

force that on every side assailed him. His voice was still heard cheering his men—his arm still wielded with desperate skill his blade. His fortune, however, seemed on the decline, his faithful followers dropped on every side; yet the Spaniards still dreaded to encounter a man whom they believed was in league with the enemy of mankind. There was one, however, to whose bold and unprincipled bosom fear was a stranger, who now closed in deadly combat with St. Amante; and revealed in an instant the long smothered hatred of years, by springing upon his foe with the fury of an enraged tiger. Surprise, grief, and anguish at the treachery of his trusted friend, unnerved the arm of the betrayed Chief; and the revengeful Montbelliard would have reaped the reward of his toils and treasures, when a female rushed upon the scene, and seized his arm from behind, just as he was aiming a death blow at the breast of his enemy. Both the combatants started back with horror, for both believed that they beheld an inhabitant of the grave. At that instant Lacroy fired, and his aim was too near to err—the bullet entered the bosom of Montbelliard, who fell groaning to the ground, and she, whose appearance had caused his fall, glided from the scene.

A murderous fight succeeded; but the star of St. Amante's fortune again prevailed—the conspirators were slain, and the Spaniards were driven back, with tremendous loss, to their ships; and it was on his return from the hot pursuit, that Lacroy communicated to the amazed conqueror, the arts that had been used by Montbelliard to separate him from his wife, and the secret that she and her babe were still living; and that it was no spectre, but his own living and injured Victoria, who had saved his life that night.

On the scene of contest, St. Amante discovered the Spanish lady, leaning against the door-way of the fortress, pale as marble, with an expression of wild anxiety on her brow. The Buccaneer Chief caught her to his bosom; and while tears of contrition bedewed his manly features, besought her pardon with the most earnest and passionate entreaties. Victoria hung weeping upon his neck, unable to answer the fond greeting of her lord.

These moments of short-lived happiness were rudely interrupted by the scornful laugh of the dying Montbelliard, who suddenly exclaimed in scoffing accents:

"Aye, my lord duke! take the wanton to your illustrious bosom—dream that she is pure and chaste as unsmudged snow. Yet know, proud man, that she is false and frail!"

Donna Victoria started from the encircling arms

of her lord, and her death-pale features were suffused with a burning blush.

"Fiend! I'll ne'er believe it," replied the Buccaneer, surprised at the mention of his title, and indignant at the accusation levelled against the fair fame of his wife. "Speak," continued he, "my long-lost, my only beloved one, and repel this base traitor's vile calumny."

Donna Victoria made no reply; but hastily covered her face with her hands, the fatal truth burst on the mind of the wretched nobleman, who struck his breast with violence; for even the fair fingers of the unfortunate Spaniard glowed with crimson, and proclaimed in eloquent language, her disgrace and shame.

"He maddened her, poor lady," cried Lacroy, in a tone of deep commiseration; "and, oh! remember your unjust jealousy threw her in the power of a wretch, bent on her ruin. Had you but questioned her, all had been well, and you had both been guiltless—both been happy."

"And happy we will be yet," exclaimed the duke, drawing her to his bosom, "the fault was all my own! Victoria, let us forget the past, and be again each other's world!"

"Heard ye those blessed words, Montbelliard," cried the lady, "those sounds of peace and pardon. False man, thy malice has missed its mark, and I shall die in peace."

Montbelliard groaned, perhaps his death wound pained him, or possibly his last revenge inflicted a bitterer pang than those mortal agonies.

"Speak ye of dying, my beloved!" said the duke, kissing the brow of his wife, and perceiving with horror that her cheek grew of an ashy hue, and that the wild light of her eye was fading to deadly dimness.

"My hour is come, Henri, and I rejoice that thus I die; for how could I look upon thee, and not blush. Yet, oh! I fain would see my babe, fain would bless him once more."

At that moment an Indian woman appeared with the little Victor in her arms, and the dying mother stretched out her hands towards him—her breath grew short, and before the babe could reach the maternal bosom, that bosom no longer heaved with life.

A long pause succeeded, interrupted only by the sobs that burst from many a manly breast. The duke heaved no sigh—shed no tear—but calmly relinquished the inanimate form of his wife to the care of the women; and addressing himself to the dying man, broke the awful silence of the scene:

"Hector Montbelliard," said he, "what could tempt you to betray and dishonor a man who gave