

he again behold her counterpart—and, like Herod, he will rave for her he doomed to death; or if pride forbid him to make lamentation for the dead, at least for one he deems so—his heart will pine for her, and her forsaken babe's sad wail shall ring upon his ears like his poor mother's knell!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"And strange suspicion whispering Sarai's name,
Now daily mutters o'er his blackened fame;
Then sudden silent when his form appeared,
Awaits the absence of the thing it feared,
Again its wonted wandering to renew.
"And dye conjecture with a darker hue."

BYRON.

THE strange disappearance of the beautiful Spanish lady, excited a considerable sensation on the island; and dark hints and surmises were repeated from one person to another, respecting her mysterious absence. St. Amante was sensible that he was suspected of her murder, and the general pause in the conversation that followed his entrance, agonized him. He became more silent and reserved in his manners and habits; and when he was not at sea, passed his days in utter solitude. The smile that wedded love had called up to his lip had entirely vanished—his bent brow, and deep abstraction, and convulsive starts, did not escape the searching eyes of Montbelliard, who exulted in these evidences of internal anguish. He sometimes even ventured to speak of her whom the Buccaneer never named; and secretly exulted when he beheld the unhappy man start as if he had pierced anew some festering wound, whose burning throb no medicament could soften or heal.

The little infant had never been seen by its father, since the dreadful night when his wailings for his murdered mother filled the desolate home she had once adorned and gladdened. An Indian woman had taken the deserted babe to her bosom; but he still pined and languished for his dear maternal nurse.

That hatred to the Spaniards, that had slumbered for more than a twelvemonth, now awoke, in all its pristine fury, in the breast of the pirate chief. Woe to the Spanish town he stormed—woe to the Spanish vessel he encountered on the sea; for her flag was vainly lowered—mercy was vainly invoked by the vanquished, to whom he now never gave quarter! St. Amante strove to quench the flame that preyed upon his heart, in the blood of the unfortunate Spaniards; and he seemed bent upon exterminating their name in the New World. The wealth of ravaged Mexico and Peru was stored in Tortuga, and his followers

increased daily; for mercenary foreigners, unsuccessful colonists, and free Indians, flocked to enrol themselves under the banners of the dreaded and redoubted Exterminator; while the people against whom he warred believed him to be leagued with unhallowed powers, and rendered proof against ball and blade, by the demons to whom he had sold his soul.

His crew harboured the same wild suspicions; and it was whispered that his lonely hours were spent in converse with the immaterial world; nay, some even imagined that the form of St. Amante was animated by an evil spirit, whose purpose was to torment and exterminate the Spaniards, and who was permitted for a time on earth, to punish them for the enormities they had committed in the New World. Others, less weak and more observing, conjectured that he had drowned the Spanish lady in a fit of jealousy; and had afterwards bitterly repented of his crime, for they remarked, that he never sailed by a certain steep promontory without averting his eyes, as if he expected to behold the phantom of the murdered Victoria to arise from the sullen waters that flowed at its base. It was even rumoured that a female form had been seen standing on the verge of that cliff, pointing downwards, as if to indicate the spot where the dark waves had received her lifeless form.

The deep mystery that enveloped the early years of the Buccaneer chief, gave rise, in a great measure, to those idle tales and wild conjectures; for whatever he had been, it was evident he had never been intended for a pirate. He had never mentioned his birth place or his real name to any one; and although that had not been considered extraordinary in a person so situated, since most of his associates had assumed different appellations from those they once bore, when they became Buccaneers, yet, when combined with his lonely habits, extensive knowledge, and detestation of all low scenes and company—his carelessness of danger, and contempt of the gold he won—it appeared that he was more actuated by hatred to Spain, than by a thirst for what all were toiling to gain; more fond of blood than greedy of spoil.

Some months had glided away since the disappearance of Victoria Toledo; and it was rumoured that the pirate, St. Amante, was about to form a second union with the companion and confidant of his late wife. Almeria Guarda was a beautiful woman, and devotedly attached to him; and though the object of her passionate love did not feel for her the affection he had felt for his unfortunate Victoria, he was grateful for the interest she took in his welfare, and at last determined to