

on; and although quite out of danger, and the wound in a fair way of healing, the man had a ghastly and disencased appearance. He eagerly listened to Mr. Strong's account of the scene he had witnessed in the vaults of the Grey Priory, and deeply lamented that he could not accompany his men in securing the booty. A stout seaman of the name of Charlton, who was next in command, was soon roused from his slumbers, and in less than half an hour the whole band were armed and ready for the encounter—Mr. Strong himself accepting the loan of the Lieutenant's pistols and leading the way.

"It will be a great prize," said Charlton to his men. "And if we take Christian, the reward will be divided amongst us."

"Aye, aye, if we take him," responded old Mat. "But there is one that fights for him that is stronger than us all."

"Old Rachel's away!" whispered Joel. "She can no longer help him at a pinch. By Jove!" he cried, turning his eyes towards her cabin, "if the old hag is not just commencing her journey, and is vanishing away in flames of fire!"

All eyes were turned in the direction of the east cliff. A ruddy spout of fire blazed up high into the air, casting a lurid glow upon the rugged cliffs and the ocean scenery. Then came a shout, so long and wild that it echoed like distant thunder along the cavernous shores. Showers of sparks were scattered around in all directions; and when the smoke again cleared away, a few burning brands alone remained to mark the spot where the old hag had domiciled for more than half a century.

"She'll have short prayers at her funeral," cried Joel. "By the living jingo! did not you see old Nick thrust his cloven foot out of the flames as he carried her off on his shoulders?"

"Well! that's an awful sight for a man to rise out of his bed at midnight to see," cried Mat. "I never thought that she would lie quietly and decently in her grave like other folks."

"It is all a trick of the smugglers to put us upon a wrong scent," cried the impatient Strong. "Are you a parcel of women, that you stand gazing upon a few scattered brands, with pale faces and stiffened hair. Let us push on to the place, and endeavour to apprehend the perpetrators of the deed."

"You may spare yourselves the trouble," said Ned Charlton, slinding his eyes with the back of his hand, and looking towards the sea. "I hear the dashing of oars, and there are two large well-manned boats stretching out to sea. Look! look! A fine lugger is rounding Oxford Ness. We are too late. God sink them! I believe that man, Christian, is no other than old Nick himself."

"Let us go to the Priory; they cannot have removed their goods in this short space of time," said Mr. Strong.

"Ah, ha! devil trust them," said Charlton. "Mr. Parson, you know nothing of smugglers. But we'll go, just to satisfy you; but as to any prize they have left behind them, you are welcome to my share of it."

On entering the vaults of the Grey Priory, they found, as Charlton had predicted, the place vacated, the doors unfastened, and not so much as an old stove left to inform against its recent occupants. Mr. Strong felt like a man in a dream. He almost doubted the evidence of his senses, and was not a little annoyed by the rude jokes and boisterous laughter of his rough companions, who returned to the Anchor to drink in the coming day, and repeat over, with a thousand new additions and improvements, the destruction of Old Rachel's cabin, and her flight to the lower regions upon the back of the devil!

Unconscious of what was going on in the village during the night, Mildred was suffering too severely with an intense headache to be able to come down to the breakfast table. Old Abigail brought her a cup of tea, and with many exclamations of wonder and affright, repeated the strange stories that were circulating about the village. Mildred could not doubt for a moment that the cabin had been destroyed by the smugglers, in order to divert the attention of the excisemen in that direction, while they succeeded in carrying off their booty from the vaults of the Grey Priory. Poor Rachel! Her bones were neither to rest beneath the green sward, nor under the deep waves of the ocean, but were scattered abroad upon the free winds of heaven. Had the witch been allowed to choose her own manner of burial, she could not have ordered it more to her taste. "Peace be with her ashes!" sighed Mildred; but there was something rose up in her heart and contradicted her prayer.

After enjoying several hours of refreshing sleep, she was awoke by Abigail, bidding her to rise quickly, as there was some one in the parlor whom she would be very glad to see. "Oh! it is Mr. Strong!" she cried, springing from her bed; "he will tell me all the particulars of this frightful business." Hastily arranging her dress, without even glancing at the glass, to see how she looked, or in what manner she had arranged her toilet, Mildred ran down stairs, and abruptly entered the room.

Her face crimsoned with blushes, as two officers, in naval uniform, rose to meet her.

"Is this Mildred!" cried the younger, seizing her hand, and leading her forward. "Dear little Mille, as I used to call her—good heavens! how