarcely defend themselves. Now, do you think yourselves numerous enough!"

She paused breathless, whilst the adventurers shouted—"Hurrah! a prize! a prize!"