

innocent blood," answered Don Fernando, sternly. "High birth only renders evil deeds more conspicuous, nay, more infamous! The Exterminator is well known to Spaniards; we will not quarrel about his title. Yet, hark thee, fair cousin, in a few days I storm this nest of piracy. I know each pass—each watchword—and many, even in Tortuga, will aid me to destroy the pirate. Return with me, and I will delay, nay, give up my promised vengeance—will forget the patriot, and be unjust to Spain, for your sake, and for the sake of your unhappy child."

Donna Victoria regarded her cousin with a look of amazement and horror, and then threw herself at Don Fernando's feet, and, bursting into tears, said in a tone of passionate entreaty: "Do not ask me to give up my consort? do not offer me such a cruel alternative! I will persuade him to retire to France with me and his little one, and to quit this fearful life. Delay your design for a few weeks, if you would not drive me to desperation." She fixed her beautiful and streaming eyes on his face, with a look of despairing and most eloquent entreaty.

Don Fernando Toledo could have encountered death in its most dreadful shape—could have endured the most agonizing tortures without a groan,—but he was not proof against his lovely cousin's tears.

"Victoria," he replied, tenderly raising her up, "you have conquered for the present; the Buccaneer is safe," and he dwelt rather scornfully on the word. "I compromise my country's honor, but I cannot bear to see you weep. Would to heaven, I had never seen you." He drew her to his bosom, and unsheathing his rapier, severed one of the long black ringlets that hung over her shoulders, kissed her brow, and rushed from the ajoupa, leaving her in a state of extreme agitation and alarm.

She lingered some moments in the hut, in the hope of seeing him return, but he came not; and she thought she heard the distant sound of a carbine, and, trembling with apprehension, she quitted the hut, and cast many a hurried glance around the deepening gloom, in search of him, and then returned to her own home, full of doubt and perplexity.

CHAPTER VI.

"I have't—it is engendered Hell—and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light."
SHAKESPEARE.

"I ALMOST relented when I beheld him fall," muttered Hector Montbelliard, as he leant over the bleeding form of the murdered Spaniard. "Surely

the gallant deserved a better fate. I have shed much blood, nor felt remorse till now. Would that my carbine had hung fire, or found a less sure mark. Away vain scruples, idle regrets; what has a Buccaneer to do with ruth or mercy? His death was necessary to my great revenge. Tremble, O mine enemy! for I have found a vulnerable part, and thou shalt feel me like a two-edged sword. He cannot doubt the evidences I offer. The dark ringlet stained so deeply with the vital current that flowed from his heart. The portrait! Yes, these silent witnesses will plead against her, with proof so strong that he must deem her guilty."

Thus spoke the pirate, while the muscles of his face moved convulsively, and every nerve shook with contending emotions. "A mighty power has aided me," continued he. "Accident, or rather my destiny, led me to listen to their conference yesternight, and chance put me in possession of their secret. There is one too, whose weakness I have fathomed, and I will tempt her to bear false witness to the tale I tell. I did not cross his path—I had well nigh forgotten the injuries—the bitter wrongs of early years, and fame and fortune promised to compensate my labours. He came, the robber, the supplanter, and stole the guerdon due to my trials and my blood; maintains his empire over a breast that scorns him, and lords it in Tortuga as in France; but my hour is come. Fate has decreed his fall—I'll torture him—stretch him on a mental rack, and then—Ha! ha! he counselled me to wed Almeria Guarda. I scorned the idea, although the maid is fair. Perchance, Lord Duke, she shall be matched more nobly than with me. But I waste time in words. I must conceal this deed, wash from my guilty hands the tell-tale stains, and bury deep in the earth, the murdered body."

He raised the insensible form of Don Fernando Toledo from the ground, and bore it into a neighbouring thicket, where he dug a shallow grave with his cutlass, and consigned the remains of the noble Spaniard to the bosom of the earth, and returned to draw the snares he had laid still closer round his devoted and unconscious victim. What arts he used to induce Almeria Guarda to aid his guilty purposes, never transpired. However, he was but too successful.

The news of St. Amande's victory preceded his return to his associate and valiant partizan; and Hector Montbelliard hastened to congratulate the man whose peace he was then treacherously undermining; but there was a visible embarrassment in Donna Victoria's manner, that did not escape the quick observation of the villain, or even that