

Dost thou seek my life? It is worthless to me, yet will I not be conquered by mortal arm, while mine can wield a sword. The choice then is thine. Peace or war—I am a suppliant for neither.”

“Nay,” he answered, “it must not be. The world would say I feared thee though I feared no other; defend thyself.” As he spoke, he made lunge at my breast, but my sword turned his aside, and in turn mine was drawn to strike; but I thought of his mourning sister, and withheld my arm. Again he struck, and again his blow was parried. He became furious as each successive blow failed of its aim, and struck at random. His blows were dealt with so true a will, and followed so closely on each other, that I was slightly wounded in the neck, when raising myself in my stirrups, I struck at his right arm. My aim was partially turned aside, and only grazed his arm, but the sword flew from my grasp and struck the jaded steed he rode. The animal reared on the slippery battle ground, but ere he saw the vantage he had gained, horse and rider rolled on the bloody field. I too sprang from my saddle, and again grasped my sword, but the work of death was o’er. The heavy war horse had rolled over the fallen rider, and the soul had winged its flight from its mangled dwelling place. My anger had fled with it, and the first tear that ever disgraced my cheek was shed over the gory remnants of one, whose morn of fame had promised so bright a noon.

The combat began in solitude, but there were enough to look upon its fatal close. The victor-chief, with a number of his attendants, and a corps of unwearied troopers, were scouring the field to prevent the useless carnage, and had arrived in time to witness the fall of the young Lord of Loridae. I was placed under formal arrest, and carried back a prisoner to the camp.

Night closed, and the wassail began, and fixed as my mind was, it was not difficult for an unguarded prisoner to leave the victor-camp. After a day so dreadful, it was not deemed necessary to be strict on watch, and all who were not revelling were sleeping after the day’s fatigue. I passed forth unquestioned, and when morning broke, I was on board a merchant-ship, that only waited a favouring breeze, to leave the shore. The breeze came, and long ere noon I was far away on the swelling wave—bound towards my native land—I had nearly said HOME, but there was no home for me. I was again a wanderer with a forfeit life, and even on the wave was I pursued by fate. Some days had we sped on with every sail spread to the balmy gale, and the chalky cliffs were dimly visible as the fifth day waned into deepening twilight. But the clouds were gathering deeply over the late glorious sky, and with the darkened night, the demon of the tempest was let loose, and swept with pitiless fury over the surging waters. Our bark was tost like a bubble on the foam

ing wave, and the winds playing in the shrouds met a wild response in the creaking timbers of the doomed ship, which gave forth music such as that which is heard in the mighty forest, when the hurricanes sweep through its lofty boughs.

The seamen shrank from the performance of no duty, but there was a gloom upon every countenance—all saw that there was no hope, and yet they struggled on, and the helmsman guided her through the breakers with unerring skill. Dawning day brought no hope of safety, and mast after mast fell over the vessel’s side, till she was only as a log upon the water; still she was borne on by the resistless wave, and every eye was strained towards the clouded sky, seeking some brighter spot where hope might find a dwelling-place. It was not fear that held sway over me—I had played with death and sported with danger—and yet these hours of gloom were not without their influence on my spirit.

Noon was passed, and the gale swept on with unabated fury, and I stood upon the deck, straining my eye to the threatening shore, against which it seemed as if we would be every moment dashed. But, ha! the rocks were passed, and human habitation met mine eye. I gazed—it was the hamlet where my unblest boyhood was wasted, and as we neared the point where the stream joined its parent sea, I became familiar with its waters. I seized the helm, and strove to guide the vessel to the river’s mouth, but the hope my action fed was but the offspring of a moment. The vessel struck a hidden rock—filled, tottered for a moment, fell over, and was a wreck.

“Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell,
Then shrieked the timid and stood still the brave.”

A moment more, and every living thing was swept from the sinking bark—and the wild death-shriek—the prayers for mercy were heard over the beetling waters. Some there were who vainly struggled, protracting the period of their pain—some sank placidly to the opening grave, and were seen no more—while some struck out with futile effort to meet a frail skiff that danced over the wave in a vain attempt to rescue the perishing victims of the storm.

It was sport to me to stem the dashing waters, and when all had sunk, I pushed towards the advancing skiff, and rose over the wave, till a few strokes would have brought me to her side, when a sudden pang struck through my frame, and I sank beneath the waters.

There is a blank in my existence—how long I know not but when remembrance came, I was tended by gentle hands in the Castle of Loridae, and a mourning eye was bent over my sunken and hollow cheek. I had been lifted insensible from the water, and borne to the Castle. Its lord was absent, having some days previously left England for the continent, distracted with a rumour of his son’s death, and he