

and danger. Now he roused himself by an evident effort, saying, in the most courteous tone of his sad voice—

“I am sorry if I have annoyed you. On nearing that shore yonder the old air comes to my lips unawares. Do not fret yourself; the mail will not go without you. We shall land directly the wind has gone down.”

This was true. There was a sudden lull, and the boat now shot into stiller water near the landing-place. Just above it stood the mail-coach, obscurely visible, a group of idlers around it, the murmur of whose confused voices came out to them, mingling with the stroke of the oars and the dash of the sea upon the strand. Suddenly, floating across the dark waves, clear as a thread of light, from out the confused murmurs came a few whistled bars of the same wild-weird air which only a moment before had ceased to ring from the stranger's lips. Harold and the boatman involuntarily turned their gaze on him, one in amazement, the other in fear. He was deadly pale, and a ghastly look of pain contracted his brow.

“An old Crusader come to meet you apparently,” observed Harold, speaking with pitiless lightness, because, like an unexpected touch, the sound had given him a nervous shock which he resented.

“Yes—a friend,” said the other quietly, hiding his eyes with a long pale hand.

There was a wild haggard grief in them, Harold thought, which he did not wish a stranger to see. So, slightly remorseful, Harold kept silent till the boat's keel grated on the sands; then he started up joyously in sudden relief.

“All's well that ends well!” he cried gaily, “Here's your fare, boatman, and here's for your lost oar, Well rowed, old fellow! You have pulled a good oar through the gale.”

His companion had already stepped ashore, and was standing close by the boat's prow.

“And here is your well-earned half-guinea,” he said, stretching out his hand with that now obsolete coin in the palm.

But the old sailor dashed the proffered gift aside, and glared at him with face working and eyes full of terror.

“Satan, I defy thee and all thy bribes!” he cried; and in desperate hurry, flinging Harold's valise ashore, he cleared the beach with one lusty stroke, and in a moment was only a dim shape on a darkening sea.

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