

A hand was laid lightly upon his shoulder, and a voice which was not unknown to him, exclaimed: "Earl Bellmont."

"Welcome, Captain Kyd, right welcome," answered the Earl, turning and offering his hand familiarly to the Buccaneer. "By my coronet, I had given up all hopes of seeing you, or else I had thought myself mistaken. It was indeed then, the ordinance of the Adventure Galley that echoed through the town at dark."

"Say rather of the Vengeance," answered Kyd.

"But Vengeance, no longer," replied the Earl, with a smile. "You must change these cut-throat titles. King William would well nigh go crazy did he dream that he employed a craft with such a blood-thirsty name. But come, we must not dally in idle words. What detained you so long? Why came you not hither immediately upon anchoring?"

"To say the truth," replied the Buccaneer, "I have been in New-York before, and there are those with whom I care not to renew acquaintance. I therefore waited until the lateness of the hour should effectually shield me from the danger of recognition."

"It is well, and, indeed, I know not but wisely," rejoined the Earl, "for should our plans miscarry, none need know that the Adventure Galley has ever been within our harbor. Whence came you last?"

"From Plymouth, and now bound in quest of adventure."

"Whither go you first?" inquired the Governor.

"To the Indian Ocean."

"Are you all prepared to sail? Do you lack any thing?"

"Nothing. My bark is in perfect trim; every thing is in readiness, and I but wait for my papers and a breeze," replied the Buccaneer. "To-morrow if please you, I'll spread my canvass, and trust me, ere I again anchor this side of the Narrows, I shall have won such renown, that Fame will have bruited my name from one end of the known world to the other."

"I believe you, Kyd," replied the Earl, impressively. "I know you are possessed of a daring soul, which no danger or hardship can awe. I know that if once roused, there is that in your bosom that will make even devils turn pale with envy, but I pray you keep your temper in subjection, and above all, forget not your allegiance to your King. How think you the name of Robert Kyd would grace the commission of a frigate—ay, as its commander?"

A smile forced itself upon the lips of the Buccaneer, as he could not help evincing his satisfaction at the prospect of having a man of war committed to his charge.

"You are silent as though you doubted it," continued the Earl, arguing a different conclusion from the seaman's silence. "Believe me, I am in earnest. Should you return successful—and whether you do or not, rests with yourself—none shall be more richly and honorably rewarded than you. You shall walk our streets, and figure at the court of royalty, the envy of the envied. Wealth shall be at your command, and the highest veterans of Britain's navy shall be proud to serve under one who has rendered his country such essential service—that of ridding its seas of the vultures that prey upon its commerce. The Union Jack shall be lowered to your flag, and the name of Robert Kyd shall be a watch-word and battle-cry to strike terror into the ranks of piracy and crime."

The countenance of the Buccaneer grew pale and flushed by turns, as the Earl held out these inducements, and as he ceased speaking he grasped his hand, exclaiming—

"I will—by Heaven it shall be as you say. My banner shall carry death wherever it goes, they shall hear my name with trembling, and the guns of the 'Vengeance' shall be to them a scourge more devastating than the plague. Give me my papers; to-morrow shall begin a new era in my life."

"To-night—this very hour must you sail," said the Earl, giving the package sealed with his arms. "You must away before it is known that you have been