

good or evil predominant. It wore an expression of hardy, patient endurance.—About the mouth were the strong lines of physical power, and the thick shaggy hair shaded a brow, whose solidity and breadth belokened anything but a simpleton.

I fancy I must have loved power and strength even then, for I know my childish spirit seemed to recognize more affinity with him than with his wife, who was by far the kindest looking person of the two.

But whatever I thought of them, I am sure I must have had memories of far different scenes, for I well remember that I resented, as an indignity, my having been brought to that humble dwelling.

I was only weak, for I had no sooner completed my survey of the desolate looking apartment, than I was forced to lay my head back upon my sea-weed pillow; and it must have been half an hour before I was able to speak. By this time the woman had completed the preparation of breakfast, and approached me with a porringer of warm goat's milk, and coarse bread. But I put it haughtily from me, and rising up in my bed I exclaimed

"I don't want any of your breakfast, if you'll just tell me what I've been brought to this nasty place for."

"I reckon 'twas as kind a thing," growled the man at the fire, "to bring you home here, as to a' left you out o' doors to die, along with that dead woman I found you fastened to, two weeks ago on this mornin'."

"Dead," said I; "mamma isn't dead, is she?"

"Well, I guess you won't find any on 'em anythin' else but dead, that was out on the lee-shore that night. They're all gone barrin' you, and we might as well a' left you to die, if you can't carry a more civil tongue in your head."

"Well, go away, please," said I, more gently to the woman, who still stood at my bed-side. "I can't eat my breakfast this morning."

"Poor little critter," said the woman compassionately; "belike she's lonesome, you ought not to told her, John;" and she turned away. I lay there in a kind of stupor—I was not old enough to realize how strange was the Providence which had preserved only me, a helpless child, among all that crew of bold, strong men, not old enough for prave and thankfulness; and I was only sensible as I lay there, still and quiet, with closed eyes, or a deep desperate feeling of hate and anger, against I knew not what—the sea, the storm, the ship, almost against the very people who had died, and left me alone in the world.

## CHAPTER II.

Mine was surely a strange childhood.—I grew up there, in a fisherman's lonely hut, on the Cornwall lee-shore. The fisherman and his wife had no children, and they loved me, and were kind to me in their way. The woman soon found out that my errant wandering could ill brook confinement, and she ceased her attempts to teach me knitting and net-making, and allowed me to wander whither I listed, only exacting that I should bring home at night a certain quantity of sea-moss, which her husband used to carry for sale to the next market-town, a distance of some twenty miles.

Perhaps, to one of my temperament, this hardy life was not without its advantages, at least it was singularly free from temptation. No Indian maiden ever led a life freer or more tameless. I used to scale cliffs, from which the boldest hunter would have shrunk back appalled, and, standing

on their jagged summits, laugh a defiance to the eagles, and toss back my long black hair, with its sea-weed coronet, a princess in my own right.

Neither the fisherman nor his wife knew how to read, and I grew up in a like ignorance; and yet I was by no means void of one kind of education. I could tell where the eagles hatched and the sea-birds hung their nest,—where the tallest trees lifted their great arms, praying to the pitiless sky, and where the stormy winds lashed the waves to widest fury.

My keen eye could discern in the distance, each little cloud no bigger than a man's hand, and afar off I recognized the coming spirit of a blast that should be strong to strew the sea with wrecks.

One night—I must have been about thirteen years old—I had climbed the very top of a high cliff, known as the Devil's Tea-kettle. It was a singular place—steep pointed, and jagged rocks hemmed in a basin, on whose sandy bed white shining pebbles lay bleaching in the sunlight. I had heard terrible tales of this strange charm. The peasantry said it was the brewing-place of the waters of the stream of death—for never were the waves known to rise high enough to fill the basin, but that some goodly ship went down in sight of land, with all her freight of precious souls.

I had never seen the waves boil in the Devil's Tea-kettle, but I had been told that never had they surged so high, so wild, so mad, as on that fearful night when I was dashed upon the lonely shore and the storm-spirits clasped hands with the winds and shouted forth my mother's requiem.

I think I must have been born in a storm, for they were to me the familiar faces of dear old friends—I loved them, and on this night of which I speak, when I had climbed to the topmost ledge of these spectral cliffs, I planted there my bold, firm step, and, looking forth to sea, laughed merrily. And yet a handsman would have said it bade fair to be a beautiful night. The sea was very calm—too calm—for it was the lull before the tempest. The sun was going down into his subterranean palace of clouds, flinging back over the waters the lengthening robe of his glory, and over opposite the moon, like a fair young bride, was climbing up the east, with a star or two for brides-maids, going forth to be wedded to the night.

Oh, it was a beautiful scene. I have looked on such, in later years, till my heart ached with their quiet beauty. But it ached not then! I clapped my hands as I looked forth over the waters, for there, in the far distance, was a little cloud. It was a pretty thing enough—quite in keeping with the scene—white and soft, and fleecy as an angel's wing. But I recognized it—I knew it was no seraph coming nearer—but that, as in their funeral processions at the East, they send far on, in advance, white-robed maidens, scattering flowers, even so now had the advancing spirit of the storm, twin-leagued with darkness and despair, sent forth this peaceful herald before his face. And I knew from its position, and the rate at which it scudded before the wind, that it was to be a fearful storm—no gentle breeze to rock a child's cradle, but a Euroclydon, to lash the deep sea into fury.

Oh, how high my heart swelled as I looked on it, and shouted in my glee, that the Devil's Tea-kettle would boil well to-night. But I think it was not from any native malignity. I desired not death, but excitement. I wanted a wreck, it is true,

but then I would have braved death itself to save the lives of its victims. But the sunset glory faded out from the heavens, the moon climbed higher, the white cloud widened, and I sprang down the cliff, and gathering up my basket of sea-moss, walked slowly home.

I did not sleep that night. My little room opened out of the one where I first found myself, and which was at once sleeping-room, kitchen and parlor, for the fisherman and his wife. About midnight, I heard a sound. It was a signal gun—once and again it boomed over the waters. Hurriedly dressing myself, I roused the fisherman from his slumbers, and, putting on a cloak and hood, stole unobserved from the dwelling. My feet paused not till I had reached the top ledge of the Devil's Tea-kettle. Merciful Heaven! the waves seethed and boiled there like mad. What a sight! It frightened even me, who had never known fear before, and springing down the rocks, I fled, as if a whole army of fiends were pursuing me.

I hurried along the shore for a few rods, when the light of a lantern flashed full in my face, and I paused. It was John. "You here, child," he said, in a tone which had more of fear than anger. I think he was glad to have some human eyes to gaze on the terrible scene, beside his own. The moon, which had shone out fitfully as I stood beside the Devil's Tea-kettle, was now buried beneath billows of black, surging clouds. It was wild—it was pitch dark. Only now and then some vivid flash of lightning would show us in the distance a great, black-looking ship, like some fearful phantom, bearing down upon the shore.

At intervals the signal guns would boom over the waves, like the sullen roar of some wild animal, or some human voice would shriek out wildly, madly, hopelessly for the help which came not. Oh, it was a terrible sight to stand there and watch that mighty ship, hurrying helplessly to its death. I looked till my soul grew sick—I could no longer. I sank down upon the cliff where I was standing, and clasped my hands across my eyes. I did not see the struggles of the great ship, but I heard the sullen, deafening crash when she too struck upon hidden rocks, and went down, helplessly in sight of land. I heard the crash, and, putting my fingers in my ears, ran inland till my breath was spent.

And then the early summer morning dawned. We had stood there three hours, though it seemed to me not as many minutes. So long had the good ship struggled with the waves—so long her brave crew died a living death of anguish and suspense. As soon as the earliest dawn-rays commenced to light my path, I turned my footsteps homeward, and at the door of the hut I met John, bearing a senseless figure in his arms.

"This is all that's left of 'em, Agnes," said he, with a sadness unusual to his tone, and entering his house, he laid his half-drowned burden down upon the sea-weed couch. His wife had already opened the windows and lighted the fire, and she hastened to apply vigorously all her stock of simple restoratives. Her care was presently rewarded, by seeing the stranger's eyes unclose, and catching the faint sound of his irregular breathing.

It was several days, however, before he could rise from the couch where he had been placed. On the morning of the fourth day, he slowly approached the window and sat down. "My friend," said he to the fisherman, "I owe you already, more than