

of joy or triumph in the town. The governor had ordered them to be inscribed with numbers, and two of them chosen by lot, to be executed by the garrote each day, in order to prolong the pleasure of the Spaniards, grievously as they were of all such spectacles.

II.

THE PRISON.

When the Leopard entered the bare and narrow chamber in which the other prisoners were confined, he found nothing but calm and joyful countenances. The adventurers were all familiarised to the expectation of death; and besides, the heart naturally raises itself to meet a public and imminent danger. One might tremble and grow pale, proceeding alone to the gibbet: but when companions in peril and death mount the scaffold together, each finds courage for all and through all.

On seeing the Leopard, the Brethren of the Coast uttered a simultaneous cry of surprise and regret.

"My uncle!" cried Joachim, rushing forward, and affectionately embracing him. "We had hoped that, more fortunate than ourselves, you had succeeded in escaping; and now we meet you here, like us, a prisoner, condemned, and on the eve of death!"

"Yes!" replied the buccaneer, "I endeavoured to escape, for I had a duty to fulfil, brethren! I succeeded, and, my vengeance accomplished, finding I could not deliver you by the strong hand, I thought I might be as useful to you in the prison as on the field of battle—and here I am!"

"Alas!" returned Joachim; "your generosity will only serve to involve you in our destruction."

"I promised thy father never to abandon thee in peril, my lad!" said the Leopard. "And besides, I am charged with another mission to thee—a sacred one—"

He hesitated, not knowing how best to divulge the secret he had learned.

"Who can have such interest in me, a poor obscure adventurer?" asked Joachim, with a melancholy smile.

"And who could it be," pursued the Leopard abruptly; "if it were not an unhappy woman, who has indeed been very guilty, but who has been punished as deeply for her faults as her most mortal enemy could desire;—a woman who has lived through long years of humiliation and suffering, only by thy memory, and the hope of one day seeing thee again?"

"I do not understand you," interrupted Joachim, with much agitation. "A mother alone could love thus, and mine, as you well know, is

dead long, long since, and by a most terrible death."

"Thy mother lived, Joachim!" replied the Leopard with equal emotion. "Thy father died so hastily, after the furious transport of his vengeance, that he thought he had killed her, while in fact, she still breathed and lived."

"My mother alive, and it is only now that I learn it!" said Joachim, plaintively. "I had a living mother, like the children whom I used to envy so much, and yet I never saw her!"

"No weakness, my boy!" interposed the buccaneer chief; "we are not alone here."

"Oh Heavens!" murmured the young man; "my mother lived. And when I was a weak and suffering infant, it was not she who cradled me in her arms, who kissed away my tears, who smiled upon me, to make my young heart glad!—My mother lived, you say! Is she now dead?"

"She is dead," repeated the Leopard, "And in dying, she besought that her son would never curse her memory, for she had loved him dearly."

"Curse! I curse her memory!" cried Joachim.

"Impossible! Why did she not come and disclose herself to me? Oh! how happy I would have been to be able to pronounce that single word 'Mother!'"

"Heaven willed it not," said the buccaneer. "She would willingly have looked upon thy face and folded thee in her arms. But in dying she had at least the consolation of having seen her son—without knowing him, it is true."

"How was that, my uncle?" stammered the young man.

"Ever respect the memory of the Seigneuresse, Joachim!" replied the Leopard.

Joachim buried his face in his burning hands, and the vainly repressed tears trickled through his fingers. He understood it all,—he dared not ask the old buccaneer another question.

During the rest of that day many of the Spaniards came through curiosity to visit the prisoners, and were much surprised to notice the calmness and indifference which they displayed, just as if they bore not on their eyes the death-number. Joachim was called Number Six, and the last-comer, the Leopard, was to the jailors only known as Number Nine.

The next morning the visits were renewed, and the young adventurer was startled at seeing among the strangers a veiled female, accompanied by a monk, whose face was almost entirely concealed by his hood.

"Do you not recognise Donna Carmen and Fray Eusebio, my uncle?" he whispered to the Leopard, with much agitation.

"Ah! thou art not yet cured, my poor boy!" returned the buccaneer chief, shaking his head.