

"Well, about midnight, the Spanish ships will join them; and then, the game's our own—and hark thee, Edouard, there be many Buccaneers will join us—they care not whom they serve, so that wine and spirits are plentiful, and they hear the clink of dollars. Therefore, tremble, O mine enemy! thine hour is come—the hand of thy fair wife, on whom thy soul so fondly doated, hath fired the train that blows thee to perdition!"

A wild cry broke in upon the ruffian's speech, which was succeeded by a dull heavy sound, as if some one had fallen to the ground. Montbelliard rushed behind the arras, and immediately returned, bearing the inanimate form of Donna Victoria in his arms. The eyes of the sufferer were closed; but the agonized expression of her death-like features, and the large tears that slid from beneath her long dark lashes, down her fair cheek, seemed to indicate that the blow that had deprived her frame of motion, had not entirely crushed the sensations of her mind. Deep sighs heaved her bosom, and threatened momentarily to exterminate her existence. Montbelliard did not feel disposed to tarry for the sure but tardy hand of sorrow; for he took a pistol from his belt, deliberately cocked it, and was about to put an end to the life and sufferings of his victim, when his comrade seized his arm.

"What are you about to do? Have you the heart to slay a lovely and defenceless woman?"

"Lacroy, thou shouldst never have taken up the trade of a pirate," rejoined his companion, in a sarcastic tone; "nature surely intended thee for a woman's slave! Why, death were the best boon that I could give her. A single pang releases her from the dire retrospect that must await her waking; I tell thee it were merciful to put her out of pain!"

Lacroy shuddered. "Nay, though you refuse to listen to the voice of pity, let not interest plead in vain. The Viceroy will demand his daughter, and while you hold a pledge so precious, you ensure the performance of his promise."

"Oh, you know nothing of the heart of woman! Betrayed—wronged—disgraced—deceived and maddened! think you she will remain a passive instrument in the hands of him who blighted her peace and fame, and destroyed her happiness! We have still her son, and to the childless Viceroy he will be dear as his mother. 'Tis an unlucky business, and lays low my loftiest hopes, which were founded on my union with her. We must be content with gold, Lacroy, and return to Europe with our gains, instead of winning realms in the New World; but see, she wakens. Release me, and a single bullet ends her woes for ever!"

"She shall not die, by heaven! Unhappy,

injured lady, let her live," cried Lacroy, continuing to hold back the right hand of Montbelliard with a powerful grasp.

The object of this unwonted sympathy suddenly disengaging herself from the arms of Montbelliard, sprang, and with one bound gained the half open door, and fled with frantic speed towards the thick embosoming wood, that almost shut out the deep blue sky with its impervious foliage; but fast upon her flying footsteps followed the Buccaneer, and once he nearly grasped her garments, and would have seized his prey if he had not stumbled over a new fallen tree and measured his length upon the ground.

The Spanish lady, winged by despair, redoubled her efforts for escape.

"Ha! we shall lose her in the thicket's maze," exclaimed Montbelliard, while Lacroy assisted him to rise; "but this shall stay her flight." He fired upon the fugitive, she tottered—the ball had evidently struck, though she did not fall. Her fierce pursuer raised a shout of triumph; but his exultation was premature, for his victim rallied her fainting powers, and with the speed of thought, plunged into the covert of the wood.

With the keenness of a blood-hound, Montbelliard tracked the steps of the unfortunate Victoria by the red stream that issued from her wound. At length he reached a deep ravine, through which rushed a mountain torrent, on whose turbulent waters he perceived the veil and mantle of the Spanish lady floating, who most probably had found in its dark bosom a cure for all her woes.

"The chase is over!" he cried to his panting comrade, I have tracked the wounded deer home to her quarry. She is deeply engulfed in these foaming waters; yet would that this evil had not so fallen out, since by it the Spanish Viceroy hath lost a valiant son-in-law. But, courage, Lacroy, and our fortunes are made. If the wind continues favorable, Tortuga will be our own, and my revenge will be complete."

His companion did not immediately reply, for the events of the morning had wrought a mighty change in his mind; and better feelings, that had been laid asleep by a long course of crime, awoke in his bosom, and he with difficulty repressed the indignation that the death of the beautiful Spanish lady excited there; but was she really dead? A wild hope that she had escaped by some stratagem, lurked at the bottom of his heart; and he determined to seek the spot and examine it himself, for he felt himself an accomplice in a barbarous murder; and despite his crimes and lawless habits, such an enormity as that had never stained him. He made some trivial remark to Montbelliard, and they returned to the house.