

overcame their terror so far, as to make a sign to the conductors to pause. But as these obeyed not their distracted gestures, and remained deaf to their despairing words, the unhappy women tore the rings from their fingers, the necklaces and precious rosaries from their necks, the golden arrows and other ornaments from their hair, to throw them to the *yellow alguazils*,* as these officials of the grave were termed. The waggon then stopped, and the yellow alguazils, having first carefully picked up their booty, threw off the winding sheets that covered the bodies.

It was a horrible sight that was thus disclosed, of distorted, blood-stained features, and forms that seemed still writhing with pain! But none of these gazers regarded it with even a shudder. Those who recognized amidst that heap of mortality some well-known beloved countenance, glared upon it with a fixed and tearless eye, as if they feared to forget its lineaments, and wished to engrave them deeply on their memory, ere they looked their last upon them. Others stretch-
 ed out their arms fondly, and seemed to say: "Farewell for a while! we will soon rejoin thee!" Those, again, to whom the features of all the dead were unknown, bent lowly in grateful prayer to Heaven.

The Leopard felt a deep sympathy with the grief of the bereaved mourners, for a thought suddenly rushed across his mind:—"It may be that Joachim lies there, amid that heap of lifeless corpses!"

He determined to resolve his doubts, and leaving the sentinel, he pursued the waggon, which had resumed its slow progress, the yellow alguazils having again thrown the winding-sheets over the bodies. A few of the inhabitants, who had re-appeared on the balconies, again levelled their fusils at the buccaneer; but to their great surprise, even while the cry arose—"Fire on the poisoner!" he quickened his pace, with two or three bounds cleared the space between him and the waggon, and leaped into that inviolable asylum.

"Bold as a buccaneer!" cried one of the alguazils.

"And worthy to join our brotherhood!" continued another.

"Sorcerer, pirate, or poisoner," said the third, "thou art welcome! The yellow alguazils drive the most thriving business in San Fernando," he added, displaying the rings and other jewels which had been thrown to them.

The Leopard answered not; he was busily engaged in examining the dead bodies.

"We are the kings of the town," resumed the

first yellow alguazil, "for we levy taxes almost at pleasure, and we are far more feared than the governor himself."

"Take this!" said the second, throwing over his shoulder a ragged shroud; "there is thy royal mantle!"

"And here is thy sceptre!" continued the third, holding out to him the half-empty bottle.

The buccaneer by this time breathed more freely; he had ascertained that Joachim was not among the fatal pile.

"You seem to love hard silver, my masters?" he said, gravely, turning towards the alguazils.

"Well! I am called the *Leopard*—lead me to the governor, Don Cristoval de Figuera, and you shall have your reward. I have nothing in common with you—Obey!"

The insolent effrontery of these men quailed before the calm bearing of the celebrated buccaneer. One of them proceeded to the governor's palace to announce the important capture; but Don Cristoval was so much occupied with the pestilence which had raged in the city during the last two or three days, that he simply ordered the Leopard to be conducted to the same dungeon, in which were confined the other adventurers, unfortunate enough to have survived the explosion of the caravel.

San Fernando was at this time thrown into confusion by the sudden, and seemingly uncaused invasion of a pestilence, the existence of which, however, few were willing to admit. The people preferred attributing to a human and criminal origin, this terrible disease, whose progress they could not understand, and which ran through the veins of the infected, like an invisible poison. This prejudice at least left some hope. Poison necessarily supposes a poisoner, and the cry of the fierce and credulous mob was: "Destroy the snake, and you destroy the venom!"

Until this time the *Vomito prieto*, which had made such ravages among the Indians of the Continent, had remained unknown in the islands. One physician alone thought that he recognized some of the symptoms of this fatal epidemic, and attributed its appearance to deleterious gases liberated by the late earthquake. But his opinion was not listened to, and he was very nearly immolated by the multitude, as being himself a poisoner. A people with whom, as in this case, distrust has increased to a madness, must have victims; it is the only remedy in which their terror has any faith.

This pestilence had so discouraged the hearts of all the inhabitants of San Fernando, that even the capture of eight buccaneers, among whom were Pirians and Joachim, had caused no sign

* Or Constables.