

In a short time Joachim lay in a deep sleep, in a dark corner of the chamber.

The Leopard kissed the pale but calm forehead of the young man, with the affection of a father, and anxiously watched his heavy, but regular breathing. He knew not yet if he had slain or saved him, but he felt now much more confident of his ultimate escape.

About an hour afterwards the churlish cry of the jailor rang through the grated door.

"Come, pirates, come! Up with ye, and march forth!"

The Leopard looked to Joachim with alarm; but his slumbers remained unbroken.

"Numbers Six and Eight!" continued the jailor, "it is your turn to-day!"

A cold sweat covered the forehead of the Leopard. Number Eight had already quitted the chamber.

"Number Six!" repeated the jailor, impatiently. "Must we come to seek you, my fine fellow?"

Joachim murmured in his dreams the name of Carmen, a happy smile passing over his features.

"Carmen, still Carmen!" exclaimed the Leopard. "He loves but her—he dreams of her alone. But the Spaniards want two victims, and they shall have them."

He took the Catalan bonnet of Joachim, which bore the number 6, leaving him his own, which was inscribed with the figure 9. He then imprinted a last kiss on the cheek of his sleeping nephew, wrung the hands of Pitrius and Jean David, the remaining buccaneers, who understood and appreciated his generous devotion, and then joined the impatient jailor.

"Should I meet my brother Bernard," he said to himself, "he shall have nothing to reproach me with. I have given my life for his son, as I would have given it for himself."

Ere they were conducted forth towards the place of punishment, he emptied, along with his companion, the flask given him by Donna Carmen, and its rapid and fatal effects were apparent in a few minutes. Nothing was left for the vengeance of the Spaniards but two lifeless corpses; and in place of stringing the two adventurers to the gibbet, they were obliged to cast them, beside their own dead, on one of the death-waggons we have previously described.

The pestilence continued to rage with increasing fury, although some alleged poisoners had been immolated by the people. Distrust and dread were visible in every countenance. The physicians proposed to establish a *lazaretto* for the plague-struck, but the Bishop of San Fernando had ordered fests and processions, and the citizens preferred the latter means of safety.

No sound of mirth or gladness had been heard for some days in the streets. No young cavaliers were seen walking along displaying their gay attire; no mendicants imploring charity at the corners of the squares; no labourers at work, humming a popular air; no laughing girls standing at the doors of the now silent houses. San Fernando seemed changed to a vast hospital. The silence was only interrupted at intervals, by the melancholy toll of the death-bells, the groans of the dying, the shrieks of the mourners, the rude onths of the yellow alguazils, and the creaking and rumbling of their fatal waggons.

All that the physicians could obtain, by way of precaution, was the shutting up of those houses, the inhabitants of which were infected with the pestilence. A cross of red chalk pointed out, to the yellow alguazils, where a corpse awaited their final ministry.

The sudden death of the Leopard and his companion had the effect of turning the suspicion of the multitude upon the buccaneers. According to some, the pirates were all infected with an epidemic fever, sent by Heaven as a punishment for their crimes. But, according to the general opinion, the Brethren of the Coast had introduced themselves secretly into the town, besmeared the walls of the houses and churches with poisonous ointments, and tainted the fountains with deleterious drugs. To believe these parties, the very air of the city had been by them impregnated with death. The popular terror touched upon madness.

The governor, Don Cristoval de Figuera, determined to profit by this frenzy in give more importance to the execution of the three last adventurers, making of it a grand spectacle to amuse the populace, and thus assuage their fury.

LIII.

THE PEST.

On the following evening, when the hour of execution drew near, the town was decked as for a festival. The balconies were illuminated with lamps and torches; the terraces laden with dwarf oranges and citrons; the walls covered with green branches, splendid tapestries, and gold-embroidered stuffs. The families of noble descent displayed their coats of arms; the wealthy exhibited their household treasures. To see the eager looks of the faces that crowded the windows, to mark the rich costumes of silk, satin and velvet, the jewels sparkling on the fingers of the ladies, and the splendid carcanets round their necks, who would not have deemed them a happy, contented people? who would have thought that deadly fear