

The Ghoul

329

I well knew the dreadful odds I was facing, yet I was unafraid. The sea was my home, almost as much as the land. I laughed at its buffeting. I defied it. What cared I? What had I to lose?—nothing! And,—I might win Joe for Rita, and make her happy.

In the very spirit of my defiance, I was calling up forces to work and fight for me, forces that faint-heartedness and fear could never have conjured to their aid.

On,—on I battled,—going with the rush,—holding back a little,—and easing out, and out, all the time toward the Rock.

Half an hour passed;—perhaps an hour,—for I lost count of time and distance in my struggling. But, at last, battered and half-smothered, yet still crying defiance to everything, I found myself rising with a mountainous sea and bearing straight upon The Ghoul. As I was lifted up, I strained my eyes toward the teeth of the rock.

Joe Clark,—that Hercules of men,—was still hanging on desperately:—no hope in his heart, but loth as ever to admit defeat, even to the elements.

With tremendous force, I was thrown forward. As the wave broke, I flashed past Joe in the mad rush of water. I grabbed blindly, feeling sure I should miss,—for it was a thousand chances to one,—but I was stopped up violently. I tightened my clutch in desperation. I pulled myself up, and clasped both hands round the ledge of the rock, clinging to it precariously, my nails torn almost from