

in hand for an inspection of the Stranger. A long low rakish barque painted white, with a scarlet streak across her port, coming down at top speed on the port tack on a west-north-west course, that must carry her right athwart his own. Her topsails were close reefed, and her yards necessarily braced sharper, but her full spanker compensated for the disadvantage, and both vessels were driving down upon each other at little less than twenty-five knots an hour. As they neared a collision seemed inevitable. To work a ship in such a gale was utterly impossible, and each commander knew that all he could hope for from his helm was a point or two at best. Trumpet in hand Garrett stood by the wheel, whose spokes two of his best seamen found it no easy task to move. As the Stranger came on he could mark that she was heavily armed and manned, but her pennant had been hauled down or blown away if she ever carried one, and nothing but her power and trimness denoted her as a ship of war. On his part the Frenchman could not but recognize in the style of the *Thetis* the stamp of an enemy's marine, a tempting prize for somewhat fairer weather. As they closed a strong sheer of the helm sent the *Thetis* shivering up into the wind, while the yard-arms scraped in the single fleet moment of encounter. That moment was enough for a mutual instinctive observation between the two men who crossed each others path so strangely, with war in the hearts of both, but whom Providence interfered to separate. The French captain, a tall handsome stalwart man of forty, stood easily and unconcernedly upon his quarter deck, wearing his gold-lace and sword as jauntily as he might in Brest Harbour, or at the levee of a king, if there were any king he owned. Raising his cap in courteous salute, Garrett knew in the motion of his lips, the inaudible words of his greeting *Vive la France!* His own reply rang out through the trumpet steady and clear, and his *God save the King!* carried with it a wild cheer from his crew that was heard high even above the singing of cordage, and the whistle of the roaring wind. And then both ships were two hundred yards asunder, and the Irishmen held their breath as they read the black lettering on the receding white counter, and knew that she whom they had slipped away from was *La Belle Bordelaise*.

For, the *Bordelaise* had an evil reputation, and Captain Charles Marie Marioncourt an evil name. Evil, that is, in its terror to peaceful English traders within the narrow seas, for whom the dashing privateer was a hawk of the illest omen. Languishing that moment in dreary French prisons were scores and scores of peaceful voyagers, whose only crime had been that they sailed under our ensign, and only misery it was that they had met the white bulwarks of the destroyer. While scores and scores of weary waiting women wept hopelessly in quiet ports at home, for the men who had left their children orphans and their wives destitute, in the mad frenzy of despair with which they had dared to dispute the will of this fierce Rover of the tricolor.

But on board the *Thetis* there was nothing but gratitude to the Power whose Supreme might had disarmed so terrible a foe. No man there had prescience of another meeting, when these white topsides were to belch floods of flame; when no friendly breeze should as much as lift the ghastly

smoke shroud, and when the thin scarlet line across the grimy port-holes was to have many a rival pattern trickling over either deck. No man there that day, and no man here with us this hour, to whom is it given to read the inscrutable purpose of the Heavens. Were it otherwise, which of them or of us could know one day of serene happiness? Most merciful Disposer of these our petty human cares and chances, for the awful veil that Thou hast tenderly and lovingly dropped before the future, I thank Thee on my knees!

By sun-down of next day, the *Thetis* was in almost smooth water, with the ever-lasting crests of the Asturias in sight from the mast-head. Garrett knew that coast well, and found himself, to his intense disappointment, very much further to leeward than he had reckoned. His calculation had been to run from Vigo or Corunna, to wait there for the first start of wind that might take him round the Gallician promontory, at least to Oporto if not Lisbon. As it was, there was no help but to carry on everything to San Sebastian, a shelter he had proved of old, and a harbour of refuge, then as always, without its superior in the world for craft of his tonnage.

And a harbour that never looked lovelier than on that May morning when it stretched its two white arms lovingly to welcome the wave-worn *Thetis* to its protecting bosom. Nestling confidently in the shelter of the glorious mountain range whose peaks still echo with the fame of Roncèvalle and of Fonterabia, with the blue ripple of old ocean creeping fawningly to kiss its shining sands, and to murmur its fondness in each listening cliff-cavern, bending graciously down to welcome its old acquaintance to its embraces,—Garrett acknowledged the seductive allurements of the little port with a fervor to which its own beauty and his recent toils lent zest unspeakable. Seventy-three years later, the Lady who should wield the sceptre of the Spains was to find her dishonored exile from the land of her wicked royalty embittered beyond all other influences, in that it hurried her from the same happy refuge, and lent poignancy to her long years of remorse in the recollection of her latest hours of dominion spent in the daintiest retreat within her realm. To Garrett it was nothing but a fairy nook, waiting the occupation of Alice, queen of all that was beautiful.

As the brigantine glided slowly in, a British ensign was dipped in her honor from the peak of a fore-and-aft schooner moored just inside the Mole. Half an hour later, as the hands were furling sail, Captain Robert Lynch, of the *Borneo*, came aboard to greet his old fellow-townsmen. The *Borneo* had missed the last convoy homewards, and the season's trade being dull and her commander prudent, had wintered in the friendly port where the *Thetis* so unexpectedly found her. How long more Lynch would have kept her there, nobody, not even himself, could have easily told. But he brightened up marvellously in Fitzgerald's company, and, after dinner in the latter's cabin that evening, came to the daring resolution of venturing out in consort. So both vessels lay comfortably at a single anchor, waiting only the wind's permission to tempt the seas once more.

Through all which weary days Alice was left mournfully desolate. Even now there are no post-offices at sea, and in those days were very few on