

and the devil, I've heard say, is apt to take care of his own. While you and Miss Rosier remain just without, I am willing to strait and shroud her, and that's more nor any one else dare do in the village; but as to stay all night with her in this old hovel that has witnessed so many of her deviltries, not all the money in king George's treasury should tempt me to do that."

"Cannot you get a companion?" said Mildred, who was anxious that the last rites should be decently paid to her unhappy relative. "I will pay you whatever demand you consider reasonable."

"Money will not bribe one of us to do that. There is neither man, woman, nor child in the parish of Dunwich, that would stay for an hour after dark in Rachel Lagon's lair."

"Not singly, perhaps; but together."

"No, no, Miss, it's all one and the same. If the devil came, as come he will to take her away, he would raise such a smoke in the cabin that we should not be able to see one another; and who knows but that we might all lose our wits in the dark? I will lay out the body and fasten the door, and I and my husband will be here early in the morning to see what has become of her."

Whilst the old dame was employed in this sad and revolting office, Mr. Strong and Mildred paced slowly and sadly along the edge of the cliff that fronted the cabin door. Mildred's heart was oppressed almost to bursting, and it was not long before the good minister drew from her a full confession of what had passed between her and Captain Tasker. This affair appeared to her friend in such a light that he determined to lay the whole before her mother, and entreat Mrs. Rosier to send Mildred to her relations in London until Christian had left the coast.

In the meanwhile he resolved to seek the smuggler in his place of concealment, which he had learned from the incautious Mildred, and endeavour to persuade him to relinquish his pursuit of an innocent girl, whose intimacy with him must ultimately end in her ruin.

It was with this intention that he concealed himself in the vaults of the Grey Priory, on the evening of the very day which succeeded the death of old Rachel; and how this errand to the lawless robber in his den, succeeded, has already been told.

#### CHAPTER XVII.

I cannot yield—I will not yield.

The man I love, to thy stern will!

Those angry threats my heart have steel'd

To cling to him through good or ill!

BURNING with just indignation at the manner in which Captain Tasker had received his pious and

well-meant interference in behalf of Mildred; and firmly resolved to save her at any risk from becoming his wife, Mr. Strong proceeded at a rapid rate along the path that led to the village. The compassion which he had felt for him during the relation of his eventful history, was lost in deep resentment at the unworthy treatment he had experienced at his hands. He no longer felt the least hesitation in giving him up to the doom he so justly merited; and he was intent upon reaching Mrs. Darnham's, and giving the necessary information to the revenue officer, who lodged at her house, before the smugglers could have any opportunity of removing their goods.

As he hurried along the moonlit path, he perceived a figure wrapped up in a long great coat, walking to and fro, with his face bent towards the ground, evidently searching for something which he had lost. As he approached the crouching figure, wondering who it could be, who was abroad at that late hour, what was his astonishment when he discovered the well known features of old Gardner. The old man had just turned his back to commence a new search; and so intent was he upon the object of his pursuit, that he did not notice the minister, and continued talking to himself in a low, monotonous tone of voice.

"Alas, alas!" he muttered. "What a loss! I can never replace it. Yes, it is gone for ever. Well, I am the most unlucky creature in the world. To think that I should discover such an inestimable treasure, to lose it in such a silly way."

Knowing that the antiquary was not over gifted with the good things of this world, Mr. Strong concluded that he must have dropped his purse, and although he was vexed at the interruption, he felt that it would be but a kind and Christian-like action to stop and enquire what was the matter.

"Ah! Mr. Strong, is that you? My good and reverend Sir, I am glad to meet with you just now, for your eyes are so much better than mine; and this confounded moonshine lies so white upon the ground, that it makes all objects appear alike. I have met with a very heavy loss. A very heavy loss indeed."

"I am sorry to hear it, my dear Sir. Where did you drop it."

"Somewhere hereabout. But I have been looking for it for the last three hours; and I begin to think that old Nick himself has abstracted it, on purpose to annoy me."

"How much money might it contain?" asked the compassionate minister.

"Money! Lord, Sir! do you think that I would have been walking here all night in search of money? Alas! the treasure that I have lost, money could not buy."