



for his fellow revolutionaries. So far the ruse had been successful, and no suspicion of the nature of his mission had leaked out, either on this side or in Guyaca.

BUT the most difficult part of the enterprise lay ahead, in the shipping of the arms without the knowledge of the British authorities. It would be impossible to get the consignment on board in the ordinary way at any seaport, and Lance Pengarvan, who had received much kindness from Diaz, had arranged that the goods should be sent by the manufacturers in the north to St. Runan's Tower. Then, when "The Lodestar" sailed from Falmouth on her next outward voyage, he would run the steamer into the cove below the Tower under cover of night and pick up the contraband, far from the prying eyes of harbour police and custom-house officials.

The heavy packages were to be stored in the dining-room, and on the momentous night they were to be lowered out of the overhanging window on to the beach by means of a portable derrick which had been constructed by the armament firm for the purpose, and which was contained in one of the cases.

"Now that ought to be just the kettle of fish to suit you, Nathan," concluded Lance. "I know you shape your course by the Bible, but there's nothing in it to stop you there. My friend's cause is a righteous one. The people he stands for are being persecuted by a corrupt and tyrannical President, who is feathering his nest at their expense."

Nathan Craze, who had drunk in every word with growing excitement depicted on his rugged face, thrust out a horny hand.

"Shake on it, Master Lance, I'll be in it!" he declared. "There was a job I had set myself to do, but that'll have to wait. The shipping of your cargo shan't be hindered by such trash as that."

"I was sure that Nathan wouldn't fail us," said Hilda, beaming on the fisherman who had carried her as a baby.

"So was I," added Lance, heartily. "And now I'll go and fetch Pascoe, and we'll get the stuff inside."

He ran round to the back of the house, and Hilda retired into the hall. Antonio Diaz and Nathan Craze were for the moment left alone together.

"You shan't regret this," said Diaz, warmly.

"I ain't doing it for you," responded the big Cornishman. "Leastways only by chance like, seeing as you're a friend of the Carlyons," he repented of his rudeness grudgingly. "Me and my forbears has been Carlyon men for hundreds and hundreds of years."

CHAPTER VI.

The Hush Before the Thunder.

THE next week passed all too quickly, and the end of it saw the break-up of the happy party at St. Runan's Tower. Lance Pengarvan had to take up his quarters on board ship to superintend the shipping of cargo and the signing on of his crew. Antonio Diaz went away to London, having to arrange for the payment of his purchases.

In the meanwhile the iron-bound cases were stacked in the dining-room, and the steel derrick which was to lower them from the window had been placed in position. The conspirators had no reason to believe that their secret had leaked out. If it had, they comforted themselves, it would not have mattered on that lonely strip of coast where the few dwellers were devoted to the young mistress of the Tower.

Hilda had told Mrs. Pengarvan about Wilson Polgleaze's preposterous offer, and the two women had decided that Lance should not be enlightened till he returned from his next voyage. He was absorbed in this clandestine shipment of arms, and there was no need to worry him with an affair which Hilda had so conclusively settled herself. Lance was short-tempered, and would probably have made trouble with his owner's son, which might have ruined the great scheme by get-

ting him discharged at the critical moment. Moreover, the position was a little delicate, since there was as yet no definite engagement between Lance and Hilda. Mrs. Pengarvan, wise woman that she was, did not want to force matters, guessing that her son had set himself to save a definite sum before declaring himself. As for Hilda, she was proudly sure of her lover.

The one thing that caused both the ladies surprise was that the date for the foreclosure of the mortgage had passed, and that Jacob Polgleaze had made no sign beyond sending the usual receipt for the interest, which was duly forwarded to him. It seemed to them that Wilson must have kept his word to intercede with his father, and holding as they did the worst opinion of the young man they were rather astonished. They were in two minds whether they had done him an injustice, or whether he was hatching some subtle scheme of revenge.

"The Lodestar" was due to sail on a Friday. On the preceding Monday Antonio Diaz returned to the Tower from London, there to remain till he should be picked up by the steamer's boat with his consignment of guns on the day of sailing. Lance was away at Falmouth, but he was expected home for a few hours on the day before sailing—to say good-bye to his mother and Hilda, and to issue final instructions for the night of the great venture.

On the morning after his return Diaz strolled down to the cove on the pretext of conferring with Nathan Craze about some detail connected with the derrick which was disfiguring the dining-room. The fisherman had relaxed his stern demeanour towards the stranger on seeing in what high esteem he was held at the Tower, and the merry, volatile southerner and the grim Cornishman had grown quite friendly over the shifts and expedients of erecting the derrick and storing the chests of guns.

Diaz tapped at the cottage door, and his dark eyes sparkled when it was opened by his forlorn acquaintance of the cave. She looked sad enough to renew his pity, but her eyes were no longer red with weeping, and he realized what a pretty girl she was. She even smiled faintly when he inquired if Craze was at home.

"I am sorry, but father is out in his boat round the point," she replied. "He won't be back for a couple of hours."

"That is bad luck, for I had wanted a word with him about some help he is giving us up at the Tower. Perhaps you will ask him to come up and see me—Mr. Diaz is my name—this evening." With the quick tact that was second nature to him he decided to make no reference to their former meeting.

"I will send him up," said Marigold, gravely. Then after an awkward pause she added: "I don't know what you have all done to father—it is Miss Hilda's spell I suppose—but he is a changed man these last weeks. He sits over his tea and talks to me as he hasn't for many a day, and he is more merciful to man and beast."

"That is good, very good, Miss Craze," responded Diaz, playing up to her mood. "What does he talk about?"

"Oh, about the old days when there was smuggling on this coast—stories that his father and grandfather had told him. He hints that he has something of the kind going on himself. But that can't be true?" added the girl, eyeing the visitor with shy inquiry.

"And what if it was? You would not approve at all of anything so lawless, eh, Miss Marigold?"

"Ah, if you only knew!" was the eager answer. "I would approve of anything if it took father out of himself, and made him kinder always."

And, thought Diaz, it would be a good thing if this poor, ill-used maid also had a distraction that would ease her self-centred misery. So he disclosed to her the scheme for shipping the guns, and strove to enlist her sympathy for the cause he had at heart by dwelling on the wrongs of his down-trodden compatriots in Guyaca. His eloquence awakened her interest, but

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