FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

F. E. M. NOTLEY,

Author of "OLIVE VARCOE," ETC., ETC.



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FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

CHAPTER, I.

"BOAT ahoy!" cried a gentleman in hot haste, as, running fast, he reached the quay on the Devonshire side of the Torpoint Passage.

"The ferry-boat has just started, sir," said a boatman; "and

she won't be back for half an hour good."

"Then I shall lose the mail!" exclaimed the gentleman, in a tone of intense vexation.

"I can row you across, sir, in time to catch her."

"Out with your boat sharp then, my man?"
"All right, sir—she'll be ready in two minutes."

The traveller watched the adjusting of the gear and launching of the boat with a curious impatience. He was a young fellow of about twenty-two, tall, handsome, and full of health. He had never overworked his brain, and was not given to nervous fancies, yet at that moment he was filled with an ugly foreboding that the loss of the ferry-boat would bring misfortune.

"And I rode so hard to catch it!" he said to himself.

This mental ejaculation increased the strange anxiety within him, and his feverish desire to hurry across the river grew stronger.

"How long the fellow is!" he cried: "His two minutes are

growing to ten."

the

He took out his watch, and was observing with wonder that only three minutes had elapsed, when a quick step made him look round. Then he started and turned away suddenly, with a flush rising on his face.

"It is the same queer customer that I out-raced on the road. By jove, the fellow can't be going into Cornwall too!" "Boat is ready, sir."

"So am I," returned the young man, jumping into it instantly.

"Pull away for your life!"

The boatman, with the oars in his hands, was just dipping them into the water, when the stranger who had a moment before arrived on the pier sprang into the boat, and with a quiet smile on his lips, took his seat opposite to the young traveller.

"I beg your pardon—I have hired this boat," he observed, in

an angry tone.

"Pray excuse the liberty I take in intruding on you," returned the other, in a courteous and strangely sweet voice. "I have lost the ferry-boat like yourself, and my presence will not, I hope, inconvenience you. It will be a gain to the poor man. Half a guinea, boatman, for your best speed."

What could Harold Olver say? He repressed a burning desire to hurl the intruder into the sea, and answered with a sort of

civil sullenness that he was welcome.

"There is no time for a row," he said to himself. "I should

lose the mail if I stopped to fling the fellow into the tide."

The boatman rowed hard; the sweat poured from his brow, the muscles of his strong arms quivered; he seemed to be straining every nerve, and his eyes had a strange dilated look.

Harold glanced at him with a little bewilderment, and told himself that he was over-anxious to earn that unlucky half-

guinea.

As the twilight deepened, a gray shiver crept over the water with a chill breeze which roughened it, and the waves, rising before it rapidly, made rowing difficult. The man only rowed the harder, and his fixed eyes seemed to gather terror with every stroke of his stout ears.

"I'll take an oar if you like," said Harold Oliver, looking at him with the same odd bewilderment in his mind. "This capful

of wind seems to give you half a scare."

The man made no reply, but by a motion of his eyelids indicated an extra oar lying at the bottom of the boat. As Harold rose quietly to reach it, the intrusive passenger began to whistle softly.

"Whistling raises the wind—so sailors say," observed Harold; "and we have enough already. What do you say to putting up

a sail, boatman?"

The man only shook his head, and Harold, in his light-hearted way, answered his question himself

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"Ah, of course it wouldn't do! With wind and tide both rushing up the river, we should make Saltash instead of Torpoint if we sailed."

With a cool air Harold dipped his oar into the sea; but in the momentary cessation of the boatman's efforts, as he changed sides and dropped one oar, the boat quivered and was spun round by the tide, with her bow turned from the Cornish shore.

"Give way, sir!" cried the man angrily. "There's a squall coming."

A sudden rush of wind swooped upon them as he spoke, and the boat, being broadside to the waves, was nearly turned over, while Harold was flung from his seat, and the oar swept from his grasp like a straw. For an instant the frail craft was at the mercy of the sudden storm, but the sailor silently recovered his dropped oar, and brought her head round to the wind with a few swift and steady strokes.

"I think you had better sit still, sir," he said to Harold, as that young gentleman gathered himself up a little ruefullly; "I haven't another oar to spare."

"Oh, I'll pay you for the one I have lost!" returned / Harold, with a laugh. "But, all the same, row away. We have lost time, and we seem to have drifted far above Torpoint."

This was true, and it was only dimly through the sea-mist and gathering darkness that the opposite shore loomed out, with the large ferry-boat faintly visible, discharging her passengers on the hard.

Harold glanced towards it anxiously, while the oarsman took a swift look, and bent again to his work with the furious energy and odd scare about him which the excitement of the squall had for a time quelled. The cool stranger meanwhile continued to whistle softly the same weird air which through the wild rush of the wind had fallen distinctly on the ear; and now the small sharp piping sound, as it beat on Harold's brain, filled him with an irritating sense of something forgotten yet familiar—a thing for which the mind groped dimly, as for a lost path in darkness.

"Ah," he exclaimed suddenly, "I remember now—you must have picked up that queer old tune in Syria?"

"Yes," said the other, raising his dark eyes for the first time to Harold's face. "Have you been in Syria?"

"I am sorry to say I have; and my rascally Arabs used to howl that tune outside my tent till I hated the sound of it."

"That is curious; it is an air of the Crusaders. Languages die, but a tune lives always."

This remark elicited no reply from Harold, who was peering

earnestly forward towards the shore.

"We shall miss the mail!" he cried. "Surely I see the horses being led out."

"The coachman will wait if he sees us, sir," said the boatman,

in his hurried scared voice.

"But the night is growing black as pitch—he won't see us!" cried Harold excitedly. "I wish you would stop whistling," he added, in an angry tone, to the stranger—"it sounds so cool. You are not going on, I suppose?"

"Not by the coach," returned the other quietly. "I have a

horse waiting for me."

"Ah," said Harold—"I hope he is a good one."

This remark was intended to be slightly offensive, for Harold was excessively annoyed at the prospect of his journey being delayed, and somehow he illogically considered the stranger's presence to be the cause of his losing the mail. Nevertheless, when the unwelcome intruder, instead of replying, raised his eyes and let them rest for a moment on Harold's, the depth of sadness in them caused him a strange revulsion of feeling.

"Poor chap—looks like a soldier and a gentleman; going home

perhaps, and expects to find everybody dead."

In this disjointed way the careless young man's thoughts ran, half pitiful, and yet threaded with an angry repugnance, a sort of nervous longing for battle with his enforced companion.

"If he would talk, one might not feel so much inclined to throw

him overboard," continued Harold to himself.

As if in answer to this thought, the stranger said, in his mar-

vellously sweet courteous voice-

"I owe you an apology for thrusting my companionship on you in this unwelcome way ! but, if you knew by what sad necessity I am compelled to journey into Cornwall this night, you would excuse me."

"Don't mention it," returned Harold. "I am sorry if—if bad news——". He stopped, remorseful, reflecting on the joyous er-

rand which was the cause of his own journey.

"That old tune now," continued the other, setting aside his sorrow, whatever it might be, in courtesy—"so you found it in Syria still? It is very ancient—an old battle-song of the Crusaders."

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But the strar coast-line with unconscious of h "Ah, poor old fogies!" said Harold. "What a mistaken, queer, battered old crowd they must have felt themselves to be—the few that got home, you know—when they found their sweethearts married to somebody else, their wives also perhaps, and their castles in the hands of their bosom-friends or brothers. I wonder if they lived ever afterwards upon cockle-shells and a pilgrim's staff."

"You hold the modern idea that all things are laughable," remarked his companion, with a quiver of angry contempt in his voice. "Those who returned, as some did, to languish out the rest of their lives in chains and darkness in some foul dungeon, felt the horror of their position, not the humor of it."

"You are over-serious now," said Harold, staring at him, with

a curious sensation in his nerves.

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His companion made no reply, but began to whistle again in the same soft persistent way, while Harold felt his ears tingle with irritation as the small piping sound made itself heard shrilly through the howling of the wind.

"That is an exasperating tune!" he said angrily.

At the moment that he spoke, from amid the darkness shrouding the Cornish shore a bright light shot forth and vanished. But in the instantaneous flash the mail-coach had appeared like a vision—a man harnessing the wheelers, the passengers climbing to their seats, the guard in his scarlet coat standing by, horn in hand. At this sight Harold started up in consternation.

"There is no chance for me now!" he cried. "The mail will

be off in two minutes."

"Sit down, sir," exclaimed the boatman, "or a worse thing will

happen to you than losing the coach."

The young man fell back on his seat with a strong word on his lips; he felt full of anger from head to heel. He would have been glad if his hateful companion had given him a blow which would have yielded him the chance he longed for to relieve the tingling of his hot blood in battle. Why had the fellow intruded on him? He felt as though the storm was of his raising and all the consequent delay his work.

"I shall be a firm believer henceforth in the old superstition

that whistling raises the wind," he said angrily.

But the stranger had ceased to whistle; he was regarding the coast-line with mournful, wistful eyes, and seemed as completely unconscious of his companion's chargin as he had been of the storm

and danger. Now he roused himself by an evident effort, saying, in the most courteous tone of his sad voice—

"I am sorry if I have annoyed you. On nearing that shore yonder the old air comes to my lips unawares. Do not fret yourself; the mail will not go without you. We shall land directly

the wind has gone down."

This was true. There was a sudden lull, and the boat now shot into stiller water near the landing-place. Just above it stood the mail-coach, obscurely visible, a group of idlers around it, the murmur of whose confused voices came out to them, mingling with the stroke of the oars and the dash of the sea upon the strand. Suddenly, floating across the dark waves, clear as a thread of light, from out the confused murmurs came a few whistled bars of the same wild weird air which only a moment before had ceased to ring from the stranger's lips. Harold and the boatman involuntarily turned their gaze on him, one in amazement, the other in fear. He was deadly pale, and a ghastly look of pain contracted his brow.

"An old Crusader come to meet you apparently," observed Harold, speaking with pitiless lightness, because, like an unexpected touch, the sound had given him a nervous shock which he resented.

"Yes-a friend," said the other quietly, hiding his eyes with

a long pale hand.

There was a wild haggard grief in them, Harold thought, which he did not wish a stranger to see. So, slightly remorseful, Harold kept silent till the boat's keel grated on the sands; then he started up joyously in sudden relief.

"All's well that ends well!" he cried gaily, "Here's your fare, boatman, and here's for your lost oar, Well rowed, old fellow!

You have pulled a good oar through the gale."

His companion had already stepped ashore, and was standing close by the boat's prow.

"And here is your well-earned half-guinea," he said, stretching out his hand with that now obsolete coin in the palm.

But the old sailor dashed the proffered gift aside, and glared at

him with face working and eyes full of terror.

"Satan, I defy thee and all thy bribes!" he cried; and in desperate hurry, flinging Harold's valise ashore, he cleared the beach with one lusty stroke, and in a moment was only a dim shape on a darkening sea.

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"Why not asked Harold, his seat.

"She's far t gone on her er her now," said Harold laughed and turned to see how the stranger bore the appellation bestowed on him; but he was gone, and his retreating figure had already vanished in the crowd and dimness.

"Well, he might have said 'Good-night, and thank you,'" thought the young traveller, with an odd little laugh. "Never mind—I am glad to be rid of him. He is rather queer, and I am not surprised the old salt took him to be the great nameless."

Shrugging his shoulders, Harold strode forward to the coach.
"How are you, Jarvey? Here's my valise. And I've be-

spoken the box-seat. Hope you've kept it for me."

"All right, sir!" returned the many-caped Jehu, touching his hat with his long whip and giving the young fellow a smile of recognition. "But you'll sit behind a poor team to-night, Mr. Olver. We have pretty nearly had a fight over the cattle this evening—that's what has delayed us. You have had a rough row across the Passage, sir?"

"Pretty stiff," returned Harold, flinging up his valise for the man to catch—"blowing a gale and dark as a bag. Without that flash of lightning I doubt if we should have found the land-

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"The ostler swears it wasn't lightning. That's just what caused the row, sir."

"Not lightning?" Then what was it?"

"It was the quarest light I ever seen in my life, except waunce afore, and that was more years agone than I can mind," interpose the ostler, looking up from his work of harnessing the teams. "I was a boy then, and I went to fetch out the horses for the mail, jist as I did but now, when the same quare light flashed out and blinded me, and, when I rubbed my eyes and got out of my daze like, the best hoss was gone!"

"Because you left the stable door open, buffle-head!" retorted the coachman. "Exactly what he did again to-night, sir; and the black mare broke loose and has shown us a clean pair of heels. It is a sorry beast we have in her place; and, bad as he is, we had

to wait twenty minutes till he was fetched from a farm."

"Why not have spent half that time in catching the mare?" asked Harold, as he settled himself with great-coat and wraps in his seat.

"She's far to seek by this time. The mare was wanted, and is gone on her errand, and the hoss isn't foaled that can overtake her now," said the ostler, as he held up his lantern and examined the harness all round with peering eyes. "Catch the ribbons, Jarvey! It's all right; it waient be my fault if the coach breaks down, as she did that night twenty years agone, when the same thing happened as happened now."

"Ah, I mind that night well enough, Bill!" remarked the landlord of the little posting-house that horsed the coach. "Folks may laugh, but that same night Squire Carbonellis was drowned in his own park, crossing a stream that a boy might jump over with a whistle."

"Not Mr. Carnbonellis of Langarth?" cried Harold, turning eagerly towards the man with a startled look.

But there was no time for answer—the coachman had gathered up the reins, the guard blew a sounding blast on his horn, the ostler with an upward toss of his hands, released the leaders' heads, the team plunged forward, and his Majesty's mail started on its journey through storm and darkness.

CHAPTER II.

The lamps sent weird flashes of light on the dark hedges, bringing their wintry bareness into fleeting view; the wild waving of boughs overhead moaned and creaked in the rough wind like the song of the storm, which the whirr of the wheels accompanied; while the beat of the horses' hoofs kept time to this wild night-music.

"We shall have a rough journey," observed the coachman gravely.

"I never heard that Mr. Carbonellis of Langarth was drowned," said Harold, letting his thoughts break into words hurriedly. "Is it true?"

"True enough, sir," was the answer, given in the sort of tone which implies a graver fact held back.

Silence followed this reply. Harold felt a nervous irritation tingling through his veins. Young Carbonellis was his college-friend: he was going now to Langarth at his invitation. Never through their long friendship had he named the fact respecting his father's death, which now by a mere accident dropped from a stranger's lips. His sister was Harold's betrothed; she too had shown the same reticence—never in their most intimate converse

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On reachi instant to br of the waves ing darkness rugged shore had she touched on this sad subject. Why was there any mystery in the matter, and by what curious combination of circumstances was it connected in that stupid landlord's mind with the running away of a frightened horse?

As if in answer to the mental query, the echo of a horse's wild gallop came borne on the wind, floating from a hill opposite,

the long ascent which lay dimly before them.

"Can you see any one riding sir?" asked the coachman. "You have younger eyes than mine."

Harold bent forward and peered into the gloom eagerly.

"No; it is too dark. Stop! Yes, I do see a horseman. He is riding furiously."

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"Yes—as far as can judge in this dim moonlight. Certainly,

if not black, the horse is not a light one."

"Jim, there goes the mare!" said the coachman, in a voice which sounded strangely full of meaning, as turning round to the guard, he pointed with his long whip to the top of the hill, where where for an instant, like a phantom, the distant rider stood out against a moonlit lowering sky, and then vanished.

"Ah, I thought so when I heard that devil's tune whistled out so loud and clear!" returned the guard, as, standing up, he leaned over the roof of the coach to bring his voice nearer.

"Whip up the team, Jim, and let us try to pass him."

"Much good that would do," rejoined the other. "The off-leader

would break down on that job in less than a mile.

Nevertheless he quickened the pace of the team, and the coach was gallantly drawn up a third of the hill at good speed; but here the borrowed horse showed signs of distress, and, soon falling into a walk, the mail was dragged but slowly along for the rest of the ascent.

The echo of that fierce gallop ahead of them still reached the ear, though growing more and more faint, till it was lost in a deeper, fuller sound, which mingled with the sough of the wind, and in a moment was rocognized as the wild roar of waves

rushing upon a rugged shore.

On reaching the top of the hill the coachman drew rein for an instant to breathe the panting horses; and now the white gleam of the waves was visible as they tossed and broke amid the heaving darkness of the sea. Down far below, all along the black rugged shore, a snow-line of foam flashed, tossed, and broke; and

here and there, amid the white boil, the jagged points of huge rocks were visible, as the rush of the waves retreated, or the gleaming spray dashed up their rough sides and caught the faint light of the crescent moon.

"A wild sea and a wild night, sir," remarked the coachman to Harold, as again the mail plunged forward, and the sea spray, driven above the cliffs, met their faces with a cold salt touch. "It's always a wild night when that man rides."

"And who is he?" asked Harold.

"Ah, that's a question, sir, that has been asked many a time,

and has never been answered yet!"

"But, if the man steals horses," persisted Harold incredulously, "I can't understand his not being discovered and hanged."

"I never said he stole horses, sir."

"You said he was riding the missing black mare."

"So he is; but he won't steal her."

"Then the man is a mystery?" said Harold.

"That's exactly what he is, sir. And whether he is flesh and blood, or something one don't like to talk about, is more than

either you or I will ever be able to tell."

"I don't see that; and I can't believe in ghosts riding off on other folk's real live horses," returned Harold, with a laugh which sounded mockingly in his own ears, as the sea-wind met his lips and carried it away.

"Nor in their coming across the ferry in other folk's boats,"

said the coachman, with grim humour.

"Was that the man —and Harold's voice took a different key, while an odd thrill crept over his flesh.

"That was the man, sir."

"And you say he is not a horse-stealer—though to my mind

he looks like a very daring one."

"The horses come back to their stables, sir, and money enough with them to make it worth their owners' while to keep quiet—that's how the matter is worked."

"Well, it is a queer story," said Harold.

"You'd say that, sir, if you heard the whole of it."

At this point in their talk the coach was descending slowly a long steep hill, and the guard had got down to attend to the drag, some slight hitch being in the chain; and now, looking up, with the moonlight shining on his weather-beaten face, he held his hand upward, beckoning to the driver to stop.

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"Throw me your knife, Tom. I can't find mine. The off-leader has a stone in his foot."

After a moment's fumbling in numerous pockets, the penknife was found and flung to him, and he proceeded to remove the During the process a curious silence seemed to fill the The cessation of the rumbling of wheels and the beating of hoofs was doubtless the cause, yet to Harold's mind there was something strange and sinister in this sudden dead calm and silence. No one spoke as the guard, stooping low, strove to remove the stone, which was wedged tightly in the horse's hoof. The shadow of the coach stretched its weird length upon the road like wings of darkness, and overhead the moon shone out fitfully from amid flying clouds, which passed her disc in sombre hurried procession. Their swift noiseless gathering had an eager look, as though a compelling force lay within their folds and they stretched out arms of darkness to cover some cruel deed. Far away to the left the distant roll of the surf upon the shore was felt rather. than distinctly heard, and the murmuring faint sound did but add to the silence. The treeless road was spread before them like a dim white belt girding the hill, without speck or sound to relieve its solitude.

The scene fixed itself like a picture on Harold's mind and he was unwilling to utter a word to break its sombre spell. But, as the guard rose to his feet, the silence which surrounded them was pierced with sharp abruptness by the shrill, clear, small sound of a whistle. Sweet as a thrush's pipe the distant voice whistled the first part of the wild weird air distinctly as Harold had heard it on the ferry. With hand upraised, the guard stood for a moment as if turned to stone, while the coachman, with arm outstretched, held it in mid-air, nor dropped it till the whistle died away as suddenly as it came. Then, gathering up the reins as the guard clambered to his seat, he started the horses at a handgallop.

"That drowned the answering whistle, Jim. I'm dashed/if I wished to hear it!" observed the coachman, throwing the words over his shoulder in a jerky voice.

"So there is always an answering whistle?" remarked Harold.

"Always, sir."

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"Then there are two of them?" said Harold with a short laugh.

The man turned a grave face towards him.

"I'd rather you didn't laugh, sir, if you don't mind. I know it all sounds queer, but queer things do happen at times that common sense can't compass. Maybe you'll hear more of the matter at Langarth. And it's because I'm afraid you may find trouble when you get there that I took the liberty, sir, to ask you not to laugh."

"Oh don't apologise!" said Harold gravely. The man's words had taken from him all inclination to laugh; the thought of

trouble at Langarth had sobered him.

The guard had clambered over the roof and taken his seat behind them. He leaned forward now, saying, in a low voice—

"What do you think, Tom-shall we find the roan gone this

time?"

"I hope not; that horse would take him where he's bound to in an hour."

"Then, if he gets the roan, there's no chance of our catching

him up?"

"There wouldn't be anyhow," responded the coachman. "No man has ever overtaken that rider yet."

"Ah, but I should like to try it with him one night!" return-

ed the guard/

"So should I," said Harold, "whether the fellow be thief or

ghost."

"You are a good rider, Mr. Olver, but that would be a sharp race; and no one has ever won it yet. You see he is riding ahead of us now, and he'll keep ahead till he gets to his journey's end; then we shall lose him."

"And where is he going?"

"To the same place that you are bound for, sir."

"To Langarth?" exclaimed Harold.

The coachman nodded, and, bending his head to the storm, he seemed suddenly inclined to keep silent.

"Then he is a friend of the family?" continued Harold.

"Perhaps so, sir; but he doesn't act like one."

"What do you mean!"

"I mean he never comes to Langarth that he doesn't leave a corpse behind him. Heaven, there he is—do you see him, sir?—just on the white bit of the road where the moon is shining!"

Harold leaned forward with a throb at his heart, and caught sight in the flash of an instant of the dark rider, with the pale gleams of moonlight quivering about him. A black cloud touched the moon, and the figure was gone,

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ght ale Harold drew a deep breath, and then said impatiently-

"The man is evidently a man, and not a ghost, and I presume his errand to Langarth is an important one, or he would not ride so fast."

"We all know his errand; he brings death to Langarth."

The superstitious assertion had a ghastly sound as the words rang out on the night-air, and, being both angry and startled, Harold turned on the man sharply.

"Is that what you meant when you said just now I might find trouble at Langarth? Have you any reason for what you say? Because, if not, I consider such assertions——"

"I beg pardon—no offence meant, sir," interposed the coachman. "I do wrong perhaps to say a word on the matter; but 'tis common talk around Langarth."

"Common talk!" repeated Harold, in a vexed tone. "But

who is the man, and why does he ride to Langarth?"

"No mortal can tell you that, sir. He comes and he goes, leaving sorrow behind him, and no man has ever yet met him face to face and dared to say, Who are you?"

"I saw him face to face in the boat, but it certainly did not occur to me to ask him who he was or what was his errand," said Harold with impatience.

"Well, sir, I won't say again what his errand is."

"Ah, I give you up!" returned Harold, crossing his arms with an air of resignation. "You Cornish are the most superstitious people in the world, and there is no use in arguing the case with you. Still I should like to hear what possible reason you can find for investing a queer traveller with a sort of death-warrant."

"Well, sir, the last time—twenty years agone—that this rider was down in these parts, Mr. Carbonellis was found drowned in his park."

"But the one event could have had nothing to do with the

other," observed Harold, in a logical tone.

"You ain't the first, sir, that have said so. Yet I reckon it's past your understanding, and likewise mine, to say why death always follows that rider's heels. Fifteen years before Mr. Carbonellis was drowned, his father was brought home dead through a fall from his horse. That very evening the 'Night Whistler'—that's what we call him down here, sir—crossed the ferry 'twixt Cornwall and Devon, and rode to Langarth. This was afore my time, but I've heard my father tell of it."

"Before your time!" repeated Harold, with sharp emphasis. "Why, the man is not so old as you, and you make out he was here thirty-five years ago! Let me see—I judge him to be forty; so he was five years old then."

"He was here thirty-five years ago," persisted the other—"ah, and a hundred and thirty-five years ago! This has been going on at Langarth ever since the roof-tree was laid on it. You ask

the young lady, sir, when you get down there."

Harold made no reply to this, for they were now close to the posting-house, and the guard, with the laudable intention of waking a drowsy world, was sounding a hearty blast on his horn. In another moment the mail-coach drew up beneath the sign of the "Silent Woman," whose peaceable portrait was swinging headless in the wind.

A crowd of rustics surrounded them in an instant. Among them, pressing to the front, was the stout landlord, with flabby face unwontedly white. He held up a quivering hand, moving his fingers in recognition. Behind the crowd stood a man in a smock-frock, holding in one hand a horn lantern and in the other a rough halter attached to a sorry-looking horse. This last group was made dimly visible by the light of the lantern, while the lamps in the mail-coach and the blaze of the fire flashing through the window of the inn flung grotesque lights and shadows over the rest of the crowd.

"Here's a pretty go, Tom!" cried the landlord. "The roan

is stole away.'

The coachman flung down the reins loosely to the ostler, and

turned a look on Harold.

"I hope you've got a decent animal in his stead," was all his response, as he descended from the box and walked forward to examine the fresh team.

The landlord, on his part, turned a curious eye on the horses that were now being unharnessed.

"Why, what's come of the black mare?" he cried.

"She's in your stable, master—in the roan's stall," said the ostler, looking up from his work. "Reeking wi' sweat she be, and shaaking en every lemb. I tould 'ee so afore, aanly you wus as onbelieving as Tummas."

• The landlord gave the man a scared look, and, taking a step backward, he laid his hand on the rail of the guard's seat.

"'Tis true enough, Jim," he said. "The Whistler is out."

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"I knowed that at Torpoint," returned the other, a little proud of his prior information.

"And the worst is, Jim, that Mr. Carbonellis has got some hot

work in hand to-night."

"What's up then?" asked the guard.

The answer was given in a whisper, but Harold caught the words "smugglers" and "cutter." And now for the first time he began to feel uneasy. He knew his friend's reckless and daring spirit, he knew too that smuggling was rife and popular in Cornwall and desperate deeds grew out of it. He chafed at the slow fingers of the ostler—he was impatient to be at Langarth. If Carbonellis was bent on some rash adventure, he hoped to ar-

rive in time to stop him from rushing into it.

The horsing of the mail-coaches throughout England at this period was carried to the point of perfection; the harnessing of a fresh team was usually accomplished in three minutes, but this time the ostler dragged their slow length to five. The sorry beast that replaced the missing roan was a kicker, and flung out his heels at slight provocation. Twice he kicked over the traces, and, turning completely round, faced the shaking ostler with a snarl on his upraised lip. Moreover, there was a change of coachmen here, and the new driver was in a worse temper even than the horse. His objurgations caused a further delay, but at length he gathered up the reins with an oath and a protest against both landlord and the kicker; then, as he held up his whip threateningly, the guard gave a flourish on his horn, and once more his Majesty's mail sped onwards through the night.

CHAPTER III.

At the great gates of the park at Langarth Harold Olver stood alone and somewhat disconsolate. The mail was late, owing to the poor horsing of the coach, as from posting-house to posting-house the same disaster pursued them and the same rider preceded them.

The new driver—a' young man not given to wild beliefs—had met each landlord's statement with savage incredulity and desperate ill-temper. He grew tæiturn and sullen as mile by mile they plodded on with lame and vicious horses, making slow way against driving rain which beat coldly against their faces.

"The folks down in these parts would make you believe anything," he observed sulkily to Harold Olver, in answer to that young gentleman's request to be set down at Langarth. "Now, according to them, pixies come and ride horses by night; and this here fellow, who has been going on ahead of us for forty miles or thereabouts, isn't a horse stealer, but a sort of ghost, who kills a Carbonellis every time he takes a ride. Now I expect, sir, you'll find everybody hale and hearty at Langarth; and, before you alight, I should like to give you my notion of who this scamp is. It's my opinion he's in league with the smugglers that the young Squire has sworn war against, and he is just riding for his life to warn them the Preventive men will be out after them to-night. There's rich men in the trade, who don't mind killing horses, or paying for them either, when a valuable cargo has to be saved."

The idea was so opposite to Harold's own fears that it seized upon his mind instantly and filled him with dismay.

"It is quite possible," he said slowly. "I hope Mr. Carbonellis

is not with the Preventive men."

"He is out in their cutter often, sir. And, if the smugglers are warned, there'll be a fight as sure as two and two is four. Here we are at Langarth; and, if all those fools say is true, there'll be no more horses stole away on the road beyond this. Good night, sir, and thank you. I'm afraid, if a carriage was waiting for you, it is gone—we are so late. And it's a mile through the avenue up to the house."

And with this the coach rattled off, with its four inside sleeping passengers and with its one wakeful baby and mother on the

outside back seat near the guard.

Harold stood for a moment watching it, till it disappeared in the darkness. He was undecided whether to knock up the inmates of the lodge and inquire for the carraige that he had expected to meet him, or whether to leave them sleeping in peace, and walk up to the house, carrying his valise himself. He decided on the latter course. But, as he put his hand on the gate to open it, he paused, for the sound of furious galloping came with the wind that met his face. For a moment he fancied that it was the echo reaching him from the hoofs of the departing team; but the mail had gone west, and the wind blew straight from the south.

"Is it—can it be possible that that strange man is riding to Langarth, and it is his horse I hear galloping up the avenue?"

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For an instant Harold Olver listened, the next he had flung his valise down beneath a tree, and, leaving the road, he sprang across the grass and gained a foot-path which evidently led to the house by a nearer way. He ran as he had never run before, except in a foot-race, and always in his ears there rang the sharp thud and echo of that wild galloping. Once, as the foot-path diverged near the road, he fancied that he caught in the distance a glimpse of a flying horseman flitting like a shadow through the gloom of overhanging trees. On and on he sped at the top of his speed, filled with the wild desire to be first at the door of Langarth, and confront and dismay with his presence this mysterious and phantom rider. But he failed in the attempt. Just before he reached the house he heard the clang of the huge ancient bell which hung at its portal, and he knew in his own heart that it was rung by the pale hand of the Night Whistler.

He paused in his race, discomfited, and at that instant the man passed him at a little distance, riding slowly and dejectedly beneath the darkness of the trees, his head hanging down, his eyes fixed like those of a man in a dream, and his long thin white hand resting on his hip. On his face there was an expression of horror and grief so intense that, as the moonlight fell on it, flashing it for a moment into view, Harold involuntarily drew

back. The next instant the darkness had covered him.

"Can he be going to the stables that way?" thought Harold, gazing blankly into the black space of night into which the vision had vanished.

In another minute or two he was at the door, which opened ere he touched the bell; and a familiar voice greeted him, and a cheering light shone out upon the broad gravel road, which was

void of all figures save his own.

"I heard you ring, sir," said the old servitor, in a deprecatory friendly voice, "and am sorry to have kept you waiting; but the cord of a picture in master's study had just broken, and it fell with such a crash that I feared perhaps Miss Estrild was frightened, and——"

"Pray don't apologise, Prior! I assure you I have not wait

ed a moment; it was not I who rang."

"Not you, sir?"

"No, it was a gentleman on horseback. I fancy he has gone round to the stables—he passed me just now."

"He couldn't go to the stables that way," said Prior, with a

flourish of the head. "I'll run round, sir, to see. And where is your portmanty, sir. Dear, dear, what a pity the carriage didn't wait. But the lodge-keeper declared the mail had passed so for

certain, the coachman believed you hadn't come."

"Perhaps he thought it had passed because the time at which it was due had certainly passed," returned Harold, as he divested himself of his great-coat. "And, as for my valise," he continued, "it is under a tree close by the lodge. Please send a man with several lanterns, Prior, to fetch it; and don't forget there's a strange gentleman somewhere about the premises, waiting, I suppose, to enter."

"I'll see to it all directly, sir. This way, please; Miss Estrild

is in the study."

Harold had lingered in the hall during this talk, partly because he was conscious of being nervous and he wanted to recover his equanimity, and partly because a question was on his lips which he felt a reluctance to utter; but he spoke now.

"Isn't your master at home, Prior ?"

A change came over Prior's face, and he answered a little primly, as if afraid of saying too much-

"You'd have seen him afore now, sir, if he was home; but he'll

be back in the morning."

Harold felt a throb at his heart which vexed him, it was so like a superstitious fear; yet the next moment he was all smiles and his face was radiant with a great joy, for his eyes were look.

ing into eyes that he loved.

"I had given you up," said Estrild, raising her long lashes shyly for just an instant, as, all aglow with love and joy, he bent over her. "I thought you had missed the mail, and would not be here till to-morrow. Tristram waited for you till half-past You know the coach always passes the lodge at ten minutes past ten punctually, so, if you had arrived by it, he would have seen you. I felt so disappointed when the carriage came back empty."

"Did you?" said Harold; and, as he held her within the ring of his arm, he emphasised his question with a tighter clasp.

"Yes; but it was not all on your account—it was partly for Tristram. I thought if you came you would dissuade him-She paused, and a slight flush rose to her cheeks.

"You thought I should keep him at home to-night," said Harold—"and I certainly should have tried to do so. Hasn't he gone on some rather risky expedition?"

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t," said Hasn't "How came you to guess it?"—and the girl disengaged herself from his embrace, and, laying her hands on his shoulders, gazed into his face with sad, anxious eyes. "Oh, Harold, I wish you could have been here earlier. I suppose you posted down?"

"Nothing of the kind, darling. Do you suppose his Majesty's mail is infallible, bound to keep the time like a Greenwich clock? It was late to-night—that was all; and I wish your coachman

had waited for me-perhaps then-'

"Well? Perhaps what?"

"Why, then I should have had the pleasure of seeing your dear face half an hour sooner!" responded Harold, changing his words,

though not his thoughts.

"Ah, then I should not have had a disappointment, and you would have kept Tristram here. It was very wrong of the man not to wait; but, you see, he and the lodge-keeper both made sure that the mail had passed, and that somehow they had missed seeing it, the night is so dark."

"Supper is served, miss," arnounced Prior, opening the door

with a discreet and unnecessary twisting of the handle.

The young lady passed out; and then Prior by a slight gesture

stayed Harold's steps.

"Your portmanty is in your room, sir; and I've sent men round to the stables and yard and through the grounds, but there's no gentleman and no horse to be seen. I think, sir, if you'd excuse me, I wouldn't mention the matter to Miss Estrild. What with the master being away and the picture falling, she's rather upset."

"Quite right, Prior, I shall not say a word. It was some be-

lated traveller who had lost his way doubtless."

Harold said this cheerily, but felt at the same time that his words were without reason and the whole affair was strange and mysterious.

"I wonder now if that fellow rode up to the house to make sure that Tristram was away?" he said to himself. "Prior, do

you know where your master is gone?" he asked aloud.

The man looked at him oddly.

"No, sir; I wish I did-I should go and warn him. The

place where these expeditions meet is kept secret, sir."

"Warn him of what?" asked Harold eagerly; the man's words fell upon his ear like the echo of a whisper constantly spoken in his own spirit. "See here, sir?" returned Prior, stepping forward. "Have

you looked at this?"

Harold turned sharply, and then saw leaning against a book-case a large painting with the frame shattered by its fall. Estrild had been standing before it during their interview, hence it had escaped his notice, his eyes naturally being filled only with her sweet face. Now, as Prior took a heavy candlestick from the table and held it before it, he saw a dark pale face gleam out of the canvas, with sad, worn, searching eyes, and a long thin hand resting on the hip, beneath the black armour in which the figure was portrayed.

As he turned away, he tried to avoid Prior's anxious questioning eyes; but the man had seen his startled look, and was answered. He replaced the candlestick on the table with a trembl-

ing hand.

"I've been here, sir, man and boy, for fifty years," he said quietly. "I was fifteen when I first saw that picture fall, and come to life, as one may say, and old Mr. Carbonellis was brought home dead. Twenty years ago it fell, and came to life again, and his son, my dear master, was drowned. Miss Estrild is calling you, sir."

"What do you mean by 'came to life'?" asked Harold impatiently, and yet in a low tone, for he heard the coming of a soft

step.

"You've seen, sir, for yourself what I mean. Yes, miss—Mr. Olver is coming; he's been giving me some orders about his

luggage."

Estrild stood at the door, and looked from one to the other. Harold felt as though ghosts, mysteries, fears, and whistling horsemen were painted visibly on his bronzed countenance. He broke into an abrupt laugh, with some apology for keeping the supper waiting.

"It is of no consequence," returned Estrild, "since I have only cold pheasant for you. Oh, you have been examining the portrait of the 'Black Crusader,' as we call him! I'll give you his history by and by, to undo Prior's superstitious account of him. He was

not so black as he is painted."

"He has a painful face. I should burn him if he belonged to me," said Harold—"or sell him perhaps."

The girl laughed.

"That has been tried two or three times—so the story goes—and he always comes back."

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They passed into the dining-room hand-in-hand, and the happy love which ran through their young veins chased away for a time the forbodings which each perhaps secretly felt.

In fatigue, darkness, and cold a man may be superstitious, especially if leariness be added to these discomforts. "Leariness" is an old word, out of use except among the peasantry—sole conservatives of ancient things—but it expresses so exactly the sadness and weariness of hunger that no other word can so precisely fill its place. "I am lone and leary," says a poor old forlorn woman living on parish pay. "I go leary away," says the beggar in the West, when driven from a door. All through his journey Harold Olver had been "leary;" but a good supper, cheery fire, and the bright presence of the loved one whose every look brought happiness had changed his feelings completely. All was joy and peace; the world was an easy-going, natural, homely place; everything was as good and full of daylight as daisies; to-morrow would be as pleasant as to-day, and pleasanter. Life, like a rush of sunshine, ran through his veins, as this aspect of the universe was the true one at the time-for youth and innocence and fair love are good; and, when a man and woman have these, all the powers of darkness cannot touch them with fear.

The lovers did not talk much; they were too intensely happy and too new to their happiness at first for overflowing speech. But, when, sitting after supper by a clear wood fire in the ancient hall, their being together seemed no longer such a strange wonderful thing, but grew to be a natural, homely, comfortable fact, the flood-gates of speech were opened. They laughed, they chatted, they kissed, they forgot time and sorrow. But love's language is the same all over the world, and this was best spoken in the short soft silence which fell at times upon them, when Estrild's head rested on her lover's shoulder and his brown hand parted her dark locks that he might better see the clear deep blue eyes which look-

ed into his and smiled.

The fitful fire-flame flickered on the coats of mail and battered helmets and faded portraits hanging on the walls, and, glancing around on them, he said laughingly-

"This must be a grand place for ghosts, Estrild. I suppose you have any amount of them wandering about in the old rooms?"

To his surprise, she answered his jest in a grave tone.

"It is near midnight—not a time to talk of such things. Ill tell you all the Langarth ghost-stories to-morrow in the sunshine."

"Well, and then you'll let me explore the old place with you, which you know I have never done yet?"

"Oh, yes, if you like?"

"It must be wonderfully ancient," continued Harold.

"Yes—some parts of it."

"Ah, I remember your brother telling me that you have an old dungeon, and staircase, and some other cranky dismal remains left of the original castle built in the time of the Crusades!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Estrild, starting up suddenly. "Do you

hear nothing?"

"No," he answered, pressing her into her seat again by his side. "There is not a sound stirring except the wind."

"Oh, I was in hopes it was Tristram's step!"

"It is only the rain pattering on the gravel. I am glad it is raining; the wind will go down now."

"You don't think there is any danger at sea?" said Estrild,

flushing with the fever of her thoughts.

"None whatever for such a good ship as the Revenue cutter."

"Oh, I wish Tristram was not with these Preventive men tonight!"

"What makes him so mad lately against our friends the

smugglers?" asked Harold.

"It's a long story," said Estrild; "and it rises out of many events. But the war began through their hiding kegs in a cave which runs up from the cliff beneath our park; I have never shown you the place, but, strangely enough, about half a mile or more from the sea there is a great rift or opening into it near a spring called the 'Mermaid's Well.' In wild weather the sea rushes up through the cave and fills the well with salt and water. That is the time when a boat can enter the cave and kegs can be floated up to a spot where the receding tide leaves them dry and secure. Then, you perceive, if there were no other safe way of removing them, men could descend through the rift I have named, and could haul them up through the opening by means of ropes."

"It must be a pretty large chasm," observed Harold.

"It is fearful. It looks narrow from a little distance; but no man could leap across it—even the deer don't try—and the roar of the sea when it boils and chafes through the cave is appalling—it shakes one's nerves to hear it. I never go near the chasm in stormy weather. Well, about a year ago the Preventive-service men made a search in the place and found half a ship's cargo,

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I believe; and the discovery cast a slur on my brother's name. On one side he was suspected of knowing and conniving at the fact; and by the smugglers he was accused of betraying them. They declared his father and grandfather had had many a good cask of brandy in return for the use of the cave; so now they called Tristram a traitor to the old stock, and said he had sold them for money."

"Well, I dare say in the old days your grandfather may have accepted a gift of French brandy and winked at the hauling of

kegs through his park," said Harold jocularly.

"But Tristram never did," returned Estrild warmly. "And now these shameful slanders have made bad blood between him and the poor people around us."

"Who are all friends of the smugglers," said Harold, laugh-

ing.

"Oh, don't laugh! I have been quite unhappy lately."

"You mean since Tristram has declared war against them and

allied himself with the enemy?"

"Well, yes. I mean since he has put himself on the side of law and order, and has given out that on no part of his land, or, if he can prevent it, under the cliffs bordering it, will he allow a

shelter to be found for contraband goods."

"That's rather strong," said Harold; and he broke into a whistle, but checked himself with a start of vexation, for unwittingly there had issued from his lips the first notes of that wild air which, like the sound of an unseen stream by a mountain-path, had followed his course that night and crept in an undercurrent through all his thoughts.

Estrild, looking white and strange, had seized him by the arm

ere the sound had died on his lips.

"Hark!" she whispered. "In a moment we shall hear the

answer. It always comes, people say, in time of danger."

And then, after a second's silence, as they stood together, she clinging to him, the notes were repeated with clear distinctness, sweet and shrill, apparently from just without the window. After a moment's hesitation, in which Harold had listened with quickened breath, he dashed forward towards the casement; but Estrild held him back with all her strength, and with rapid change of thoughts he yielded to her will.

"It is an echo," he said, "and a curious one. But perhaps it

comes only when the wind lies in a certain quarter."

CHAPTER IV.

"Where did you hear that tune?" asked Estrild, putting aside Harold's suggestion that the echo came only when the wind was in a certain quarter.

"I have heard you sing it to me," he answered, in his gayest

way.

"No, never. I know of no words to it."

"Well, then, you have played it," he rejoined.

"Oh, no, no; there is a reason why I never should."

"But you have the music?"

"Yes, in manuscript copied by my grandmother. But she never played the old air after her husband's sad death. There is a curious superstitious feeling about it in our family. My grandmother called it the 'Crusaders' Chant'—I don't know if that is its right name."

"It will do for it, at all events," said Harold. "And now you are going to knock down the family bogy and play it for me

at once."

The girl looked at him with sudden tears in her eyes.

"If you knew the story of that man whose picture fell to-night,

you would not ask me."

"Indeed but I would. I want to dispel your foolish fancies. We should always grapple with this kind of nonsense and bowl it over. Come, darling—do play this queer old tune to oblige me!"

A little more coaxing, a kiss or two on the fair soft cheek, and Estrild yielded, though her heart was heavy with a sad reluctant

foreboding.

The yellow faded manuscript was searched for and found, and soon beneath her skilful fingers the mournful chant rang out solemnly through the large silent room, while the weird echo without repeated the strain fitfully, and bore it away on the wind's wings into the night's darkness.

As she played, Harold leaned over her caressingly.

"You perceive, darling, I was right about the echo. I wanted

you to be convinced."

She looked up at him with eyes full of strange expectant fear; then, as the last chords died away beneath her fingers and her hands dropped upon the keys, there sprang into the sudden silence the deep boom of a gun at sea.

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"What is it? What has happened?" she cried wildly.

"Nothing," answered Harold, hiding his own anxiety. "It is only a harmless shot fired by the cutter's men to show the smugglers they are in earnest."

"Oh, I cannot believe you! Prior—Prior"—for the old man was standing at the door with a white grave face—" what is hap-

pening? Who is firing?"

"I came in to tell you, miss, lest you should be frightened. I heard master say before he left that he should ask the captain of the cutter to fire a shot when they were nearing home, just to let you know that all was safe."

Estrild sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands.

"Thank Heaven!" she said softly.

As her head dropped, the old man looked at her wistfully, as if thinking his falsehood would not avail to give her peace for long. Then he turned and met Harold's eyes with a gaze which he understood and obeyed.

"My dear Estrild, you must go to rest," he said. "It is very

late."

"But Tristram," she answered—"surely he will be home soon now; and I must wait——"

"The cutter can't be in till morning, miss," interposed Prior.

"You see the wind is dead against her now."

He looked imploringly at Harold for help, and his voice shook

a little in spite of his efforts to keep it steady.

"My darling," said Harold, in a low voice as he took Estrild's hand, "you hear what Prior says? You see it would be unreasonable to sit up; and, to own the truth, I am dead tired myself and longing for sleep. But, of course, if you persist in your wish to stay up, I shall do the same."

Estrild raised her eyes to his face, then she looked at Prior; both men bore her gaze steadily with reassuring calm mien. A sigh broke from her lips; then she rose and held out both hands

to Harold.

"I don't think you would both deceive me," she said piteously. "I should be selfish to keep you from rest after your long journey. Yes, I will do as you ask—I will try to sleep. Good night!"

Upon hearing her say this, Prior discreetly retired, and then Harold took his love within the circle of his arm, and with soothing words succeeded in restoring her to calmness. So a

final good night was said at last almost cheerfully.

They had mounted the stairs together, and in the long dim corridor where they had parted Harold now stood in pained thought. The sound of the gun at sea, which like a dull blow had struck the windows of the house, was still vibrating in his ears. Now that he could think of it alone, it made the blood leap in his veins. If a fight was going on, he would fain be in it; the warrior instinct of the English race and of his own warm youth grew hot about his heart. Nor was it this alone which moved him; formless, wordless there lay beneath all a something unseen, unheard, which yet beckoned and spoke in a voiceless, viewless way and was nevertheless stronger than the cry to arms or the sight of a foe's face. The vague fear which had crept like a trail of blood through all the hours of the night, and which hitherto he had held from him with both hands, roused him now into action.

That night-rider, around whom the pesantry had thrown a shadow of superstitious horror, was surely a swift messenger from one of those rich traders who secretly owned some of the smuggling craft on this wild coast. He had come to warn them and set them on the defensive, and maybe a battle was raging while he stood there supine.

There are times when reason persuades us into beliefs or disbeliefs which an underlying and deeper feeling protests against. This was the case now with Harold. Olver, and with silent steps he went in search of Prior.

The old man had put out the lamps and was dozing wearily in an arm-chair in his own sanctum. He rubbed his eyes and looked up at Harold in a dazed way.

"Now, Prior, what does that gun at sea mean? It does not

signify in the least what you said, I presume?"

"The Lord forgive me for lying," returned Prior piously."

"But there, even if He don't, what can it matter what falls upon me so that Miss Estrild gets rest and strength to bear what the morning may bring? That shot means danger to the cutter, sir; or, more likely still, it means there's a fight going.

on somewheres out there in the storm and darkness."

"Well, old fellow, if there is, I mean to get into the midst of it as quickly as I can. Your master keeps boats, I know."

"There's a good sea-going boat in our cove, sir."

"Then can we call a crew together of honest men who will launch it and venture out with me to your master's aid in spite of wild weather?"

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"Men, sir? Plenty who care as little for a rough sea as they do for a smooth one; but it's the job they won't like. We sha'nt find men willing to go out against their friends and brothers. Oh, why didn't master keep to the good old ways of his forefathers? The folks round would have died for a Carbonellis then; now he's looked on as an enemy."

"See here, Prior—it is no time for talk!" Gather your wits together and think of the few true men—servants, keepers, anyone who can row—who will make up a scratch crew and come

with me to-night."

"They'll be marked men—they'll be hated ever after!" said Prior, rising slowly. "But they can all row well enough—we are used to the sea down here."

"Then rouse them up quickly and quietly. I am afraid the Preventive men are getting the worst of it to-night."

The old man's eyes turned upon him with a flash of fire in

"If master wasn't with that gang, I shouldn't be sorry. I'll go now and rouse my son, and he'll get the men together and have the boat ready in half an hour or less."

Left alone, Harold took up a small lamp, and, impelled by feelings which he did not analyse, went to the library. Here placing the light near the fallen portrait he stood contemplating it, yet not seeing the painted face, but the living one of the sad stranger who had sat opposite to him in the boat and ridden past him with drooping head and dejected mien beneath overhanging boughs.

The picture was painted on panel; it was hard and crude, and yet it had that unmistakable seal upon it which proved it the true similitude of the living man whom it represented. It was a worn, sad warrior face, having the strange shining look in the eyes which is said to forbode an early or a violent death.

Minutes passed swiftly as Harold stood overwhelmed by that dim groping search which at times perplexes the human mind. Like a blind man stretching his hands into the darkness, so does the soul at rare moments seek to enter the unseen and make tangible to the sense those things which a sure instinct teaches her are real though hidden.

Throughout nature we find in instinct cause and reason; no instinct has ever proved to be untrue. If this be the case in natural things, we may surely deem it so in those which, in our ignorance, we name supernatural.

To the dark edge of that material ground on which we all stand there comes at times from the Infinite beyond a light that

gleams, a shape that beckons, a shadow that speaks.

Shall we deny their existence because, in belonging to another world, they can come only to the threshold of this? Or, in plainer words, because the laws of our existence and theirs differ, therefore they can touch only for a moment, perhaps with mutual risk, as the denizens of air and water may each stand on the verge of the other's element for a little space, but can never enter it and live.

As Harold Olver stood face to face with this portrait of a dead man—a man who had lived and died centuries before, whose history was to him a blank—he felt that it was nevertheless interwoven with his own life, and he was in the presence of a mystery which touched his innermost being. He was going he knew not whither, into regions beyond the senses, and his strained nerves almost caught the clue, almost grasped the solution, and saw the secret shape of the vision before him, when, with a start, a human voice brought him back to earth.

It was a relief, and he turned eagerly to greet, as he thought,

Tristram Carbonellis. But he saw no one.

Startled, he sprang to the door and opened it, but the hall was empty, and the dim light of the great staircase before him bore no sound of footfall. He placed the lamp upon a table and passed his hand across his forehead in wonder. Who had spoken, and what had the voice said? It was strange; but he was somewhat dazed, and he could not recall the words. They had sounded clear and distinct when he heard them; but now they were gone.

He returned to the library and searched it through, but found

no one, and knew he should find no one.

Prior's step sounded now through the hall, and Prior's voice

called his name, bringing him back to healthier life.

"The boat is ready, sir. Ah, you are looking at the old picture! It is more like the living man than the dead, if he is a living man."

"You mean the strange visitor who preceded me and then rode away. I have been thinking, Prior, that he was a messenger to the smugglers, and perhaps some compunction, some dread of consequences, led him to come here to give your master warning also. Then at the last moment he repented of that impulse, and rode away without speaking."

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r to d of ning and They were passing through the hall as Harold said this, and Prior did not answer till both were out in the free air beneath the stormy sky.

"Twenty years ago he came and went in the same way, sir, and fifteen before that he gave us warning too; but his warnings have naught to do with things of this world. Take that path, sir, and you can't miss the way to the little cove where the boat lies. There you'll find the men. God speed you, Mr. Harold! Don't provoke wrath if you can help it—leave angry men alone."

CHAPTER V.

A rough sea at night, with dark and driving clouds above, and tumbling waves whose abysses were darker still beneath, and a frail boat holding lives between these two. Whosoever has not grasped an oar at such a time, and with hand and eye and ear alert striven to fight for dear life against the strength of that strongest of all deaths, the sea, has not tasted of true danger, or felt through every thrilling nerve the loveliness of life.

The darkness deepened as the winter night wore on to morning, and the cold strengthened, but the wind lulled, and the waves fell into smoother, calmer lengths. In the rush of the wind the men had scarce heard each other's voices, nor had they tried to speak; but now the strain was over, the battle was fought, and each man felt a lightening of his heart. Not a sound was on the sea save the beat of their own oars, not a speck was visible save the faint reflection of stars in the deep dark of the heaving waters. Steadily through the dying storm and the night silence the crew rowed on, a pale gleam of phosphoric light shining on their path, then vanishing into swift darkness.

They had rowed thus for an hour without result—no sail had come phantom-like across the water, no stroke of oars had broken the monotonous moaning of the sea; but now, ever and anon, they saw near by what seemed the white crest of a wave, which fell into darkness, then rose again nearer, and gained upon them in a strange silent way, till, gliding close by, it loomed out suddenly as a long low white boat impelled by muffled oars and full of armed men.

"Hallo!" shouted Harold, springing up.

"Boat from his Majesty's cutter the Alert," responded a voice. "Yield, or we fire!"

"We are no smugglers," returned Harold—"boat from Langarth, manned by Mr. Carbonellis's servants. We are seeking him. Is he with you? Can you give us tidings of him?"

There was a sudden silence in the Preventive service boat, followed by a short whispered conversation between the officer in

charge and the coxswain.

"Mr. Carbonellis is on board the Alert," said the former, in a hesitating voice, as he raised his cap to Harold. "I am glad you have come. The Alert lies just within that point yonder; you can head it now that the wind has fallen. I am sorry I cannot turn back and show you the way. We are on duty; we are in pursuit of a boat that has escaped. You have not come across any craft?"

"No," was the answer, given quickly.

"Ah, I thought not! You—you will have to take Mr. Car-

bonellis home. Give way, men."

Swift as an arrow the white boat flew forward with its muffled oars, and for a moment was a light streak upon a tall wave which wafted it away into darkness.

What had happened? What had been said! Why this sudden tightening of every heart, this breathless silence, this grasp-

ing of oars with quickening stroke and hands unnerved?

No one dared ask a question of the other, no one dared givewords to the fear which was tugging hard at his labouring breath. Each man bent to his oar in this strange forced silence, till the toil was over of rounding the headland and the boat glided into smoother water; then the crew rested and waited in the silent darkness for some guiding voice or sound.

"To starboard, lads!" said Harold. "There lies the Alert;

she hears us—she has put up a light."

His tone was calm, yet it vibrated with that living thrill which in moments of deep excitement threads the human voice with a fire that burns upon the ear and heart.

In another moment or two they were along side the cutter, and

a voice hailed them, asking who they were.

"Boat from Langarth," answered Harold—"come for Mr. Carbonellis."

*There was no reply; the sailor who had hailed them drew back, and, after a slight stir and whispered talk, an officer took his place and leaned over the bulwarks.

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"You are come for Mr. Carbonellis," he said, in a grave voice.
"Yes, I am thankful you have arrived in time, otherwise, bound to obey orders as we are, we must have taken him to sea with us. Anticipating that, we have done what we could in a rough way."

But here he stopped, and, turning away, gave some orders in a voice inaudible to Harold and his crew. After a short interval, which yet seemed terrible in length, the tramp of men was heard, and Harold saw the officer stand aside bare-headed, while others grouped around him uncovered also. Then a procession of four men came forward, bearing something dark and long between them.

"Are you ready?" demanded the officer, his grave face once

more leaning towards the boat from the gangway.

" Ay, ay, sir!" was the answer.

Ready for what? No one asked the question. Every heart was beating loud, every face was pale. Harold stood up bareheaded and speechless. In another instant there was lowered amongst them and caught by trembling hands a rough and light coffin, unlidded. Within it lay the corpse of Tristram Carbonellis—the moonlight showed them his dead face, shining on it as it shines on ice.

The expectation of some great horror had sat upon them all, paralysing speech; but imagination ever falls short of reality. Not a man there whose heart had quivered that night under shadowy terrors but felt now that hope had never entirely deserted him; still his gloomiest forebodings had never foreshadowed such a sight as this.

The shock was terrible. Unable for a time to speak, Harold knelt by his dead friend in overwhelming anguish and bewilderment. When he raised his face, it was nearly as white as the

one over which he had bent.

"We did not know of this," he said, in an unnaturally calm voice.

"I am very sorry if that is the case," returned the officer. "I thought you had heard the truth from our boat, which must have met you at the head of the harbor. It is a very sad misfortune, and it happened in a strange way."

"Yes?" said Harold interrogatively.

"I am extremely sorry, but I fear I cannot give you all the details now; we are under orders to sail at once. I can only tell you simply that it was an accident."

"Was he shot?" asked Harold.

"Yes—a pistol went off we scarcely know how. The poor young fellow who caused the accident is quite delirious with grief and horror. I doubt if he will ever recover the shock—his nerves are so shaken. The poor lad is only eighteen."

Harold heard this in silence; at that moment he had no pity

for the innocent slaver of Estrild's brother.

Perceiving this, the officer drew back, and a short colloquy ensued between him and the commander, who was pacing the deck. It was the latter who now came to the gangway; and, removing his cap, he stood bare-headed before the pale presence on which he looked down.

"You are anxious to hear particulars of this sadly fatal affair," he said, in a grave voice which seemed to hide anger rather than grief. "For my own part, I regret bitterly that I ever yielded to Mr. Carbonellis's entreaty, and permitted him to come on board my ship."

Anger broke his voice here, and he half turned on his heel, but faced the dire result of his imprudence again with a slight

shrug of impatience.

"Mr. Carbonellis was very excited, very eager to join us, and, having given me some information useful to the service, I felt myself scarcely at liberty to refuse his request. I assure you there

is no one can deplore this fatal result more than I do."

He paused, as if thinking he had said enough. To express regret, to confess that even some degree of blame might be thrown on him, appeared to his mind—perhaps as captain of a ship—the height of magnanimity. But to Harold his speech seemed selfish and cruel, as it showed that he was considering the terrible event only in the light in which it affected himself. The cutting down of a young and happy life, the grief and horror awaiting the opening of Estrild's eyes to the light, were sorrows that had not stouched his heart. And these regrets and this half-expressed self-reproach told in fact nothing of the truth that Harold was burning to know. Was he holding back an explanation purposely? Was there something with regard to this dire event which he was striving to hide?

The suspicion sent a hot throb of indignation through Harold's

veins.

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eep and he dead face of a friend who has met his death on board your ship, but I cannot understand why you are holding back the details due to his sister and myself."

"I am holding back nothing, sir," returned the other haugh-

tily.

"But you have told me nothing," reforted Harold in anger.

"I have said it was an accident—a pure accident. I have no time now to enter into details. I am infringing on my duty in delaying to parley with you so long."

He turned, and in a stentorian voice gave an order, which was instantly followed by the hoisting of a sail. Then he came to the gangway again.

"I would advise you to get out of the way," he said; "in a

moment your boat will be in danger."

"You are aware that there will be an inquest," returned Hafold, his voice quivering with indignation; and you will be called upon then to give the information which you refuse me now."

"His Majesty's service comes before all other duties, sir: but, if I am able to return to port in time for the inquest, I shall be

quite ready to give all the information in my power."

"And you will also have to give up the man who has committed this murder," said Harold, in a firm tone, so full of loud wrath that it passed over the captain's head and reached the ears of a little group of men standing near the mainmast.

Among these there was a sudden movement, a sudden cry; and, peering through the dim light, Harold fancied that he saw two sailors stoop and lift a prostrate figure, which they bore away.

"There has been no murder, but only a sad, a deplorable misfortune," said the captain, in a shaken voice, as, after glancing for a moment in the direction whence the cry had proceeded, he turned once more towards Harold: "and I have no man to give up. Poor boy; he is but a child! Your cruel accusation would be unpardonable if—if—"

"If I had not cause for making it," interposed Harold fiercely.

"You are unjustifiably angry, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Olver," interposed Harold again. "Perhaps you will give me your name?"

"James Armstrong, lieutenant in his Majesty's Navy, and

commander of his cutter the Alert."

"Thank you," said Harold. "I am glad of your name, as the coroner will know whom to summon as a witness when the in-

quest is held. Now I demand the name of the member of your crew, whether man or boy, whose hand did this ghastly deed."

As Harold said this he stood with one foot on the thwart of the boat, his face, which had paled with anger, standing out white as snow against the black side of the ship. Above him stood Captain Armstrong, with face equally white and mien more determined; but his gaze passed over Harold, and was fixed on the pale silent figure of Tristram Carbonellis.

"In that presence, Mr. Olver"—and he pointed towards it—
"I will not quarrel with you; neither will I, at your insolent request, give you the name of any man or boy among my crew, now under my command, in this ship. The morning is breaking; I

bid you good day, sir; our interview is ended."

"You are screening an assassin!" shouted Harold, as Mr. Armstrong turned away. "But even the captain of a ship has to live under the law of the land."

"On shore maybe, sir," interposed one of Harold's crew, "but not at sea; and the captain is off to sea in a moment! Give way,

lads, or we shall be run down."

This was true enough; for the *Alert* swung round as he spoke, her black prow threatening to engulf them; and, with oars hurriedly dipped in the water, they had to labor hard to escape the danger of being cut down.

Harold sat by his dead friend, his heart swelling with silent indignation and grief; he dared not attempt speech, lest he should

burst into tears like a woman.

But the men were less reticent, and, as they cleared the path of the cutter, which dashed forward proudly with sails set, they broke out with a yell of hatred, a groan of horror and disgust, which passed far over the sea after the departing ship.

"Ah," roared young Prior, as he clinched his fist and shook it towards the figures faintly visible on the deck, "you are hiding a murderer among you; and, unless you cast him out like Jonah, you are doomed men! Your ship will go to the bottom as sure as there's God's light in the sky."

"Well, now, if the Squire—poor dear young man—had only stuck to his friends, this wouldn't never ha' happened," observed another of the crew. "This comes of standin' by sich gashly

trash as Preventive men—Crumell's dogs and Sarrasins."

"Cromwell's dogs" and "Saracens" are terms bestowed by Cornish folk on vile and obnoxious individuals; and at another time Harold at the whole

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time Harold might have smiled to hear these epithets hurled thus at the whole Preventive service.

"It is certain," he said thoughtfully, "that your master was not killed in any fair fight with smugglers, or Captain Armstrong

would only too gladly have said so."

"Killed by smugglers!" cried two or three of the men indignantly. "There edn't no cowards among they! Though the Squire did turn agin 'em, and forgit all the years—times out of mind—when the Carbonellises were friends to the fair traade, yet there wadn't a man among 'em who would ha' touched a hair of his head."

Harold believed this. Wild, daring, and brave the Cornish smugglers had ever proved themselves to be, but their worst foes could bring no accusation against them of cruel assassinations, secret murders, and revengeful deeds, such as had occurred

on other coasts among men of rougher breed.

"No smuggler's hand has taken that dear life!" said young Prior, as his eyes grew dark and angry. "It is some villain aboard this ship that has done it; and the captain is screening him and hiding him, and helping his flight to another land this very minute, while we with broken hearts are taking home the corpse his wicked hand has made. Look there, comrades," he added, turning suddenly to the east—"there's the blessed sun rising out of the sea; and, so sure as that sun will travel up the sky, and go down into the sea again in the west, so surely will that man's life end in blood. He may escape this time, but judgment will overtake him at the last."

A general assent ran from lip to lip, mingled with a groan of righteous wrath at the remembrance that the slayer was escaping safely now, at this awful moment, while they, with weary woful hearts and hands, were laboring in a heavy sea to bring a dead

master to his home and lay him before his sister's face.

Every thought of Estrild and her coming agony brought a pang of sheer physical pain to Harold's heart. How should he break the truth to her? How should he meet her and lead her to face this pale burden, once her dear living, loving brother? He could not think it out; he could form no plan of action; he felt he must leave it all to chance, and hope that with the terrible moment would come the inspiration of words of comfort. His own mind was dazed, confused, deadened by the very excess of his grief, and there was no clear remembrance in his brain of the imperfect narrative given

him by the officers of the *Alert*. Hence, as the boat was rowed on swiftly beneath the grey dawn and on the tumbling sea, his thoughts, like the rolling waves, rose and fell and reached no aim and struck no shore. All within him was a heaving darkness, thought on thought heaped confusedly, with only here and there a flash of light showing him the goal of pain towards which he floating.

As the light grew clearer, so did the burden they bore grow before their eyes a larger, crueller, ghastlier thing to carry home beneath the morning sun. While the darkness lasted they had talked of it, looked down on it, and wondered over it, but, now that the sun was shining on that white face, all eyes were averted from it, and a solemn awe fell upon their anger, softening it to

grief for the living more than for the dead.

The green heights of Langarth were gleaming in the sun, and the smooth beach of white sand at the foot of its rugged cliffs lay glistening like crisp snow in its beams, when the boat crept in guiltily on top of the crested waves. As she neared the shore, the men's weary hands wavered and shook, their strokes grew slower and slower, the oars went down into the tumbling waves and rose again as uselessly as though they were but straws playing in the water.

Harold saw the hesitation of the crew, and roused himself to

speak.

"I will land," he said, "and go up to the house first, and prepare Miss Carbonellis to bear the shock; meanwhile you must remain here—a little under the cliff if possible—till I return or

send you directions."

"All right, sir," answered the young man Michael Prior. "But, when you speak to Miss Estrild, please, sir, be mindful not to lay this crime to the charge of his own people. You won't forget, sir, what the officer said who spoke with us first—how 'twas some one—some boy, he said—aboard the ship that did it?"

Harold turned on him a bewildered gaze; it required an effort to bring this back to his recollection—to hold indeed anything upon his mind but the one overwhelming thought that he had to

see Estrild and tell her the terrible truth.

"I will remember," he answered hurriedly. "I will take care, Michael, not to confound the innocent with the guilty. Now row to the landing-place as quickly as you can."

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which huge cliffs stretched their sheltering arms, breaking the force of the great waves that rushed upon them from the outside sea. In this little bay the waves ran in with a glad sound and broke softly on its white shining sands, while the cliffs above were green and fragrant with many kinds of sea herbage. Down the face of the cliff, winding among rocks and bushes of golden gorse and broom and white hawthorn, ran a zigzag narrow path, worn by many feet, and cut in the old times before the memory of man.

As the boat rounded the jagged peaked height on the eastern side, and came in full view of this sequestered cove, lovely in the morning sun, its shining sands smiling at the inrushing of the soft glorious sea, Harold's heart misgave him; the gladness, the joy, the life that seemed springing from earth and sea and sky were too bitter a contrast, and for a moment his head sank upon his hands and all around him grew dark as night.

He raised his eyes to see Estrild coming slowly down the winding path, with face turned seawards and gaze fixed wonder-

ingly on the boat.

The men saw her, and every oar instantly stopped its stroke. Then Harold and Michael rose by one impulse, and stood before the coffin to screen it from her sight. But they were too late. The slight figure they were watching stopped suddenly and gazed at them with wild eyes; then a piercing shriek rang over the sea, and they saw her throw her arms upward and fall upon the path.

CHAPTER VI.

When Estrild returned to consciousness, Harold was leaning over her; and his eyes met hers so full of tender anxiety and love that her first impulse was to reassure him by saying faintly—

"I am well-quite well; do not be alarmed for me."

Then she half rose, leaning on his arm, and turned a quick frightened glance towards the sea.

It lay spread out before her, a divine expanse of blue, the deep mirror of a cloudless day, its swelling waves bearing forward softly to the shore only the innocent whiteness of the spray, which adorned their long ridges like sparkling jewels or rose like

snowdrops from their liquid green. Across the whole heaving field, from the soft rush of the waves on the white sands to where they dashed upwards against the blue dip of the sky at the horizon, no black speck of boat or hull of ship was visible.

With a quick passionate sigh Estrild turned her eyes from the blue solitude of the sea, and fixed them in questioning pain on

Harold's face.

"I saw the boat," she said; "and—and there was something in it I could not understand. It frightened me—I think I fainted. That was because such a dreadful fancy seized me; but—but it could have been only a delusion. The sun was in my eyes, and it seemed to lift up a face from the boat. Oh, Harold, Harold, you are not speaking—you are not telling me it is but a dream!"

"My dear, dear Estrild, try to be brave."

"No, no; there is no need for courage. After a night of terror, one is full of fancies; and the sun dazzled me, and the seamist wreathed itself into a strange shape. Harold, speak!"

"My dearest, I cannot speak to deceive you; what you saw

was no delusion."

The girl gazed at him with face growing to the hue of snow, yet once more she grappled with a last faint hope—once more she refused to believe the truth.

"Then some poor man is killed," she said: "and you are cruel not to assure me that Tristram is safe on board the cutter."

"My darling, how can I dare mock you with false hopes? You yourself saw our sorrowful burden only too plainly. I wish I could have spared you the pain; but you looked down from the height into the boat, and the sun was shining on all that there is left of the truest, kindest, bravest heart that ever beat."

There was no answer now; she slipped from his arm to the ground, and sat there with eyes turned seawards, and a frozen look of white sorrow on her face, which made her seem a statue,

all thought and feeling fixed in stone.

Harold knelt by her side in silence, in patience mastering his fears, waiting till she should turn to him for comfort. The moments went by hot with agony, and yet slow and cold as water and time are to a drowning man. Harold racked his very heart meanwhile for words of consolation; but grief and horror choked speech. Language seemed to him now as light and vain as the withered leaves which the wind caught up and swirled away on a contemptuous breath.

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The moas water ry heart choked as the ray on a At last a faint color rose in the stony whiteness of Estrild's face, and Harold, watching it, felt a deep sigh of relief break from his lips; but she did not seek for comfort or remove her fixed gaze from the sea.

"So you have let him die," she said bitterly and slowly; "and

he was your friend and my brother!"

"Estrild," he cried, striving to put his arm around her, "you

are wild with grief-you know not what you are saying !"

"You have let him die!" she repeated, freeing herself coldly from his embrace. "You went out to save him, and you have brought him home dead! Do you expect me to be grateful?"

The horrible cruelty of her words struck Harold like a blow, so stupefying his senses that for a moment he did not see their unreason. Then a strange rush of pity came over him, as he nerved himself to bear this new strange shape that her grief had taken.

"Come home with me," he said gently; "and as we walk I will tell you all that has happened—so far as I know it myself."

She rose at his bidding, without looking at him, without accepting his offered help, and walked by his side cold, pale, and silent; while he poured out fast and eagerly the story of the past night of sorrow.

"So he was murdered?" she said calmly, when the tale was

done.

"I hope not, Estrild, Bear in mind that Captain Armstrong and the young officer who first spoke to me both declared that his death occurred through an accident."

"But you have said that one of those men was rude and insolent, and appeared to you to be holding back the truth with

rough resolve!"

"It is true—he did give me that impression," Harold answered relut antly.

"Are you too screening him?" Estrild asked, with mournful

"My dear, dear love, you have no pity in your grief!"

"Pity!" returned the girl. "I give my pity to my brother, not to his assassin."

"My dear Estrild, who is pitying him?"

"You are!" she answered, flashing her eyes on him at last, with a hot color rushing over her white face. "I have noted your pity and sympathy in every word you have uttered."

Harold stood still in his walk, his heart beating painfully.

Could it be possible that there was some truth in her accusation! Was his soul stirred within him with pity for the young unknown hand that had wrought such misery, or was it only the natural reaction of his feelings rebelling against Estrild's injustice? At all events, he owned inwardly, with a speechless moan, that his sympathy had for an instant flown from her to follow the departing ship, and hover over an agony greater, he fancied, than this cold stony grief of hers. He had looked for the tears, the sorrow, the softness of a woman whom he loved and could have comforted; but when grief turned her to stone he found not a word within his hurt soul which he could speak tenderly.

"You cannot answer me," she continued, with increasing bitterness. "You have owned that Captain Armstrong was troubled, not for Tristram, but for his slayer. And, to save him from the consequences of his deed, he has sailed away whither

we know not."

"But, Estrild, he was under orders to sail," Harold said, with a little shade of hardness in his voice.

"How do we know that? We have only his word for it," she answered sharply.

"Surely a gentleman would not lie to me at such a time!"

"Not to save some one he loved? Oh, you do not know yet what love can do!"

Her lip quivered as she spoke, and for the first time a softer look stole over her marble face.

Harold was touched; the pain he had felt at her words passed

away-he longed again to comfort her.

"Love will not make a man lie, Estrild—at least I hope not—though perhaps it might a woman. Believe me, Captain Armstrong spoke truly. Duty comes first to man in his position; he was compelled to obey orders, and the ship will return soon."

"Ah, but not with the assassin of my brother on board!" she said, with scornful emphasis. "He will never be seen in Corn-

wall again-he will be left safely in some other land."

Harold could not gainsay this—his own suspicions did but echo

her words; yet he tried faintly to argue against them.

"My dear Estrild, why imagine this unhappy lad anxious to escape when innocent of all guilt? He cannot be punished for an accident, no matter how fatal or terrible."

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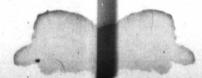
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As Harold said this, they had both reached the top of the ascent, and there lay before them the long green sweep of the park, dotted with noble trees, and, at the head of a far-reaching slope, the old mansion of Langarth standing with its shadows round about it, as though sleeping peacefully in the morning sun.

At this sudden sight of her home, coming upon her in its new aspect, as masterless and desolate, the hardness of Estrild's grief gave way, a sharp cry escaped her, and, trembling visibly, she hid her face in her hands. But she sought for no comfort from her lover. She stood aloof from him and, without the relief of tear or sob, battled with her passionate agony until she became calm again.

Harold stood by in wondering speechless sorrow, not daring to offer her a word of consolation; he felt she would have thrust all such words aside as importunate, and worthless as the dust which

the wind scattered in their path.

He ventured to come close to her, almost to touch her arm; then her hands fell from her face, showing it very pale and resolute.

"Give me a moment," she said, in a low quiet voice. "Then

I will answer your argument."

"There is no need, Estrild. Why should we argue? Why should we speak at all on this dreadful subject?" asked Harold passionately. "Will you not hurry homewards and then lie down and try to sleep?"

"You mistake me strangely if you think I could do that. I never supposed you would misinterpret my duty in such a way."

"Oh, Estrild, Estrild, you make things very hard and bitter for me!" Harold cried, yielding at last to the angry dismay filling heart and mind.

She looked at him as if not comprehending his words, and then

spoke as though she had not heard them.

"Where is the boat?" she said, turning suddenly seawards and shading her eyes with her hand. "Where have you hidden Tristram? When I fainted you told the men to hide from my sight."

"I wished to spare you, Estrild," returned Harold, his voice quivering with emotion and tenderness he vainly hoped to hear

in hers.

"You do not understand me," she said, passing her hand over her brow as if to sweep away some pain. "There can be no childish sparing of feelings for me now. I have to act, not weep or wail or shut my eyes in sleep because there are sad sights to look on. You have not answered me. Where is he? Where is my dead brother?"

Without an attempt again to soothe, to comfort, or to spare

her, Harold replied to her appeal in the simplest words.

"I ordered the men to hide beneath the cliff and wait there till I gave them a signal that they might come on to the house."

"Then give the signal now. Tristram and I will enter Lan-

garth together," she said. "I will wait here for him."

Harold looked at her face—the face he had thought the tenderest and sweetest in the world—and he saw that it was white and unflinching, and he knew that all expostulation would be vain.

"As you will," he answered; and, going to the verge of the cliff, he fluttered his handkerchief in the wind and called aloud on Michael's name.

But there was no response.

"They cannot hear you or see the signal from this point," Estrild said impatiently; and, before he could stretch out his hand to hold her back, she had sprung to the giddy verge of an overhanging rock and stood there unflinching, with a sheer

precipice of two hundred feet between her and the sea.

With an agony indescribable Harold saw her slight figure sway upon this dreadful height, as she leaned over the verge striving to descry the boat. He stood immovable, not daring to approach her lest his steps should startle her and cause her to lose her balance. So he watched in breathless anguish, till at last she drew back and turned her face towards him with a wan piteous smile.

"They have seen me," she said—"they are coming."

"Oh, Estrild, come back to the path! Leave the cliff, I entreat you!" he cried.

"They are lifting him very gently," she answered, leaning over the verge again. "They will not hurt him."

"Estrild, Estrild, I implore you, come away!"

She waved her hand in an impatient negative; his tortured cry did but pass over her head like the wing of some importunate bird not worthy of thought or heed.

He feared to speak again, for she was leaning so far over the precipice that, to his excited fancy, the movement of a leaf

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might suffice to fling her beyond the verge into the depths below. At length, with a heavy sigh of relief, he saw her raise herself from her bending attitude and stand erect for just a moment, with gaze still fixed downward; then she turned slowly from the sea and came towards him.

"I could not come away till I saw he was safe. They have

placed him on the sands now," she said.

Her voice was less firm, her lips were quivering visibly. Harold noted these tokens of returning softness thankfully. He took her hand and strove to lead her gently towards Langarth; but she drew back, saying, with an instant return of firmness—

"Not without him. I shall wait here for Tristram. It is a steep ascent, but he will not be long in coming. They will carry

him willingly; they all loved him."

She sat down upon a bank of heather, her hands in her lap, her eyes fixed on the narrow path before her with a strange

glistening expectation in them which was dreadful to see.

Harold looked as her with such a mingling of grief and pain and wistful jealousy in his heart that he could scarcely refrain giving vent to the musings of his vexed spirit. Her words, "They all loved him," rang in his ears. Yes it was true—they all loved him. He himself would have given his life for him willingly; and his sister loved him so dearly, so terribly, that now she was angry because he had not died in Tristram's stead. And she could not bear to look into his face because he was alive and well and her brother was coming up the path, a dead man. Oh, it was true, and it was bitter! And the poor love she had given him, which had flitted out of her heart now, was a mere pale shadow compared with the strong-rooted love which had grown about her life for years. Ah, he had no place in her grief for Tristram, no place in her thoughts, which were all wound about the white face coming slowly, slowly up the toilsome path towards her!

"It is a long way, and I cannot hear their steps yet," said Estrild, her voice breaking on his bitter musing and rousing him as from some painful dream. "I want to tell you quickly, before they come, what I think and feel about—about that man

you pity."

"My dear Estrild, why should we talk of him with anger?" asked Harold wearily. "Let us leave him to the law."

"Which will not touch him. No, I must tell you what I feel.

I have thought it out; I understand it now. The man was guilty, If he were innocent, Captain Armstrong would have given him up to you. He would have said, 'Here is the man; he is willing to stand any investigation, any inquiry—let him be a prisoner till he is proved guiltless.' Harold you have not done your duty by me and by Tristram. You should have seized that man. Now he has escaped us forever."

Her head sank upon her hands, but only for an instant; and, when she raised it, she fixed her tearless eyes as before on the

steep path.

Harold felt her words to be hard and unjust indeed; her reasoning as to the guilt of the unknown might have truth in it, but there was none in her assertion that he ought to have seized the man.

"Could I board a King's ship and arrest, one of the crew by

force?" he asked angrily.

"Perhaps not," said Estrild, in a weary voice. "But there will be no rest on earth for me till he be found. Oh, if I could but see him once—only once be assured that he is a human being!"

"Estrild," exclaimed Harold, startled more even by her strange tone than by her words, "of what are you thinking?"

"Hark!" she cried, starting to her feet. "Do you hear what

they are singing?"

Yes; Harold heard and grew pale. It was the sad wild air that had haunted him through his night journey—it was the "Crusaders' Chant," sung in soft, mellow Cornish voices to the words of a burial hymn.

"'Sing from the chamber to the grave'—
Thus did the dead man say;
'A sound of melody I crave
Upon my burial day.

"'Sing sweetly as you travel on,
And keep your footsteps slow;
The angels sing where I am gone,
And you should sing below.'"

The cortege was in sight now many feet below them still, winding slowly up the path and hidden sometimes by its abrupt turns or by the rocks and bushes that lined its jagged side.

"Are the men mad," said Harold to himself, "that they sing

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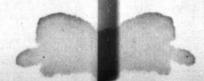
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Estrild divined his thoughts, and turned her ashen-grey face

at once towards him.

"Do not stop them," she said. "It is a Cornish custom to sing in bearing the dead. Let them sing on—they are doing their best to comfort me."

And surely the mournful chant had brought comfort, for tears were in her eyes and the bitter hardness of her voice had broken into tenderness.

"But I feared this singing to that strange air," Harold began;

but she held up her hand to stop him.

"We sing it always when a Carbonellis dies in—in this way. Prior must have told them who rode to Langarth last night."

"My dear, dear Estrild ____"

"Ah, I cannot talk—I cannot answer you!" she cried, in a dreadful whisper. "He is coming—he is very near! Hush! Let us listen."

"'Then bear me gently to my grave,
And, as you pass along,
Remember 'twas my wish to have
A pleasant funeral song."

The men were close upon them now, four of them carrying the rough coffin—Cornish way—by the hand, not on the shoulder. Every head was uncovered.

Estrild stood up, and Harold put his arm around her; then, with a burst of weeping for which he thanked Heaven, she clung to him; and after one look, she hid her face on his shoulder from the sight before her.

Solemnly the men passed on, too pitiful to look upon her grief – only the deeper tone of their voices told that their hearts were

with her in her sorrow.

"'So earth to earth and dust to dust;
And, though my flesh decay,
My soul will sing among the just
Until the Judgment Day."

Pitiful and brave the men lifted up their voices and rolled the hymn strong, great and victorious against the pale morning sky.

Comfort and hope sprang out of the sound. Even in death man is king, and the crown of life sits on his cold brow.

The ancient nail-studded door was set wide open, and servants lined the hall as to receive a royal guest, as the young master of Langarth, who had gone out in life and health, was carried over

its threshold dead.

CHAPTER VII.

ESTRILD'S reproaches and her apparent coldness had stung her lover to the heart. Yet in her last few words, which betrayed the superstitious horror lurking amid her grief, and in the clinging touch of her hands, as at length she turned to him for help. he found a gleam of comfort. These things, like the straw upon the river, showed him, as he believed, whither the current of her thoughts tended. The mystery shrouding her brother's death had brought down upon her like an avalanche all the hereditary gloom and superstition of his house, and she was irritated that no tangible evidence could be brought forward to disprove her agonized fear that her brother had fallen a victim to a dreadful power beyond all human ken. To have such a belief forced upon her was hateful; hence her irritation, hence her bitter disappointment that the slayer of her brother was not seized and brought before her eyes to disprove by his veritable flesh-and-blood presence that the bounds of this world had not been passed, and no spirit from the "other side" had stepped across its awful threshold to compass his death)

As Harold sat gloomily alone in the library, striving to eat the breakfast which Prior had set before him, he thus endeavoured to thread the labyrinth of Estrild's thoughts and see in them

a cause of her bitter injustice to himself.

That her thoughts ran this way he felt sure; and it was no argument against their strength and gloom to say that they were unreasonable and morbid. No, they must be fought with and conquered by a better way than wordy counsels against the folly of superstition. Such counsels he knew would fall into the dark vague terror of Estrild's mind unheeded; they would be lost there as the light fall of a few flakes of snow is lost instantly in the sea. So instead of words there must be deeds; instead of argument there must be proof.

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t was no they were with and the folly into the would be instantly nstead of The "human being," as she had passionately said, who had slain her brother must be brought before a Court of Justice, and his innocence or his guilt be proved by undoubted human evidence. In the eye of day, in the face of indubitable fact, the mists of superstition would be chased from her mind, and his own love would be herself again.

The tender joy of the hope touched him almost to tears, and he forgot for a moment the estrangement of Estrild's looks and the cold silence in which she had left him ever since she had shut the door against him and all the world, to be alone with her

grief.

But was this a time for him to be angry because she chose to weep alone and not in his arms? Well, if she would not accept comfort from him, she should at least accept help. He would be

up and doing.

But, alas, the spirit may by willing, but the flesh is weak! From the moment when he had stepped into the fated boat on the Devonshire side of the Torpoint Passage he had not closed his eyes in sleep; and each hour of the twenty that had passed since then had brought its share of weariness, excitement, danger, and grief. Even now, as he forced himself to swallow food, he felt the exhaustion of fatigue in every nerve, and with intense sorrow he was fain to confess that an hour or two of rest was a necessity before he would be fit for the work that he had set himself to do. Meanwhile he would question old Prior as to the best course to pursue. He knew the people and the place, and would tell him to whom he ought to apply for aid in his enterprise.

"Yes, sir, I understand you," said the old man, when Harold had explained his project. "You want to hire a boat and pursue the cutter. Well, the best man to help you in that is an old pilot called Daniel Pascoe; he has a fast-sailing sea-worthy boat, and, if any man can put you in the right way to catch the cutter, he

can."

"Where does he live, Prior?"

"Down to Langarth Churchtown, sir. My son shall show you the way. Ah, Mr. Olver, there will be sad changes here now!"

"There will indeed, Prior," returned Harold absently. "Miss Estrild will be in the power of a bad man, sir."

"What do you mean?" asked Harold turning to him now with roused attention.

"I mean that Mr. Vicat is her guardian now; and, if ever there was a bad man that wore out good shoe-leather on God's earth, he is one! I never thought to live to see Miss Estrild in that man's hands."

*Vicat?" repeated Harold anxiously. "I have heard of him. He is reported rich, and he is related to the family, is he

not?"

"Only by law, sir. His first wife was a sister of Mrs. Carbonellis. She died and left one son; by his second wife he has

other sons and daughters."

Harold received this information as a matter of no great importance. He could not imagine any mere uncle-in-law interfering much in Estrild's life, and, besides, in fourteen months she would be of age, and free, he supposed, of guardianship.

"I think we need not be afraid of this Mr. Vicat, Prior," he said. "A husband, you know, can stand between his wife and

a bad guardian."

"Oh, sir, I hope the best; but this is a sad day for us all, and

I fear it is only the beginning of misfortune!"

"Now, look here, Prior," returned Harold gravely—"I shall be much annoyed if any talk of that kind reaches your young mistress's ears. She has real sorrow enough without being troubled by the superstitious fancies of ignorant people. I shall expect you to keep all idle tales in the regions to which they belong. By the-bye, I thought we agreed that she was not to hear of the stranger who came to Langarth last night?"

"Ah, sir, you and I hoped to keep that a secret; but early this morning, before daylight, the guard of the up-coach told the lodge-keeper all the story of the dark rider who outraced the mail last night! Then, when the light rose, the woman came up here and saw Miss Estrild; and she sent for me and asked if that strange visitor had rung his warning note at our door. I could not answer 'No;' I owned that you had seen him, sir."

Harold heard this with an inward groan. Was it wonderful that Estrild met him with a moody spirit tinged with all the superstitious gloom of her race? And in his inmost heart, as he brooded now for a moment over the events of this black night, was he not obliged to own that a secret shadow of horror rested also on his own soul? The voice he had heard in the library as he stood before the old picture might have been a delusion born of his heated fancy; but it was not the least strange that it ap-

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peared to him to be a Tristram's voice; and, if it should be proved hereafter that this delusion came upon him at the moment of his friends death, it would ever remain to him an unaccountable mystery.

"Well, Prior, I am sorry," Harold said, "that this history should have reached your young mistress and vexed her heart at such a time. Doubtless it was this that made her go to the beach?"

"Yes, sir; and I thought to get there first and warn you of her coming. But I was too late, though, knowing the tide was out, I ran the shortest way through the caves to the beach."

Harold did not question the old man further; he perceived new that he had poured forth his story to the waiting crew, and they, in spite of all they had heard at the cutter's side, had instantly accepted their master's death as the supernatural doom which fell on all his race. So they bore him up the cliff to the air of the "Crusaders' Chant," the old sepulchral hymn which, like the wail of a sorrowful spirit, followed every Carbonellis to his last home.

Harold felt now that in forcing Estrild to play this sad air to him he had been cruel. He had thought to sweep away her superstitious fancies by imposing on her this task; but he perceived now that it must have had the very opposite effect, and the fact would strengthen all the morbid terrors that filled her mind. If she had only told him at what calamitous times this sad chant was sung, then for worlds he would not have asked her to ring it out beneath her white fingers. Yet he could understand her silence, her unwillingness to let a single word of hers strengthen her unseen terrors. He recalled the brave effort she had made to play calmly and to lay no superstitious stress upon the fact that she was playing the fateful music that a wildly fanciful legendary people sang as the funeral hymn of her doomed race.

"These Cornish folk are strangely superstitious," said Harold to himself. "Every rock and wild heath has its legend, every house its ghost, every mine its elf and goblin. Brought up amid a cloud of such wild fancies, Estrild's spirit must needs be shadowed by them; but I will take her away from all this. London will shake the cobwebs from her brain. As soon as this terrible time is over, I must persuade her to be my wife at once. I am resolved she shall not stay alone amid all the gloomy recollections

of this old place. In London she will forget them. Ah, yes, surely I shall make her forget them when she is all my own!"

The grating of wheels and the prancing of horses on the broad gravel sweep without roused Harold from his reverie. He glanced at the window and saw a post-chaise and four reeking horses driven by two post boys, so called, though they were, in fact, lean and battered old men. One of these dismounted and clamoured at the bell with clumsy hand.

The sound grated harshly on Harold's vexed ears. All his thoughts rushed in pained fear to Estrild's room; the clang would

startle her sense bodefully with new terrors.

"Now who can these blundering people be who pay us a visit at such a time?" he said to himself angrily. "Prior will send

them away, of course."

But no; to his surprise he saw the old man, with strangely scared look, open the chaise door and help a stout lady to descend. A gentleman, also stout, with a florid handsome face, followed her. Both entered the house.

In another moment, as Harold rose in angry amazement, Prior had set the library door open and announced—

"Mr. and Mrs. Vicat!"

CHAPTER VIII.

I'HE stout lady remained timidly near the door, ; but the florid gentleman came forward with great composure.

"Mr. Olver, I presume?" he said, in a pompous voice.

Then, as Harold merely bowed in reply, he turned round to his wife.

"My dear, let me introduce you to Mr. Olver. You will be

greatly interested, in making his acquaintance."

"I am glad to see you. I mean I am sorry—at such a time, you know," returned the lady, in a frightened way. "I am sure I wish it hadn't happened."

"My dear," said Mr. Vicat, "pray reflect before you speak. Rebellion at all times is bad, but rebellion against Providence is

really unpardonable."

At this rebuke Mrs. Vicat pushed her chair nearer to the wall and sat there silent.

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"This is a sad dispensation, sir," continued her husband, turning to Harold.

"To what are you alluding as a 'dispensation'?" asked Har-

old, his anger and contempt breaking through his voice.

"I allude, of course, to my nephew's death, of which I have just been informed by that dear, affectionate, familiar old creature, Prior; but we went into no details. I presume it happened about a week ago?"

"It happened last night," said Harold, shortly.

"Dear me! Now that is strange—that is remarkable! A

short illness, I suppose?"

In his exasperation and grief Harold rose and walked to the window, and the question of Mr. Vicat's was answered with his back to that gentleman.

"There was no illness. My dear friend lost his life by an accident on board the revenue cutter. And I think," continued Harold, turning now and facing his interlocutor with indignant mien, "that this is not a time at which his sister can receive visitors."

"Quite so. I am glad to hear you say so," returned Mr. Vicat, with much satisfaction. "It relieves me, you see, of the painful task of saying that at such sad times a bereaved family should be left to themselves."

Harold grew white. He thrust his hands into his pockets, for they tingled with a very natural desire to seize Mr. Vicat by the collar and fling him out of the window, and it required a strong remembrance of Estrild and of the solemn stillness of that sacred room above him to hold him back. With the thought of this in his heart, he refrained and forced himself to speak quietly.

"I acknowledge no right in you, Mr. Vicat, to question my presence here. My position with regard to Miss Carbonellis makes it a duty on my part to remain to protect her and carry

out her wishes."

"My dear sir, I am quite aware of your position; but it appears to me you are in amazing ignorance of mine," returned Mr. Vicat, with exceeding suavity. "Now don't let us quarrel, but permit me to state the case simply. Miss Carbonellis is my niece—"

"By marriage-by law only," interposed Harold, sharply.

"Granted, by law; but I am her guardian also by law, and, my nephew being dead, I am now her sole guardian; and I am

also sole executor and sole trustee under her father's will," responded Mr. Vicat, rolling out his words with slow unction.

"This is the position in which the law places me."

He paused a moment here as if awaiting some contradiction; but Harold was in no condition to give him any; he was in absolute ignorance relative to the truth or untruth of this statement. Seeing him silent, Mr. Vicat continued, in the same ex-

asperating soft way:

"I have said sufficient, Mr. Olver, to show you that until my niece comes of age—which will not be until she is twenty-five—I have a perfect right to question anyone's presence in this house. But—don't mistake me"—putting up his hand to stop Harold's speech—"I have no desire to do so with regard to yourself. In this, as in all other things, I shall consult my dearniece's wishes; and I hope she and I shall always be of one mind."

"The man is lying," said Harold, to himself bitterly. "My poor darling, she shall escape from this thralldom quickly! Once my wife, I defy him to injure her!"

This was the young man's thought, and it brought a quick fire

into his eyes, and firmness to his voice.

"Excuse me, Mr. Vicat," he said dryly, "but I shall await some confirmation of your statements from Miss Carbonellis before I accept them as correct."

"I can pardon your doubts, Mr. Olver. I am aware that you are only very slightly acquainted with my niece's family affairs,

or, indeed, with herself."

"I have been engaged to Estrild for six months," returned Harold, indignantly; "and I have known her nearly two

years."

"My dear sir, I know the whole history of your acquaintance with her," and Mr. Vicat waved his hand toward him as if dismissing the matter as a mere bagatelle. "You and my dear nephew were college chums; then, when Estrild was staying in London with a connection of mine, Lady Membury, you were introduced to her for the first time. That was—let me see—just twenty months ago. Then last summer you joined her and her brother in their excursion to Switzerland; and it was during that tour that the engagement you speak of took place. Yes, I believe I am correct. Of course, as coguardian with her brother, it was my duty to ascertain all these facts; and there was a dif-

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"No; I never heard him mention your name," and Harold's

voice shook slightly as he spoke.

A rush of indignant feeling, mingled with a thousand recollections of that sweet and tender time when his love was young, had for a moment so quivered round his heart that he could not command himself to speak firmly.

"Ah, poor Tristram was always very reticent as to his family connections," observed Mr. Vicat, rubbing his hands together complacently as he regarded Harold's evident discomposure.

"And so is Estrild," broke in Mrs. Vicat, suddenly. "I am

sure I never was so surprised as when she sent for us."

"Sent for you?" echoed Harold, staring in intense amazement at the hitherto silent awkward figure that had now broken forth into this strange utterance.

"Did you suppose we had come without an invitation?" de-

manded Mr. Vicat, with immense dignity.

"I certainly did," returned Harold, "and, in spite of Mrs. Vicat's assertions, I shall continue to suppose so."

"Well, I don't wonder to hear you say that," burst out Mrs. Vicat, with a childish laugh, "for it was such a queer invitation

that I hardly knew how to take it myself."

"My dear, my dear," expostulated her husband, "you permit yourself at times to make such strange remarks that really I shall be obliged to you if you keep silent. There was nothing extraordinary, I assure you, Mr. Olver, in my niece's invitation except, perhaps, that she might have written it, instead of sending a stranger to our house to say that our presence was needed here immediately."

"Yes, a most singular person, who would not give any name, and who made me quite nervous," said Mrs. Vicat, hurrying her words out with great speed, as evidently in fear of a sudden check. "I had been dozing on the sofa, and I awoke with sort of feeling that some one was looking at me like—like— What's that thing in poetry, my dear, that kills people? Oh, I know—a basilisk—yes, like a basilisk! Well, and I was all of a shiver, and he was standing opposite to me; and wher I stared at him, he said:

"'I have come to deliver a message. Your presence is needed at Langarth. Will you tell your husband that?'

"And with that he was gone. And it was so odd and sudden that, when I rubbed my eyes and roused myself, I took it for a dream. There, that's the truth. But Mr. Vicat took it seriously, and so we started in a post-chaise the next day. And—and here

we are, at the cost of a pretty penny, too."

"I don't count cost where my niece is concerned," responded Mr. Vicat, with a flourish of his hand. "And now, sir, you can comprehend why I observed that it was remarkable when you informed me that my dear nephew's death was only last night. Naturally I had concluded that it was in consequence of his loss that my niece had sent for me."

"She certainly never sent for you," returned Harold, firmly. "The whole thing is a mistake. Mrs. Vicat, as she rightly judged, was dreaming when she imagined the presence of a mes-

senger from Langarth."

"Well, that's just what I think," began Mrs. Vicat, in the same hurried way, as if she expected an instantaneous stopper on

her speech, which this time certainly arrived.

"My dear, I must insist upon your being silent," interposed her husband. "All this talk is very irrelevant to our purpose. We are here to take our natural and legal position as Estrild's guardians, not to discuss Mr. Olver's doubts as to a messenger from her having called upon you or not."

"Excuse me, I have no doubts on the subject," said Harold,

"and a reference to Miss Carbonellis will settle the point."

"Yes, I should like to ask her the question. I feel so odd about it altogether!" exclaimed Mrs. Vicat. "No, Anthony, I won't be stopped! You can't put a cork in my mouth always! I will have my say out! And I repeat that it was extraordinary that no servant could recollect letting that man in; and he gave no name. To be sure, the milkman was at the door; he might have come in then."

Mr. Vicat gave his big shoulders a slight shrug, as if to shake off the overflowings of his wife's idle babble, and then addressed

himself to Harold.

"Messenger or singular dream, if my wife will have it so, is a matter of little consequence," he said, sententiously. "The fact remains that my nephew is dead, and the duties of my position render my presence necessary to my niece. My first duty will be—"

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duties by a slight scream from his wife. At her delight at having accomplished one or two speeches without being smothered, she had removed from her modest seat near the wall, and betaken herself to an arm chair near the fire. She was standing before this now, with her face flushed and a look of terror in her light-blue eyes.

"What is the matter now, Louisa?" asked her husband, sharply, his pompous manner and his suave delivery both lost

in unmistakable rage.

"Matter?" she cried. "Why, I am frightened—that's what's the matter! There is the gentleman I saw—or his picture—it's all the same!"

"A man is not quite the same as his picture," returned Mr. Vicat, with much contempt. "You are dreaming again, I suppose."

"No, I am not. There is his potrait against the wall where

I was sitting. I could not see it till I moved over here."

"Do you mean this painting?" asked Harold, touching the fallen potrait of the Black Crusader. "You could scarcely have seen this gentleman, I think."

He spoke in a quiet, mocking voice, but was vexed to feel that

his heart was beating fast as he awaited her answer.

"Yes, that's the picture I mean. And it is exactly like him too. Dear me, it's very trying to one's nerves! I wish people's pictures wouldn't walk about."

"Louisa, I wish you would try to put one grain of sense into your ridiculous speeches," said her irate husband. "At times

you make a hopeless idiot of yourself."

"If I had not been idiot enough to see that picture standing before me, and ordering us to come to Langarth, you would not be here at this minute!" retorted his wife, with some show of logic.

"Well, well, I will acknowledge that it is curious—there!" returned Mr. Vicat, soothingly as if talkingto a child. "I presume it is some friend of the family depicted in fancy dress."

he continued, turning to Harold.

"I think not. It is a very old painting, and is supposed to

be a portrait of a Crusader."

"Ah, that is rather interesting and singular. And a remarkable face too the Crusader has—a good deal of electricity about him of the black kind. A man, I should say, to leave his mark on his descendants."

"Perhaps so," assented Harold.

"It is a mere case, my dear, of astonishing likeness,"—addressing his wife, who sat very limp and frightened in her chair—"no need whatever to make a wonder or a miracle of it. This gentleman in the black chain armor no doubt has his quiver full, like the rest of us; and one of the arrows, flying through the centuries, sped to you the other day, winged with a message—that's all."

"That's all!" repeated Mrs. Vicat, in a rasping tone.

"What's all? Who is talking nonsense now? I don't understand a word you've said! No one fired any arrows at me! That's what you call talking over my head, I suppose!"

"Then, to speak at your level, my love, I will say that your visitor is doubtless a remote descendant of this gentleman depicted here; and he has been good enough to carry on the family likeness."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Vicat, rubbing her nose with much irritation. "And if that's the case he has carried on the family eccentricity too. Why didn't he leave his name or his card, or at least knock at the door like a Christian?"

To this question no one responded. Mr. Vicat was examining the old painting curiously through his eye-glass. Harold also bent an earnest gaze on the worn, scarred face which looked out from an inscrutable darkness—for it had no background, and no light around it save that strange quiver of living light which seemed to come from the face itself as from a living man. Such an aspect of life shines rarely on a painted canvas, and only when some great master has limned the features, which perchance through love or sorrow have touched his heart and sent a lightning thrill of pain from heart to hand.

"I am an amateur of paintings and handle the brush a little myself," observed Mr. Vicat, with that air of conceit of universal talent which emanated from his florid features and florid talk; "and I am of opinion that this picture is not nearly so old as the Crusades. Indeed, there were no painters in England at that period."

"It might have been painted in Italy," said Harold. "Crusaders traveled home that way. At all events, one can see that the painter's hand drew from a living face—a face worn and marred, and with a great capacity for woe."

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and most likely one of the arrows from his quiver who bore a great hereditary likeness to his forefather of the cross. The dress is historical and correct, copied perhaps from a missal; but the portrait itself dates only, I am certain, from the sixteenth century. I must ask Estrild if any tradition in her family tells who sat for it."

"I must beg you will not speak to Estrild on the subject," interposed Harold hurriedly. "She is not in a fit state of mind

to discuss a matter of such light importance."

"Light!" repeated Mrs. Vicat. "I don't call it light when people are nearly scared out of their wits by folks walking into drawing-rooms who ought to be lying quiet with tons of marble atop of them! So I give you gentlemen fair warning that I intend to sift the matter to the bottom. I shall question and cross-question Estrild till I get at the truth. And unless Mr. Vicat smothers me, like the babes in the Tower, I don't see how he is to prevent my speaking to her."

Mr. Vicat's answer to this outburst was another shrug of the shoulders, given with intense contempt, while Harold glanced at the garrulous woman with a kind of horror, his mind full of troubled thoughts as to the result of her threat if she carried it out. In Estrild's present state of gloomy grief incalculable mischief might follow her foolish injudicious outpourings. The idea struck him that it might be possible to send her thoughts flying

on another tack.

"I dare say the gentleman you saw will call on you again, and apologize for his abrupt visit," he said; "and then you can ask him as many questions as you please respecting his resemblance to this old portrait, which doubtless represents a remote ancestor of his. I should surmise that he is a member of some collateral branch of the Carbonellis family. But why he should take upon himself to request your presence at Langarth is a mystery I can not fathom. All the rest appears to me simple enough."

"Well, perhaps, after all, he came in without knocking because he found the door open," responded Mrs. Vicat, in her

childish way.

"Decidedly I should say so," said Harold, smiling in spite of

all the care gnawing in his heart.

"I know of no collateral branch of the family," observed Mr. Vicat. "Do you?"

Harold made no reply, for at that moment the door was opened by old Prior, who announced that luncheon was served in the dining-room—a fact which made Mr. and Mrs. Vicat rise and

follow him with cheerful alacrity.

Left alone, Harold took up the picture to replace it against the wall—for it had been carried to the window—and in doing this a slip of vellum or parchment fell from the broken frame. It was still in tolerable preservation, and, on opening it carefully, he read this doggerel, written in black-letter, or old English:

"When Cumberland and Cornwall meet,
When man than horse shall prove more fleet,
The rider lose, yet the race be won,
Then hate by love shall be outdone,
The curse I leave at last shall cease,
And an unblest spirit rest in peace."

"This was doubtless written in the days of witchcraft, when prophets were by no means poets," said Harold to himself. "Now, shall I put it back into its old place, or shall I burn it?"

He decided on the first, not without a vague feeling of superstition, to which he yielded unwillingly, calling in his own mind a mere veneration for the antique. To this reverence for antiquity he also attributed his copying the lines in his pocketbook before he carefully replaced the slip of parchment between the panel and the back of the painting, whence it had fallen.

"At all events, I will take care that Estrild never hears of this rhyming jumble of impossible events," he said, as he clasped his pocket-book and hastened out on his quest for a boat and a pilot.

CHAPTER IX.

Daniel Pascoe was a wiry, weather-beaten old salt, with face brown as tanned leather, and hands full of sinews and knots, which had a grip of iron in their strength. He was sitting on the beech at Langarth, on an empty cask placed in the teeth of

the wind, w

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with face and knots, itting on teeth of the wind, which he seemed to enjoy as he smoked the short black pipe.

"So you want to overtake the cutter," he said. "Well, my boat can do that—only give her a fair wind. There's a good capful brewing in the sky to-night; and, being January, you see, most likely it'll be a nor'-wester. Will that wind suit you?"

"That's more than I can say till I know which way the cutter has sailed. Michael, you must go up to the coast-guard station

and inquire."

"And do 'ee think they'll tell 'ee up there, even if they know?" asked Daniel, taking his pipe from his lips to blow out a long whiff of smoke. "They be poor critturs with regard to sense, they coast-guard men, though I won't say they can't fight when called on. Michael, my son, there edn't no call for thee to go up to station to ax where the cutter es. I reckon thee knows well enough what folks keep a good lookout as to the whereabouts of thic craft."

"Well," returned Michael, "I reckon I do. You see, sir, them that have a venture out at sea be the most likely wauns to know where a craft be that they need to keep clear of like: and, ef so be Dan'l have got a mind to speak out, as, being among sure friends, he will, we two needn't go no furder to ax ques-

tions."

"That's so," said Daniel, with a queer twinkle of light coming into his deep set gray eyes. "And time was when no surer friends to fair traade was to be found anywhere than among the ould squires of Langarth; and for their saakes, ef you've got a mind to come so close, sir, I'll taake 'ee right athwart the cutter's gun—the saeme ould gun as they fired laest night, may be five minutes or so too laete to do anything with 'en 'cept to waaste powder;" and here Daniel shook the ashes out of his pipe, and refilled it with a pleasant air of satisfaction.

"And so you positively know where the cutter is cruising?"

said Harold.

Daniel nodded.

"I reckon ef we sail right for the coast of Brittany, and stand off Morlaix harbor, we shall see that there craft lurking round waiting for a bark that'll sail out of another port about fifty mile away. But Cap'en Armstrong he had sure word, you know"—and a gleam shot into the old smuggler's eyes—"that the 'Swift' would run into Morlaix, so there we shall find 'un for sartain."

"Ah, I fear that false information has cost Mr. Carbonellis his life!" said Harold.

"We are powerly sorry, one and all," returned Daniel, "for that poor job; but et esn't a sin that can be laid to our chaarge. There's waun aboard the cutter who have goet that blood upon his mind; and, whether he be innocent or guilty, I reckon blood maakes a red stain that years caen't wipe out. Ef the squire had stood by his awn people he'd be saafe and well this minute."

"I won't say that," put in Michael, gravely, "for a sure token came to Langarth laest night that death was on the road for a

Carbonellis."

"Ah, I heard tell of that, too," said Daniel. "And 'tis a mystery past book larning, that es. There's heaps of gentry says 'tis aal a lie; but it comes and its goes aal the same, though argyments enough be thrawed at it to blaw et ento powder. But we knaw, my dears, though twenty years or more may go by, and forgetfulness be springing up with grass on the Langarth graaves, yet, when a Carbonellis' time es come, the Black Rider es as sure to be here as that death comes behind him."

Harold had remained silent, in the hope that by letting the two men converse freely he would perhaps gain some knowledge that would prove helpful to him; but now he broke upon their talk

eagerly.

"Has that horseman never been followed?" he asked. "Has no one ever had sense or courage enough to take horse and ride after him, and discover the road he takes on leaving Lan-

garth?"

"No living man has ever done that yet," said Michael; "though I've heard say many have tried to overtake him both in coming and going, but they've always failed. He slips away out of sight like a ghost or a sperrit; and some say he is the laest."

"I can vouch for his being no ghost," said Harold, "for he came across Torpoint Passage in the same boat with me."

This assertion made old Daniel look at him with curious, searching eyes.

"Did you touch him, sir?" he asked.

"No, though I felt inclined to handle him and rather roughly, too."

"Ah, sir, if you didn't touch him you caen't be sartain he wasn't a sperrit. Sight es a desaiving sense; 'tes when we handle things

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we knaw what they be maade of. Now there've been times at sea when I've glimpsed a ship in the offing, all sails set and signal flying for a pilot, and I've seen her plain as I see the sun now in the sky; but when I've tried to run alongside and board her, then she faaded away. Her sails have fell down waun by waun, and she'd seem to sink slow in the sea, till there was aunly a bubble of foam and a curl of spray to shaw where she'd gone down. Then I knew there'd be a wreck of some good ship near by, and I've stood off and on, waiting for it, and saaved many a dear life that way. But now, sir, to come back to business," said the old man, checking himself suddenly-"I hope you understand that I don't bargain for more than to bring 'ee in sight of the cutter. I can't board her and take the man you want. I reckon 'twould be more'n a justice could do, for sea law esn't land law. Even in Plymouth Sound I've heerd say the Mayor of Saltash es the aunly man that can board a king's ship with warrants; and he must go out en a boat with his silver mace that Queen Anne give'd un."

"And that wouldn't be no good, I reckon, in French waters," interposed Michael, "where the 'Alert' will be cruising."

"Right you are, my son," said Daniel.

"See here," exclaimed Harold chafing with impatience—"I am not going out with a warrant and a constable. I should waste hours in the endeavour to arm myself with such legal aids, and perhaps, as you say, I should find them useless. I leave all that matter to the coroner, who will do his duty doubtless. But I am resolved he shall have a fair chance for executing that duty. The assassin on board the 'Alert' shall not be landed in France and escape without at least my becoming cognizant of the fact, if I can not prevent it."

"So you think, sir, Captain Armstrong will put this man

ashore on the Brittany coast?"

"I fear it. And I will find out whether or no he has com-

m tted that crime."

"I don't reckon he'd ventur' 'pon sich a course," said Daniel, slowly. "He houlds the king's commission, so he's answerable to two courts for his good conduct—court-martial, you see, and court of law. Ef he comes back to England he's bound to bring that man 'long with him. Being captain of his own ship, he's bail for him like now, to the law."

"Daniel, I grant your good reasoning, but I feel that Captain

Armstrong will fling every consideration overboard rather than not save the miserable man."

"I never argify agin' feelin's," said Daniel, pulling a huge silver watch from his fob and looking at it grimly, "nor yet agin' facts. Now the cutter have had six hours' start; but, since she's the slowest auld tub in the navy, I reckon I can catch her afore she gets near enough to the French coast to send a boat ashore—more by token that the wind have been agin' her all day, and is aunly now shifting to the nor' west. I can be ready in an hour, sir, if you can."

"Less time if you like," said Harold eagerly.

"No; an hour, sir—no more and no less. I like to victual my boat before I go to sea, and I've to get my man and boy ready. You can slaip when you get aboard, sir. I can see that's the first thing you want," and Daniel glanced pitifully at the young man's fagged, weary looks.

"You are sure the 'Alert' can not send a boat ashore till she

gets off Morlaix?" reiterated Harold anxiously.

"Ef you knowed the Brittany coast as I do, you wouldn't be oneasy on that score, sir. And Morlaix lies four miles up the river—a long tug for a boat's crew—and we could follow if you liked. Any way, when we waunce sight the 'Alert,' no boat can leave her without our knowledge."

"That's all I care for," returned Harold. "Let me once get the cutter in view, I'll never leave her till she is in an English port, and not then till I see that man dragged out of Captain

Armstrong's hands and lodged in jail."

Daniel nodded quietly, as if he thought Harold's present state of mind past reasoning with, and only to be soothed by giving him his own way.

"I'll bring the 'Curlew' round to Morvah Cove, sir," he said,

as Harold strolled away.

"All right," Harold answered.

"That's the cove where we landed this morning, sir," said Michael.

"And the caves from the park run down to that beach. Can we go home that way now?" asked Harold.

"If the tide be low enough still, sir. But et is a rugged way

and through black darkness."

"But your father got to the beach this morning by that road, so I suppose I can traverse it, too, Michael?"

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"Oh, father knows every inch and every turn of the caves; and he didn't think of darkness, I reckon, this morning, when he came through them."

A few moments' rapid walking brought them to the lonely white beach on which they had landed in the low morning sun with their sorrowful burden. All around lay a wan wilderness of gray rock, with tangles here and there of long sea-weed, and small clear pools holding pale sunlight. And among them, rushing to and fro, fell the soft surges of the sea, bearing in their sound all the sorrow of the years to come.

With thoughts within him as troubled as the waves on which he looked, Harold stood for a moment to gaze on the heaving desert of waters that stretched away to the dim horizon. Then he turned to the rocks and noted the long reef that lay like a petrified giant lifting wan hands of stone among the shallow waves, as if to guard the little harbor he had sheltered.

"It is like Jaffa," said Harold to himself. Then there rushed into his mind a thousand memories of Tristram, and of that pilgrimage to Palestine in which he had joined him—the wild chant of the Arabs, the weird chorus of the mule-drivers, the mournful cry of the camels who laboured beneath their loads; all seemed borne to his feet in the mingled roar of many waters dashing upon the pale rocks around him. And, surging all about his heart like the waves upon the cliff, a multitude of sorrows. oppressed him. Only yesterday his happiness stood on a sure foundation; to-day it was shaken and ready to fall into ruin. Was it possible that Tristram's life had meant love, peace, joy, and that all these were snatched away by his death? Surely not! He would strive for his love with all the force of his soul, and his own strong hand and heart should defend her from the evil that threatened her. That pilgrimage to Palestine, whose pictures and memories kept passing through his mind, mingling with the surge of the sea and with Estrild's image, which, phantom-like, flitted upon every remembered mountain and plain -could it be possible that Tristram had undertaken it, not with the light mind of a modern man, but with the faith of ancient days, with the secret latent hope that, if he came with the heart of a true pilgrim to these holy places, the curse of which he never spoke that lay upon his race might be taken away? Viewed in the light of all this new-fallen sorrow, threaded as it was with a dark line of superstition, this hidden motive for his journey seemed to Harold to break through all the light talk and laughter of that time, and to stand like a gloomy spectre beside his friend in those serious hours when dangers beset them, or when thoughts too deep for words, like a cloud of witnesses fell upon them as their feet trod upon sacred ground. Then too, with a startled sense of something fateful, there broke upon his mind the memory of that wild, mournful chant, which, like a funeral march, had followed the steps of their pilgrimage.

Ah, it was sad to think that now, with sorrowful, dim eyes, he could look into his friend's brave heart and on the gloom that had shrouded it, and understand even somewhat vaguely, how every note of that wild music must have struck an echo in his soul which rose from graves? And through it all he had kept silent, perhaps clasping faintly some new hope of life, some thin trust of escape from his doom, or perchance, in deeper despondency,

battling with the shadow of death.

"And shall I det Estrild fall into such a snare of darkness as this!" said Harold to himself. "Shall I permit her to imagine, in the depth of her grief, that some mysterious fate has seized upon her brother—a fate which now will pursue herself? No. I may be going on a blind, useless chase, but I will follow it to the end, and fling this shadow from her life as surely as I live myself. This stupid mystery, which would fall to pieces before investigation, shall not stand an hour longer than I can help it. Not to fight against it would be to allow the thing to grow, and build a wall of separation between us. Ah! it has cast a shadow of coldness already on our love."

Thoughts run fast, but words are slow in telling them. All these memories and feelings had coursed through Harold's mind with lightning swiftness as he traversed the white sands, and paused now at a narrow cleft in the rocks where Michael stood

awaiting him.

"This is the entrance to the cavern. Stoop low, sir, as you come in."

Harold did so, and found himself in a narrow passage with white, glistening sand underfoot, and having on either side a wall of jagged rock, and above a roof of rock so low that he had to keep his head bent as he walked slowly along. The light from the opening stole through it with a subdued softness, and the rush of the waves without sounded like the far-off echo of some distant sea. A clear stream ran through the white pebbles with

sweet, tinkling its way to its

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ssage with side a wall he had to light from s, and the ho of some bbles with sweet, tinkling music, as though rejoicing in having at last found its way to its ocean love.

"No horseman could ever pass through this place," said Har.

old, in a tone fall or disappointment.

Michael, who was leading the way, turned and stared at him. "No man straddled on a horse would ever try sich a path, I reckon," he answered. "Why, he'd knack hes head to jouds en two minutes. And as for a hoss, ef he waunce got en here, he'd have to be cut up en lerrups afore he could be got out again."

In the dim light Harold paused and looked behind him. The cleft by which they had entered seemed now no broader than his hand. The sea beyond it was a narrow strip of undulating blue;

passing sea-gull shut it from his sight.

"I fancied, Michael, that queer fellow-traveler of mine might have ridden away through this place, but I see now it is impossible"

"Aw, my dear," said Michael, in his soft, caressing, Cornish voice, "that's a whisht notion, sure 'nough! And you haven't come to the oogliest bit of road yet. Ef the hoss now was a ghost like the man, I wouldn't say nauthing agin sich a fancy; but as it is—Lor', I've seed men most nigh to break their hearts in rouling kegs along the oogly plaace we're coming to, and a hoss would brak his neck the fust step he took, ef the life wasn't knacked out ef un afore he got there. Here we are? Now, sir, you strave to find your own way on, will 'ee?"

But apparently a black, impenetrable wall of rock rose before them, barring the road and hemming them in on every side, save by the one narrow passage, through which some faint light still

reached them.

"I should say there was no road to find, Michael; but I suppose there is, since somehow the park can be reached this way."

"Bide a bit till I've struck a light," said Michael, taking a tinder-box from his pocket, and forthwith eliciting sparks with flint and steel. And, when at last the tinder caught fire and he blew into it to increase its power and catch the flame upon the sulphur match, Harold felt the wildness of the scene more vividly, and watched the play of yellow light on Michael's handsome face with a mysterious sense of having beheld all this before in a dream-picture, or in some far-off time forgotten.

"Now, sir, please follow me;" and Michael ascended three or four rugged, unhewn steps or ridges in the solid rocks; then sud-

denly he bent his head and disappeared.

He had passed through a rent or fissure in the rocky wall, and on following him, Harold functhimself in a large cavern black with a darkness made more horrible by a hoarse murmur which rolled around the walls like approaching thunder.

"The tide has followed us fast," said Michael, "and 'tis a rough sea running through that narrow road behind us now. Ah, my dear, many's the time I've seed some rare good stuff stowed away in this here place—a safe place too it used to be en the ould times!"

"Safe indeed, I should say," returned Harold, looking around the cave as Michael, with all the satisfaction of a guide, lighted numerous matches and held them aloft. "I should be sorry as a Preventive service man to find myself pursuing smugglers into this hole."

"And a man might be trapped here, sir, like a rat of the tide was coming in. Why, en haaf a minute or so from this time the sea will be pouring in through that there rift we've crept through like a tearing flood. And in rough winds and high tides the sea howls and roars round here till a man's heart grows faint with fear to hear it. There's aunly waun escaape out of this here cave in high tide; and, of the smugglers took that away, any man shut in here was a dead man as sure as there's death in drowning."

As he spoke, a shower of spray dashed through a cleft in the rock-wall, followed by the swift rush and roar of the wave as it fell back from the grim barrier which for a moment still restrained its onward fury.

"I reckon we'd best waaste no more time," observed Michael, "aunless we've got a mind to be drowned corpses. The sea don't wait for any man's talk, even ef 'twas Solomon hisself praiching. Here's the ladder, sir; hould on to it for bare life, and come along quick. The tide is roaring in, hungering for our lives."

It was true that the sea-spray which had sprinkled their faces with its salt touch had been quickly followed by wave upon wave, which rushed through the cleft in the rocks and fell upon the floor of the cave with a roar that filled it as with echoing, deafening thunder. It was a relief to find themselves above the devouring, rolling, creeping death, whose inrushing sound in its mighty strength bewildered the senses.

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ladder up which they had climbed, was not totally dark; a faint diffused light glimmered through it, and along its sandy floor the same little stream ran, which by some unseen course pursued its way among the dark windings of the rocks, till it reappeared in the passage they had first traversed. From there it made its final way to its goal, the all-devouring sea.

"Now I reckon, sir, "observed Michael, "you do feel pretty sure by this time that no four-footed beast in nature could ever——"

"I am quite satisfied on that point, Michael. I am only wondering why that ladder is left there. A man could leave his horse and escape that way."

"Well, he might," returned Michael, pondering it, "ef he knowed the way, and ef the tide suited. As for the ladder, 'tesn't no harm to laive it there now. 'Twould be aisy enough to pull et up and drown a Coastguard chap any time waun had a mind to. It stands there handy, you see!"

Michael said this in his sweetest, most caressing tone, as if it would be rather a kind deed thus to trap a Preventive man.

"Tessn't a heavy ladder to left, neither," continued Michael, as he walked on. "Waun pair of hands would do it. But lor', there esn't no call to discourse over this ladder nowadays, for I reckon all our good times be over!"

"Didn't a heavy sea sometimes roll the casks about and smash

them in those good times, Michael?"

"Never that I heerd tell of, sir. When the tide went out, they was always right and tight as drums, aunly they warn't

empty, like the high-sounding things."

During this talk the light had perceptibly increased about them, they were no longer only a voice to each other, sounding curiously loud among the dark echoes, but two stalwart figures visible now to the eyes of each. And, though the light was still dim and veiled, it was clear enough to show the wildness of the place, its grim and savage grandeur, its huge bare rocks, and its tinkling stream passing on into-darkness, like a voice singing as it went down to the depths of death.

Another moment, another sharp turn, and a blaze of light dazzled their unaccustomed eyes. Long fronds of a dark green fern hung from the roof—the Asplenium marinum—and shorter tufts clung to the sides, and green mosses were beneath their feet, and the stream bubbled and quivered with the sun's life, which it gave back to flowers on its brink.

Right before them was a sort of natural archway, through which was seen, not a glade of the park, as Harold had expected but a long reach of the sea, glistening with many colors, and tossing its cloud-shadows from wave to wave. Framed as it was by the rocky arch, the picture was divine as though touched by the mysterious glory which fell from the face of the heavens as it mirrored itself in the shining waters.

In spite of the heaviness hanging about his heart, Harold was touched by the beauty of the scene, and, shading his eyes with his hand, he stood for a moment contemplating it in silence.

On emerging from the arch he found himself on the very verge of the cliff, and checked his steps almost in consternation.

Michael smiled at his dismay.

"You thought these caves ran inland, sir, but all along they're only just inside the cliff. Please to walk carefully—a false step might throw 'ee down 'pon the rocks below, and you'd have to be picked up in a basket then, I reckon."

"I should like to sit here through a summer day, Michael," said Harold, turning away reluctantly—"if I were happy, and Estrild were by my side," he added mentally, with a retro-

spective sigh.

They turned sharply from the sea by a narrow path skirting a projecting rock, and then there stretched before their view a singular rocky valley or chasm which ran up through the park, narrowing slightly in its inland course. It was a strange freak of nature, a frightful rent in the green earth showing the iron sides of the dark cliffs which towered up on either side in gray precipitous walls, fringed towards their summit by clinging bushes of gorse and hanging tufts of heath and sea-pinks. Down in the lowest deep of the gorge meandered the stream whose soft silent power had doubtless wrought this miraculous path for itself through the solid rock. It ran on almost in darkness, with no green edge of verdure to embellish its border, except where here and there a tuft of fern waved its delicate fronds over its waters.

"How are we to get out of this place?" asked Harold, as he

gazed up the chasm with eyes seeking for an outlet.

"There are steps by the waterfall at the head of the combe," returned Michael. "The Merman's Well is there. 'Tis a whisht plaace, but Miss Estrild dearly loves to sit there. And look—there she is now!"

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And through a mist of spray rising from a cascade which like a glistening white thread fell over a dark wall of cliff Harold saw a slight figure bending towards him and beckoning with slender hand.

With a great bound of the heart which sent a glow of joy through all his veins, Harold strode on rapidly, leaving Michael far behind.

CHAPTER X.

At the end of the gorge, towards which Harold now hastened, there rose a sheer wall of rock, as clean-cut and precipitous as though it formed the side of a quarry hewn out by human hands. Over this there dashed a white thread of water, which fell iuto a natural basin below with a haze of foam and rush of sound, ere it wandered onwards in its course through the wild ravine to the sea.

Slightly hidden by the cloud of spray, Estrild stood near the waterfall and held out both her hands to Harold with a wan smile of welcome, He caught them in his nervously, and looked into her eyes with the anxious gaze of a man who for the first time has felt the coldness of a falling, shadow between him and his love. She met his look for an instant, then her eyes grew dark with unutterable grief, their lids drooped, her lips shook, and her cold hands were withdrawn from his.

"Estrild," Harold cried passionately, "is your heart so turned

against me that you cannot even speak to me?"

For answer she raised her eyes to his in mute reproach, then suddenly caught his hund in a wild clasp, and, dropping it, laid her head on his shoulder and strained him in her arms with a cry of pain that went to his heart

"Oh, my déarest—my dearest!" she murmured. "Never now to know how dear! Oh, Harold, cannot you feel the truth? We are parted—a shadow from the unseen world has come

between us, and will separate us for ever in this life."

In the excess of his joy and his sorrow—for both were with him—Harold trembled, and the arm that supported her quivered beneath her soft touch.

"My dear love, your nerves are unstrung, and you are full of

natural grief," he said soothingly. "Believe me, there is nothing can part you and me, seen or unseen. Trust me, be true to me, and I will prove the truth of my words with my life."

"I do trust you," she answered; "and I will trust you, no matter what wall of separation may be built up between us."

"Then what is there to fear, darling? No separation can arise except through a change in your own feelings, for mine can never alter."

"And do you think mine will?" she asked, in a trembling voice. "Do you think it was from want of love I seemed hard and cold when I saw Tristram lying dead before me?"

"My dearest, I cannot tell you what I thought. I was full of fear and pain. But we are recenciled, and you are my own again now, and no cold breath of unkindness shall ever touch us more."

Estrild raised her head and looked into his face with eyes full of unshed tears.

"It was not unkindness," she said, staying her voice—"there shall never be unkindness between us—it was despair. Haro'd, hope and love are dead for me now. Last year I promised Tristram—"

But here her voice broke, and she clung to him trembling, all speech stayed in the renewed memory of that day's grief. He supported her within his arm, pressing his lips on her bent head in silence, feeling that one touch of love could give her more comfort than a thousand words. Thus he stood till the paroxysm of agony that shook her slight frame was passed and she could speak again. At that moment Michael joined them; but they did not start apart at his presence; they stood together, still with arms interlacing for her weakness had need of his support.

"I reckon, sir," said Michael, "I'd best fetch your things and carry them down to the beach to waunce. There won't be time for 'ee to go up to the house now."

"Yes, yes, Michael; ask your father to put up two or three requisites for me. And I'll join you by the cliff pathway in ten minutes."

"We'll be back to-morrow, miss, I hope," said Michael, "ef we've goet a fair wind. And I'm going 'long with Mr. Olver, miss; and I promise 'ee there sha'n't no harm come to 'un that don't go through my body fust." With a glan had no voice of away.

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hael, "ef ver, miss; t don't go With a glance of deep pity for the fair young mistress who had no voice or strength to thank him, Michael hurried swiftly away.

"So it is true, and you are going in pursuit of the cutter?" Estrild said. "Is it my fault? Is it through me or for me that

you undertake this danger?"

"My dear, there is no danger. And I go because I suspect Captain Armstrong of a design to screen a criminal. I confess that that alone is not my motive. I want to prove to you that —setting Providence apart—nothing has occurred that cannot be accounted for naturally."

For a moment Estrild was silent, then she said quietly—

"I understand all you think and feel, but you cannot understand all my feelings. You have not lived as I have, in the midst of death. Your reason, I know, is full of arguments against my gloom, but a thousand words will not do away with facts. Tristram is dead, and he has died, as all my people die, in circumstances of inexplicable mystery."

"But, my dear Estrild, if I prove the contrary, if I bring forward a whole ship's crew to bear witness to the manner of his

death, surely you will believe it without mystery then?"

"If you can succeed in doing that, Harold, we shall not be

parted; but my hope is very faint."

"See here, Estrild—we will not talk of parting. Success or failure, you are mine and I am yours for life. Such words from you discourage and dishearten me; at any other time but this I should think them cruel—I should know that they meant you no longer loved me."

"You must promise me never to attach that meaning to them again?" she said earnestly. "You remember how unwilling I

was to love you?"

"I remember it too well. And the love that was so hard to

win it would be harder still to lose," he answered.

"You will never lose it—the love that could conquer all the fears and doubts of my past life is not a love that can change. You broke down the great resolve of my heart. Tristram and I had agreed that we would never marry, but stand by each other through all our days. If my love for you has proved strong enough to make me faithless to that compact, is it likely to prove weak now, when Tristram is gone and I have but you in the world?"

She asked the question with tears, and he folded her in his arms and kissed her.

"My dearest," he said, "is that the promise to Tristram of

which you spoke just now?"

"Oh no! It is a promise I tremble to think of, for even if it kill me I must keep it! Oh, my love, my love, do not hate me for saying this!" She clung to him with trembling hands, her eyes beseeching his pity, in a passion of mingled love and terror.

"Tell me the promise, Estrild, and do not fear to speak out. I shall not hate you for it, whether you keep it or break it."

She drew a long breath, and gave one piteous glance at his

face, as though deprecating his anger.

"It was last year in Switzerland," she said; "you had just told me that you loved me. I was very happy. I had had a season of doubt, of fear and indecision; I had resisted your power; I had tried not to love you; but that was all over, and I had accepted happiness, and began to believe that it could be mine. I confessed all this to Tristram, and he listened to me without uttering a reproach. He only said, 'So you break our contract, little one! And I shall be very lonely when you are gone.' I felt heart-broken, and I threw myself into his arms and declared passionately that I would not leave him even for you. He stroked my hair with his dear hand, and said, 'The thing is done now, Estrild; a dearer love than mine is come to you. I will not part you from it. Only remember this, that I will remain single all my life. A curse shall not be transmitted through me. We have talked on this subject many times, and you know my thoughts on it and my determination. I will not break that resolve; I feel I can hold it through the bitterest solitude that can fall upon a man. I had hoped, child, that you would have the courage to resolve with me to be the last of our race, but I see now I expected too much from your tend r nature. Do not cast a cloud upon your own and Harold's halp less by telling him of our fears. Time enough for that when ne comes to Langarth—time enough when he takes you away and leaves my house desolate. I was wrong, Estrild, to ask you to lead a lonely and barren life such as mine will be. There—do not cry so bitterly; I am not hurt that you could not do it. All I will ask of your softer heart is to stand fast by your duty, and give up your lover rather than bring upon his life the terror and anguish that cling to ours. While I live the curse can never

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touch you, but, if I die as we all have died, then you will stand in my place, and you must bear my cross. Will you promise me to do this? Harold, as he said that he held both my hands and looked into my face with eyes that would take no denial, and I answered 'Yes.'"

Estrild had spoken rapidly, with growing excitement and colour rising in her cheeks; she stopped now with hurried breath and eyes bright and shining. Harold noted all this, and, fearing to increase the fever of her grief, he refrained from speaking the thoughts that burned angrily within him. It needed a keen remembrance of the silent room where Tristram lay pale and cold to check the bitter reproach against his superstition which was ready to spring to his lips. He held it back; this was not a time to blame the newly dead to his sorrowing sister.

"What did you say?" he asked her quietly. "Tell me

exactly the promise that was wrung from you."

"Oh, it was not wrung from me! We grew up together with this resolve in our hearts. Often we wandered to this very spot, hand in hand, and sat down here by the Mermaid's Well, and talked of our future lives to be led together in loneliness, strengthening each other in our vow. But I had not his courage.

Oh, I have failed—I have failed pitifully!"

She raised her bent head and looked around on the wild landscape, filled to her with dear memories of childhood and of youth and the brother lying now so pale and silent in her desolate home. Harold held his peace for very pity; he knew his image had no place in these sad recollections, and he would not thrust himself upon thoughts sacred to another. He waited till her eyes turned to him again, and the swift blood rushed to her face with a tide of newer memories.

"I cannot help my thoughts wandering to the old days when Tristram was all in all and you were not in my life. You will forgive me?" she said piteously, holding out her hand to him. "From what I have said, you will understand better why he could demand such a vow and why I could speak it. I promised in solemn words that, if his death was like the death of all his race, the curse should die out with me, and I would renounce the dearest love of my life, and never be wife or mother."

"And you said that after you had given your word to me,

Estrild?" asked her lover bitterly.

"I must answer both 'Yes' and 'No,'" she said, her face

can never

growing very white beneath the reproach of his fixed gaze. was a resolve spoken continually between us for years, and here on this very spot where we stand it was solemnly ratified. This was before I knew you—it was the eve of Tristram's departure for Palestine. You remember that pilgrimage ?"

"I remember every shadow and light of it," he answered;

"and I see its meaning now."

"Yes. Tristram went in faith, like a pilgrim of old, and carried a hope with him which was never fulfilled. We spoke of it here together and then he reminded me that, if he never returned, I should be heiress of Langarth, and, if death fell upon him from the same mysterious hand which struck us all, his burden would thenceforth be mine, and his vow mine to keep. Then it was that I repeated it in strong and solemn words; and I know that I am bound by it now."

A short silence full of gnawing pain fell between them. Harold had a thousand arguments on his lips against the cruel folly of such a vow and the superstition that led to it, but the time would not allow him to utter them. One glance at Estrild's grief-stricken face choked them back upon his heart; she would not suffer any shadow of reproach from him to fall upon the brother whose face was yet visible to her, tender and loving still in its awful beauty. One expostulation he could permit himself to make.

"My dear Estrild, all this passed between your brother and you before your engagement to me. He ratified that engagement, and by so doing he absolved you from your promise."

"No, no-not unless he lived, or died naturally as other men If his life passed away in mystery, as it has now, my vow was to stand. I have told you that he made me repeat itmade me promise that I would renounce love, hope, happiness, all I hold dear rather than bring a curse upon the lives of others."

"My dear Estrild, all this is a mistake—a wild folly built

upon surmise and superstition."

"Which make the fabric of my life," she interposed. "These follies, these superstitions and terrors, have been built into my days hour by honr. You cannot fling their burden from me by a few words."

"Granted," he continued, "and I will yield to your feelings thus far, that, if your brother's death cannot be explained naturally, I shoul weighed some proof that 1 acknowledge

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ally, I should be neither angry nor surprised if your promise weighed somewhat on your mind. But, if I bring you back full proof that his death was a simple accident, you will surely acknowledge that you are not bound by it?"

She met his eyes with a pale smile on her lips, and laid both

her hands on his shoulders.

"Prove that to me, and I am yours for ever; nothing should stand between us then."

He bent forward and kissed her, with a cold feeling at his heart that his happiness was still far away.

"Nothing between us," he repeated, "except your guardian and uncle. You ignore the real difficulty in our path, Estrild, to build up a fanciful wall of terrors."

"My guardian?" she said, in surprised scorn. "He possesses no weapon in all his mean artillery by which he could separate us. I have no fear of him."

"But I have," returned Harold; "and I hate now to leave you to his mercy, alone too as you are."

"No, not alone. I have sent for my cousin Pleasance. You remember her? She was with us a little while in Switzerland."

"I am thankful to hear that," Harold cried, as he caught her hand again. "Miss Glendorgal is kind and good; I shall leave you now, Estrild, with a happier mind. In forty-eight hours I hope to be with you again; meanwhile promise me to be brave."

She turned away her face, and he saw tears falling slowly from her eyes. It was a good sign—it was better to weep than to meet grief with the stony anguish and terror she had shown that morning.

"I must go, darling," he said unwillingly. "The boat waits for me; I have delayed too long."

"One instant longer," she said, with sad eagerness. "You spoke of a fancied wall of terrors between us; but that horseman, Harold, who rode to Langarth—you saw him—was he a fancy."

"No," returned the young man; and his heart was suddenly stirred within him by a curious revulsion of feeling. It was partly anger at her seeming indifference to his departure, and partly dismay at seeing her mind so filled with this cloud of superstitious gloom that her love could not break through it to give him a word of comfort, and it was partly also the shock of discovering within himself a lurking sympathy with her horror of this strange visitor. "No," he said; the man was flesh and

blood—of a kind—an odd kind; and one day I will follow him and hunt him down, with as sure a certainty of tearing off the mystery in which he chooses to shroud himself as I have now of finding the *Alert* and bringing the hand that slew your brother to justice and to daylight."

"Do not be angry," she said, in a low slaken voice. "When you come back, perhaps we must say good-bye for ever. But now

we say it in hope; let us part in love."

"Good bye!" he answered, and folded his arms about her, angry still that she could talk of parting forever through shadows rising from a dead past—shadows that he was going to sweep away.

For an instant she clung to him; then their arms fell mutually, and they stood apart, with the spray of the waterfall rising between like a pillar of separation.

"Good-bye!" she said again, and broke down utterly, with her

weeping face upon her hands.

"I have been cruel," he thought; and with a single step he had her in his arms again.

Thus they re-embraced in a sort of bitterness, feeling dis-

united still.

She stood watching him as he spang up the rugged steps leading from the gorge and hurried swiftly to the sea.

CHAPTER XI.

The sea was surging uneasily; every roller came in tinted with gray, for the depths were stirred by the great waves that lashed the barricade of cliffs, and hidden sands were flung upwards to

mingle with the heaving waters.

Within the long reef which protected the tiny harbour from the outside roughness lay a little boat, tossing like a cork on the waves as Michael and a boy rowed her to and fro, with faces often turned anxiously towards the path which wound its jagged length down the cliff.

When Harold appeared at last, Michael took off his cap and waved it, partly in satisfaction and partly to hurry his steps.

On seeing this signal Harold broke into a run, and was soon down on the white sands, which were narrowed now to a mere

glistening line, angry roar.

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Michael brought the boat to the side of the long reef, which acted like a pier or breakwater, and beckoned to Harold to join him there. By any other way it would have been impracticable to get on board. But between him and this ledge of rock there raged and roared a foaming mass of waters through which it was impossible for him to pass without being dashed to death

On seeing the narrow strip of beach now completely covered, Michael threw up his arms in despair. Then, making a speaking-trumpet of his hands, he called aloud to Harold; but his voice, strong as it was, went out upon the sea a mere breath without sound. Seeing by Harold's signals that not a word had reached him, he desisted from further speech, and, grasping his oars, gave his attention to the safety of the boat, which needed all his care and skill lest it should be dashed against the natural pier or ledge of rocks too roughly.

Suddenly the open-eyed wonder of Daniel's boy, Josiah Mar-

tin, caught Michael's gaze.

"What be glazzing at, sonny boy?" he asked impatiently.

"Thic gentleman we've been waiting for. He be climbing the

cliff like a goat."

"He can't get to us that way," returned Michael. "He must walk to Langarth now, and Daniel must take the Curlew round for 'un. I shall make 'un understand somehow, I reckon, what he've goet to do. We'd best start to waunce; when he sees us off, he'll come round arter us."

"' Bide a bit; he be goin' to jump!" cried the lad eagerly.

Michael, whose back was towards the shore, turned his head in amazement, just in time to see Harold make a daring spring from the rugged point of cliff to which he had climbed to the edge of rock below. Beneath him as he sprang was a tumultuous sea, whose surf dashed upwards as though hungering to seize him in its relentless grip. For one second his life hung suspended over this raging white death, the next he was safe and on his feet upon the firm gray ridge of rock that stretched its giant length among the tumbling waves.

Michael drew a long breath; his face was white, but his eyes

shone like coals of fire.

"That was as brave a leap as ever I see in aal my born days,"

he said, as he stretched out his hand to help Harold into the boat. "I didn't think there was a man living could taake sich a spring. You don't count your life for much, sir, I reckon."

"I count it worth millions, Michael. Now for the Curlew as hard as we can row! You see I could not affort to waste more time by going round to Langarth, which was the sole thing to do unless I had jumped as I did."

"You shouldn't have wasted them precious twenty minutes, sir," said Michael, regarding him with renewed admiration.

"You see the tide wouldn't wait for 'ee."

"The minutes were not wasted, Michael, though, as you say,

they were precious indeed to me. Now give way, lads!"

The Curlew was close by, yet it took hard rowing to reach her; and it was harder work still to get alongside of her black hull and catch the rope flung to them, and so reach the wet deck drenched with spray. Then the boat was hauled up—it was only a small dingy—the sails were set, and the Curlew put her prow to the waves; and, dashing the foam from her gallant sides, she flew like a bird into the open sea.

Of all the boats that floated upon the ocean, the safest and the soundest is a true pilot-boat. Built for every weather and for every wave, it will ride out the fiercest gale, and fly gallantly before a storm that would shatter a stately frigate or founder a

huge man-of-war.

"If the wind holds up," said Daniel, "we shall catch the coast of Brittany in six hours. And now, sir, I'd advise ee to tackle a bit of crouse [victuals], and arter that titch pipe a croom, and then turn in and slaip till we make land."

Harold felt this was good counsel, for since his hasty breakfast he had tasted nothing, and for lack of sleep head and heart were

heavy and weary.

"Now then, gawkum [simpleton], what be stopping there for goggling for gapes like a pattick?" cried Michael to the boy. "Go and get the table fitty for denner."

Josiah, with his chin upon his hands and his elbows on his knees, was sitting on an upturned bucket staring at Harold with

the glazed and expressionless eyes of a fish.

"I knawed a miner waunce," said Josiah, rising leisurely, "who jumped down a shaaft for fear he'd be spaled [fined], 'cos, you see, he were laate, but he bruk boath his legs short like a carrot, and he wes carr'd hoam 'pon boords knacked aal to jouds [pieces].

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; leisurely, fined], 'cos, short like a al to jouds "What mazedish stram be telling op now?" asked Michael, with some anger.

"Teddn't no stram—'tes truth, I tell 'ee. And the man was buried a week arter thic jump. And there was talk of having a barr'l for 'un 'stead of a coffin, 'cos he doubled up so like."

"Josiah, my son," interposed Daniel, "I reckon a rope's-end

will double thee up soon, ef thee drumbles any longer."

Upon this hint Josiah departed to perform his duties, yet he gave a last glance at Hamild with a dissatisfied air, murmuring audibly that if his bones were not broken they ought to be.

"Wall, it was a braave spring for a goat, leave alone a man," acquiesced Michael. "Where did you larn, sir, to maake your

limbs so spry ?"

"I've been a mountain climber all my life, Michael—that's the secret of it. I have taken many a longer jump than that, and a more dangerous. I would rather spring from a cliff than jump across a crevasse."

"May I maake bould to ax what that is, sir?"

"Well, it is a rent or chasm in a mountain. If you will imagine it as something like the gorge that runs up to the Mermaid's Well, you will be able to form a notion of it, Michael."

"Well, now," observed Michael, "I shouldn't wonder if you

was dreeve to it, that you might jump thic plaace too."

I should be sorry to try," returned Harold. "I think in all likelihood I should be picked up like Josiah's friend the miner—in any way but a whole piece."

"The 'tatie-pie es 'pon the taable," said Josiah, leering at it with a hungry eye as he turned away from the little cabin; "and the Capen says, will 'ee plaise to come an' maake a clain-

off denner to waunce while he's hot?"

Even to this day, when the grand earth-apple has suffered blight and change, a potato-pie is one of the tastiest dishes Cornish hands can make. It is not one of the oldest, though among the best, for all the herb-pies and cakes of Carthage, ancient in repute and renowned in story, are still dainty and delicate realities in the Cornish land. Who that has tasted the golden cakes, the Phænician cream, and the many pies of courteous Cornwall does not long to eat of them again?

Harold did full justice to the old Cornish dish, and felt all his

griefs the lighter for his much-needed meal.

"Now, ef you baint too tired, we'll titch pipe a croom," said

Daniel; and, suiting the action to the word, he forthwith pro-

ceeded to light a short black pipe.

Smoking was not a custom then so universal as now, and Harold had not taken up the fashion. He sat on the deck silent, his eyes fixed on the dark green trackless hills whose undulating heights were spread around and beyond him, while a great black sea of thought—wordless, formless—beat in constant waves of pain upon his heart.

"It's ill thinking without speaking," observed Daniel, "when thoughts are black. I reckon, sir, though you be on the sea, your heart's ashore at Langarth. But it's little you can do

for the young lady now, sir; she is in other hands."

"That is just the point I am debating," returned Harold. "I fear I ought not to have left her to go on a wild and maybee

hopeless chase."

"I wish I was as sure of fair weather as I be of falling in with the cutter," responded Daniel. "I know Capen Armstrong's ways of sailing as well as I know the north star; and, if I don't steer right down 'pon the Alert afore morning breaks, you may call me a Dutchman. Now, ef 'twas the Flying Dutchman we was chasing, I'd own it would be wild work, and we might so well haul down sails to waunce. There's neither wind nor wave, nor prayer nor curse, nor moan of the sea, nor groam from the land, will ever reach thic ship."

"And you've the right to say that, Daniel, ef any man have," said Michael, "for you've seen and chased her too—many a

time."

"Not many a time, my son, but oftener than I wish to again. But I've seen worse than the Flying Dutchman."

"Have 'ee sure?" said Michael. "Was it a pixie now?"
"Or a ghost?" asked Harold, half smiling at his own question.

"This is just the hour for ghost stories, Captain."

"But not for making fun of 'em," returned Daniel seriously.
"The sea is full of ghosts. Death and the sea are twin brother and sister; and, if a man escapes from the grief of the first on land, he falls into the cold arms of the other at sea. Years come upon years; but death is never tired of giving, and the sea is never tired of having."

"Well, now, Daniel, I reckon even a ghost-story is more lively

talk than that," observed Michael, "so let's have it."

"It happened just like this," said Daniel, "and it might be

ten years agone. arter the old ch barque was in, w there was the ba ing at her were but he didn't m taake no notice civil word desar 'un, and said, " spake. Then I a bit like. 'Th Why, I'd spake come from some manners. 'Pon great eyes, and under water a v shells sticking i walked up the of 'un at all. I water going 'sq Then I spoke to stranger; but h run home and g barque; and I the pier I looke left him. I fel to my aun door open, glaring, a shook like a lea my hair, and th happened for a I was in a daze; we two went al Well, the Curle hoam I was car hair falled off a

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ten years agone. I went down to the wharf waun night jist arter the old church clock had gone twelve, for I'd heard say a barque was in, wanting a pilot to ake her on to Falmouth. Well, there was the barque, sure enough, and leaning on the wall looking at her were a man. I spoke to 'un and gave 'un good night, but he didn't maake no answer, and he didn't turn round, nor taake no notice like, and I felt vexed as fire—for, thinks I, a civil word desarves a civil word back. So I went up close to 'un, and said, 'Tis a fine night, maister.' Not a word would he spake. Then I felt my blood curdly up, and I let go my temper 'Thee'rt a queer chap,' I said to 'un, 'not to spake. a bit like. Why, I'd spake to the devil if he spoke civil to me! You be come from some oogly country, I reckon, where nobody learns manners. 'Pon that he turns round sharp and glares abroad his great eyes, and shaws me his great face, white as if he'd been under water a week, and I saw bits of seaweed and tiny broken shells sticking in his whiskers and hair. This scared me, and I walked up the pier hard as I could go, for I didn't like the looks of 'un at all. But he followed me close, and I could hear the water going 'squash, squash' in his shoes every step he took. Then I spoke to 'un again, for I didn't want to be ancivil to a stranger; but he never answered a word. So then I thought I'd run home and get waun of my crew to go out with me to the barque; and I went for my life, and when I got to the end of the pier I looked back and there was the man standing where I'd left him. I telt glad he hadn't followed me. But, when I got to my aun door, there he was standing straight up, his eyes wide open, glaring, and all his teeth showing as if he had no lips. shook like a leaf, my hat lifted off my head with the rustling of my hair, and the sweat boiled out of me. I can't tell what happened for a minute. When I woke up like, he was gone, and I was in a daze; but I went into the house and got my comrade, and we two went aboard of the craft and put her into Falmouth. Well, the Curlew comed round there for me, and when I got hoam I was carried to bed and lay sick a month, and aal my

hair falled off and 'twas white at the roots as snaw."

Daniel shook the ashes from his pipe as he said this, and filled

it up again in silence.

"Is thic the end of the ghost?" asked Michael. "Why, I can't see no good in his coming at all!"

"No more can I, my son. But thic barque went down with

all hands aboard. She loaded at Falmouth and sailed for Swansea, and foundered in sight of land. Not a soul was saved of aal her crew."

"Well, it is a queer story anyhow," observed Harold, "whether you were ill or well at the time of the vision came to you. And, since you are good at seeing ghosts, tell me what you think of the ghost at Langarth—that dark rider. Is he man or spirit?"

"A spirit wouldn't want horseflesh to bring him to Langarth," said Daniel. "I say he is a man; but he don't come alone. If a spirit didn't lead him to Langarth, he'd never take that whisht

ride."

"I wonder he has never been followed and identified," said

Harold. "I wish I had pursued him last night."

"You wouldn't have caught him, sir," observed Michael. "The aunly way to lay hould of him is to get ahead of him—so the ould folk's stories go; and no waun have ever done that yet."

"'Tis my watch now," said Daniel rising; "and I'll say good night to 'ee, and I hope you'll slaip well, Mr. Olver. There's as good a night's rest in thic there bunk of mine as in arra king's bed ashore."

CHAPTER XII.

COULD it be possible that from the mystic margin of that land which is far away phantom shapes might beckon or some sad spirit stray?

In gloomy bewilderment this question wandered to and fro through Harold's racked brain as he strove vainly to sleep. All the mingled noises of the night seemed to join in a confused warfare, battling against his slumber, and all reiterated the everrecurring thought with vexed and feverish persistency.

Should he arouse himself and laugh at the cloudy superstitions which shaped phantoms out of the mist and saw portents in the colour of a wave? Then there rose before him the dead face of his friend, or the sad eyes of his love reproaching him with his unbelief. Rough-hew his thoughts as he would, they still took this one certain form—that of fear for the effect of her brother's death on Estrild's mind. He might fling from his own soul the

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cloud of superstitious terror that was settling round the bier of Tristram Carbonellis, but he could not hope to clear Estrild's heart of the perilous stuff that weighed upon it unless he could bring forward Irrefragable proof that her brother's death was caused by human means without supervention of aught not of this world. With this conviction came the strengthening of his resolve to gain that proof at however great a cost of toil and time and trouble. Through storm at sea, through labour on land, he would pursue these phantoms whose icy shadows had laid a cold touch upon his love, and he would lay them for ever at rest, and bring peace back to her troubled heart.

The sound of the hurried waves surging against the ship's sides, the shriek of the frosty wind among the sails, the creaking of cordage, the tramp of feet above his head, all seemed now the cry of encouraging voices urging him forward on his course.

The overlapping waves, as if weary of their endless wakefulness, broke on his ear with a gentler touch, as though they too dreamed of peace, and thus at length they laid a seal upon his eyelids and rocked him into slumber.

What was it that awoke him, or seemed to awake him, from the sleep that had fast bound him within its peaceful folds? It was a cry of the night—a faint cry as of some living thing struggling with death, and dying even as its voice went forth in spent weakness. Then from out the darkness in the midst of the sea he saw a hand—a man's hand—clutching an oar, which the wind dashed to and fro with savage strength like a bit of drift-weed, relentness, regardless that holding on to it in fierce hunger of life was a human soul, clothed with all the tenderness of human hours, and maybe with a picture of home and loving faces in its sad eyes, as fighting for breath, it was borne onwards and vanished in the hollow of a black wave.

With its vanishing there fell down a great sorrow on Harold's dreaming spirit, for some inward voice, soundless as thought, and yet having words, seemed to pass to him from the drowning man, saying, "I had no word, no prayer, no cry to utter to thee when I was just as thou art; but now, in the spirit, I warn thee to cease thy quest; some knowledge is forbidden. Had I lived, I would have unveiled this mystery; being dead, I hide it."

Only a dream; but never did man strive and agonise awake as Harold strove now in slumber to save the perishing life that

drifted fast away into the heaving darkness of the eternal sea He awoke with cold sweat upon his brow, and hands and arms

outstretched like a swimmer's in despair.

The turmoil of a great storm was round about him, and shricking amid the sails as the little ship flew onward before the mighty wind's breath. He rose and struggled to his feet, dazed still with sleep, and wondering with dull wonder at his strange surroundings. In a moment his mind cleared, the vividness of his dream subsided to a paler hue; it no longer seemed dreadful, but rather the natural consequence of the hubbub around him.

The liquid low light of dawn was trembling on the sea as he emerged from the tiny cabin and confronted the spray-drenched faces of the men who had battled with storm and darkness while In the dim light he looked at his watch, and noted with surprise that his sleep had lasted seven hours. It had been the dead sleep of a man exhausted by fatigue and excitement. He gazed around him now as though looking on a new world; but it was a world of waters tumultuously heaving and engirt by a dark sky, save in the east, where the darkness was struck across as by a hand alight from the horizon.

Daniel was at the helm, and by the set firmness of his face Harold guessed it would not be wise to disturb him with speech

Michael however came forward.

"We have sighted the cutter, sir," he said.

"Where?" Harold cried eagerly, his face flushing with hope.

"To larboard, sir. She is hugging the coast too close in such weather as this, and Daniel is giving her a wide berth. can't see her now, sir," he added, as Harold rushed to the side scanning the southern haze with searching eyes.

But on that side darkness still reigned intense, and full of the terror and turmoil of storm. It was the heart of the tempest and the night, untouched as yet by the pulse of light throbbing The night of the sea was appalling; huge wave lifted the Curlew to the top of their crests only to fling her down into deep hollows, where for an instant, ere she rose again she seemed to be engulfed by a black and seething death.

The close-reefed mainsail stood the storm, the jib was gone the tiller was lashed, and the stout little ship took the blows of the gigantic seas passively. It was only by holding on with both hands, that Harold could stand on the flooded deck. When the sea is wrathful, man's strength is but a straw. There was dange

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in every rush of water to leeward, there was death in every hammer blow from each enormous wave that sprang like a living foe upon the gallant little *Curlew*, who only shook her wings and flew and flew along her dark and dangerous path still safe and sound in every plank.

At length the light lifted the thick darkness from the sea, and the great gusts of wind that swooped down from the sky rent the clouds as under and gave to the waves the glory of the sun. Then suddenly, as if she were a ghost looming from within a hazy and mysterious veil, the Alert became visible for the flash of an instant, and then vanished. Had the sea swallowed her up? Had she disappeared for ever?

The blood rushed to Harold's face and back to his heart as he looked out over the haze, and the mighty swell of waters that bore for him now only the blankness of death. Slowly he made his way to the helm, where Daniel stood lashed to it, his salt wet hands on it still, his earnest eyes piercing the sea-drenched path through which the *Curlew* flew.

It seemed a sin at such a time to draw away a single thought from the man on whose skill human lives were hanging.

For a moment Harold stood abashed, then his unquenchable desire to reach the *Alert* burned in him again; and, touching Daniel on the arm, he point to the coast. He was understood instantly.

"Impossible!" said Daniel. "If the Alert were sinking only a hundred yards away, I couldn't save a man in her. I could but save my own bird, and the lives here trusting in my seaman ship."

"But, Daniel, surely the Alert is not in danger?"

"In ten minutes she'll be a wreck. She's drifting on the rocks. It's Capen Armstrong's way; he always hugs the shore too close."

"Can't we reach her? Can't we bear down near to her?"
Harold cried.

"If we want to be drowned, we can. But I reckon there isn't no waun aboard the Curlew weariful for such a whisht death"

Harold turned away with a silent cry of anger in his heart. He had no right to risk men's lives for Estrild's sake, but it would be hard to go back to her with a blank and dreary message of utter disappointment.

Michael came up to him at that moment and put a glass into his hand.

"Catch the right point, sir, and you'll see the Alert plain enough. She's got death for her compass now, and the sea for her grave. It's an awful sight to see brave men perish and not be able to stretch out a saving hand to help them. This has been a wild night, and it's a wild night's work. The Lord forgive they men who slocked [decoyed] Capen Armstrong into this!"

Harold scarcely heard his rapid words. He had got the Alert within the focus of the glass. She was on a huge hungry reef of rocks, and foaming breakers were dashing a white and savage message of death over and above her. It was horrible to see the enormous waves, and think of their power and strength as they dragged lives down beneath them. Even at that distance the roar of their onslaught on the doomed vessel was wafted across sea and sky in a low moan which touched listening hearts with terror.

The Alert was lying broadside on, with a heavy list towards the black cliffs above her, and with her mast still standing. By aid of the glass Harold could see some of the crew huddled together in the rigging, and the sea making clean breaches over the hull. The scene was dreadful, and so vivid that in imagination he heard the noise of the grinding and smashing of her timbers on the rocks. The spars were carried Apparently the doomed vessel had driven beaway. then perhaps had tried fore wind and sea for hours, an anchor, and eventually been dragged ashore. Her position now was hopeless, and that any life could be saved in this weather and on this iron coast was impossible. No boat could render any service, for the stoutest ever launched could not not have lived a moment in that boiling surf. But seemingly no inhabitant of that wild coast dreamed of striving to risk boat or life in a hopeless contest with the raging sea. On the height, wind-battered and dimly visible amid spray and mist, stood a small crowd of men, who now suddenly lighted a fire of dry furze, whose flame shot up with crackling swiftness, flinging the lurid light over the stormy sea and lighting up the vessel with startling distinctness. Then it was that Harold, with a quivering pulse, recognized the figure of Captain Armstrong standing on the poop—one hand extended as though in giving some order, the other clinging the brave face, vagainst the tower fell and darkness

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th startquivering nding on ne order, the other clinging, he could not discern to what. For one instant the brave face, white but steadfast, was visible as if clearly cut against the towering blackness of the cliff, the next the frame fell and darkness followed.

When next, in the swaling of the furze, the flame shot again upwards and outwards, the poop was gone—washed away—and the gallant figure that had given commands to the last had

vanished.

Harold felt his heart quiver within him with that electric touch of sympathy which a brave man's death conveys to the human soul. He hurried up to Daniel and ventured once more to touch him on the arm.

"Can nothing be done? Can we not save one life?" he asked,

in piteous entreaty.

Daniel cast one glance at the iron-bound coast, so perilously

near, and shook his head with ominious gravity.

"Heaven keep us off that!" he said, turning his gaze for an instant towards the white line of breakers tossing like driven snow against a wall of blackness. "Maybe we may pick some

one up from the sea-'tis all we can hope for."

A huge cloud at that moment, lifting from the land passed over the sea to the west, and a shaft of lightning broke from it, rending it asunder as if by a flaming sword; a roar of thunder followed like the crackling and rattle of a thousand muskets; then came a burst and downpour of hail which struck the deck with tremendous force.

Staggering beneath it, Harold clung to the mast nearly blinded. As he dashed his hand across his eyes to clear his sight,

Michael clutched his arm and pointed to leeward.

Amid the dreadful sea a boat was drifting bottom upwards, two men clinging to it. Like drift-weed, the vision passed on into the hollow of a wave and was instantly lost to view.

"Gone to death!" said Michael, turning away to look once

more on the wreck of the Alert!

It was a last look, for, as he and Harold bent their storm-beaten gaze on the reef, she was lifted high up on the waves, and then crashed down on the rocks with hideous force. Here for an instant she rested, and seemed to quvier in every plank; but a huge wave rushed upon her, and lifted her into deep water, and she suddenly sank by the stern, and went down in a moment, leaving a ghastly blank upon the sea, which struck the eyes of the beholders with the amazement of an unexpected horror.

CHAPTER XIII.

Mr. Vicar had dined; he sat in a luxurious arm-chair and stretched his large feet agressively before the fire. Then he put his big thumbs together and the points of his thick fingers, and in this attitude remained some minutes apparently in deep contemplation. In reality he was reflecting on the flavour of the different wines that he had tasted, and he was thinking with satisfaction that his position now with regard to the House of Carbonellis would give him the run of their particularly good and choice cellar.

"It is only these old families," he said aloud, "that can do this sort of thing."

"What sort of thing?" asked Mrs. Vicat, looking round the large dimly-lighted room with a little shiver. "I suppose you mean family portraits and ghosts? There are too many of them here."

"New men can only buy a stock," continued Mr. Vicat, not heeding her, "and must trust the word of the seller as to age and other finer attributes. But, even if they are not cheated, it never turns out the same thing; it's the body, as it were, without the spirit. Now in these old families it is just the contrary; the body, which they may be said to bury down in their old dungeons or cellars, gradually wastes or loses all its grosser qualities, and only the spirit remains—the aroma—the veritable ghost, so to say, of the—Well, my dear, what is there to stare at over in that corner?"

"I wish you wouldn't frighten one, Mr. Vicat, with such dreadful talk! Who wants to hear about bodies and spirits and ghosts at such a gloomy time as this?"

"Who but a simpleton would ever suppose one was talking of such things? It is the ghost of the grape I was speaking of. I was saying it was only in an ancient place like this, where wine is laid down from generation to generation, that one can taste the genuine article. I never drank such a bottle of Burgundy in my life as that old fogy of a butler gave me to-night." Mr. Vicat pressed his lips together at the remembrance, and looked down on his thumbs with satisfaction.

"I wonder you can gloat over you dinner and wine on such a night as this," said Mrs. Vicat irritably. "Just listen how the wind is howling round these dismal old walls; and think what

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These words Vicat's mind.

"Prospect f Olver. I'm gl there is up-stairs, and how that poor girl is crying hsrself to death in loneliness!"

"That's her own choice; she could come down here and have

cheerful society if she liked,"

"She doesn't want cheerful society, especially ours. You know perfectly well that she detests you, and she thinks me a fool."

"Well, my dear, I won't cavil at her judgment; and her

dislike is a matter of perfect indifference to me."

Mrs. Vicat stared for a moment at her husband, as if puzzled by his words; but, when she took in their meaning, she flushed a little, and searched in her own mind for some weapon of retaliation. But, being a dull woman, it took her some time to furbish up a sharp speech, and her silence gave Mr. Vicat an advantage which he seized.

"Your dulness of comprehension, my dear, hinders you from seeing that, although my niece may be perfectly right in her opinion of you, and perfectly justified in her detestation of me, yet in neither case can this alter our position with regard to her."

Mrs. Vicat had been trying to collect her faculties, but this speech, to which she had given a divided attention, pressed them into a heavy lump from which she could elicit no sparkle of thought.

"I am sorry for her," she said helplessly

"So am I," returned Mr. Vicat; "but that does not prevent me from being glad for myself. I shall have all the power in my own hands now; and it will be a very nice thing—yes, very nice and satisfactory altogether. It is a large estate to manage, to say nothing of the funded property and the dues from the mines."

"Mines?" repeated Mrs. Vicat, who still sat in a collapsed state, seeking amid the jumble and entanglement of her thoughts

for the sharpness that so rarely came to her aid.

"Yes, my dear, mines—or rather dues paid by the mines to her as owner of the soil. Why, the dues alone, I happen to know, amount to four thousand a year; and the estate brings six thousand more. Oh, it is an excellent prospect for me!"

These words struck the spark so much needed to lighten Mrs. Vicat's mind.

"Prospect for you?" she said. "You mean for young Mr. Olver. I'm glad he'll be so rich."

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on such ten how ak what "Glad!" repeated her husband. "Now who on earth except a simpleton would make such a speech as that? You can keep your gladness, my dear, till his wealth arrives, and by that time you'll be old as Methuselah, without being as wise. In my opinion, if this weather continues, that young man's prospects at present consist of a good chance of being drowned, and that's an event I should be glad of—it would save me the trouble of getting rid of him."

"What do you mean?" gasped Mrs. Vicat, staring at him

with round eyes full of fear.

"I mean that I have not the slightest intention of helping a needy young man to jump into ten thousand a year. I don't intend to let him marry my niece."

"But she is engaged to him," persisted his wife.

"Well, what then? An engagement is like a house of cards—a whiff of breath or a touch of the finger knocks it into nothing."

"You are a bad man," said Mrs. Vicat.

"Thank you my love! When a woman can't understand a thing, she usually has recourse to abuse. You must permit me, if you please, to comprehend my own business, and to act by my own judgment without the aid of your superior wisdom. Now it is my business to marry my niece and ward to my oldest son—and that is what I intend to do."

"They'll hate each other directly they see through your plans,"

said Mrs. Vicat angrily.

"That's a mere assertion not likely to be fulfilled," returned Mr. Vicat.

"And it is still more likely that Estrild will give up the man whom she loves at the wish of a man whom she hates," retorted his wife.

"You grow quite sharp, my dear," he answered coolly. "If she hates me, she won't hate her cousin. You forget that my eldest son is the child of her mother's sister. Not being your son is, I presume, the reason you are not anxious to see him a wealthy man."

Mrs. Vicat looked up, and a slight quiver passed over her

foolish honest face.

"I care as much for his welfare as you do. It is not for himself or for his own sake that you wish him to marry his cousin."

"My dear, what a razor you are to-night! You are really giving me some remarkable proofs of your intelligence."

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or himcousin." "I don't mind your sneers," she answered—"I'm used to them; but I tremble sometimes for you."

"Much obliged for your solicitude"—and Mr. Vicat laughed disagreeably—"but I believe I am a man who can take care of

himself."

"In a worldly way; but if you will take the trouble to raise your eyes for a moment from this earth to the sky, you will see that there are other worlds besides this."

"I live in this one," returned Mr. Vicat in a hard voice. "I am not going to try a flight among the stars. You had better be quiet, Amelia—I warn you I have had enough for the present! I can stand a pretty large amount of nonsense, but, as you know, I draw the line always at preaching—that I won't stand."

Yes, Mrs. Vicat knew it. She rose, and stood holding the

back of her chair with one hand; it trembled a little.

"I was in love with you once," she said, "and I obstinately insisted on marrying you against my dear father's wish. Well, I deserve to be punished."

"You deserve it pretty often too, my dear."

She took no notice of this.

"Who is it that says 'our sins turn into scorpions and sting

us'! Gilbert told me, but I have forgotten."

"You will have an opportunity very shortly to refresh your memory by asking him," observed Mr. Vicat, "for I shall hurry over the inquest and the funeral and return home with all despatch."

"You can't mean that?" said Mrs. Vicat entreatingly. "Sure-

ly you will consult your niece's feelings on these things ?"

"I shall consult my own interest, and not such rubbish as a silly girl's feelings. I don't intend to linger here to let Estrild see that young Olver again."

"Oh, Mr. Vicat, you are past praying for !"

"Now see here," said that gentleman, turning on her with a sudden fury blazing in his pale eyes—"I have already warned you that I won't stand that sort of thing."

"But I can't help it," returned his wife, retreating, and dragging her chair with her as a rampart of defence. "I am bound

to pray for you."

"Well, pray away as much as you like; but take care you don't interfere with my plans in any way except praying against them. That you are welcome to do; but touch them with one

of your fingers, and you and I have a quarrel which you won't

forget very soon."

The voice in which he said this would have chilled the marrow in the bones of a bull-dog; it completely cowed the shrinking woman whose dull mind was little able to find words as weapons of self-defence.

"And one thing more," continued Mr. Vicat, in the same tone—"beware of poisoning my niece's mind with vour silly opinions of my conduct. I forbid you to speak of me to her. Your judgment is altogether at fault with regard to what I have to do. I save her from a fortune-hunter—that's a meritorious action—and I make her happy with my son—that's another good deed."

"I don't know the law," said Mrs. Vicat, clasping both her hands now on the back of the chair behind which she stood; "but I believe you want the girl's money for yourself, and perhaps her marriage with your son would give it to you. I know the law always takes away a woman's money."

"Only to give it to her husband, my dear," said Mr. Vicat jocularly, restoring himself to good humor in a sudden way.

"Estrild's money will be Gilbert's when he marries her."

Mrs. Vicat looked up; some thought pressed on her mind for utterance which she hesitated to speak. It seemed to be a fear which she was reluctant to shape into words even to herself.

"You know that Gilbert," she began, "is not—is not in good

health. He may never live to marry."

"Yes, he will. I shall hurry the marriage; afterwards he may-"

"No; don't say it!" cried his wife. "You frighten me. You mean him to make a will and leave away the girl's own estate

from her to you."

"He might so dispose of the personal property," said Mr. Vicat quite calmly—"and I see no wrong in a son taking care of his own father; but the land could not be taken from Estrild during her life. At her death it comes to my son Gilbert under her father's will, whether she marries him or not."

Mrs. Vicat drew a long breath, as if of relief. She was glad to hear that no machination could deprive Estrild of Langarth, and she guessed that the provision in the will over which her husband rejoiced could come into force only if she died unmarried or childless. Yet dimly, in her dull groping way, she fore-

saw how this deeds of what trembled to downright

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was glad Langarth, hich her d unmarshe foresaw how this chance of heirsh p for his son might lead him into deeds of which she knew his nature to be capable and which she trembled to think of. She turned away from the subject in downright terror.

"Estrild will be thankful to have her cousin with her," she

said

"Cousin! What cousin?" asked Mr. Vicat sharply. "I not going to allow any cousins to prowl around my niece."

"It is a Miss Glendorgal who is coming," returned Mrs. Vicat.

"I heard Estrild order a carriage to be sent for her."

"And why didn't you tell me this at once," demanded her husband. "It is just like your sense not to name a thing till too late to hinder it! What a pitiable idiot you are!"

Mrs. Vicat was too much used to compliments of this kind to receive these words either with a burst of tears or of anger. She took them stolidly, without change of countenance or of voice.

"I saw no harm in Miss Glendorgal's coming here to help

Estrild to bear her sorrow," she said.

Mr. Vicat scowled at the fire without answering. He was wondering what Miss Glendorgal would do or say that might hinder his schemes. He knew her slightly and was slightly afraid of her. He was, in fact, afraid of everybody who might stand in the way of his snatching at the wealth which he was beginning to feel within his grasp. He listened for a moment to the fierce gusts of wind that were swaying the great trees without like reeds, and a smile of hope twitched his lips and carried his thoughts away.

"There will be wrecks to-night somewhere," he said; "and it's

an ill wind that blows nobody good."

Mrs. Vicat stared at him with round frightened eyes, and then stole away without uttering a good-night.

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE is no day that does not bring the night. The sun of our joy has sorrow for its shadow, and the longest, brightest life that walks gladly through its day goes down at its setting to the night silence of the grave, and is lost in its thick darkness.

There the veil falls and hides the great impenetrable secret, the vital mystery whose throbbing beats in every human heart, and whose longings run round the world in that electric chain of faith which binds this earth to the throne of God.

Our day of life here is but a short dream, even if we reach the evening and stretch out our arms willingly to the shadow of fast falling night; but, if at noonday or in the morning a man is cut down in the freshness of his strength, then the tears we weep are bitter, and we are galled with a sense of injustice, and deem the inscrutable hand of death has dealt its blow in cruelty.

This was Estrild's feeling as she sat alone in her gloom, her heart full of its new quivering sorrow and her mind brooding

over many memories.

It was hard—oh, it was bitterly hard—that he should die so young, that his happy life should have been taken in horror and mystery, Death, like an executioner in a mask, striking him with a swift and sudden blow? And who was this man who had killed him? Was he indeed innocent—guiltless as an executioner is, who does but obey the unseen judge who directs the stroke?

This question brought an instant array of visions before her clothed in superstitious terrors, and she shrank from dwelling on it; she thrust it away, being willing to wait till Harold should bring her a surer answer than her fears could give. By a quick transition of feeling she followed him in his quest, and a little pale gleam of joy shot into her heart at the thought of his brave and tender readiness to seek a solution to the mystery that shrouded her brother's death. Yet in a moment is seemed a sin at this early time to quench her grief in a renewal of hope or in the thought of Harold's love. It rather returned to her as a reproach, for it had shared her heart with Tristram, drawing away some of the affection that should have been all his; and it was a bitterness to her now to remember this. Hence, in the jealousy of her grief, her thoughts flew morbidly from the consolation of her new love and dwelt only on the recollections of the older affection which had cherished her childhood and guided her youth with tender and protecting hand.

Tristram was twelve years her senior; he had been brother, father, guardian, all things to her that were true, loving, and helpful. He had saved her from the hard grasp of the man

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n brother, ving, and the man whose ruthless hands now were too ready to seize upon her as his lawful prey. At this thought she fell upon her knees with a low cry and buried her face in her hands. Oh, she had not been half loving enough in the old dear time gone now for ever! She had let a stranger step into her life and steal her best thoughts. Even the very last hours of Tristram's last day had been stolen from him and given to this new engrossing love.

How could she forgive herself? How could she look to it for comfort? She could only regard it with a sort of angry amazement, as a something strange, inexplicable, that had overpowered her and blinded her to the sorrow—the lonely sorrow—it laid upon Tristram's life. She could read it all now on his sad face; she could see how it had crushed him, disappointed all his hopes, and left him stranded on a solitary desert to fight his battle of life alone.

She could see too how he had hidden all this, and never unbared to her by inadvertent word the soreness of his heart. Oh, she had been ungrateful, unkind, cruel! She had forgotten all his long, long care, all her own promises, and she had deserted him for the first kiss of love from a stranger's lips. would be true now; she would remember how bravely he had resolved to live and die alone rather than bring upon some weak and tender woman the fear that had haunted his existence, the dread that upon her children might fall a strange and sudden She would prove herself brave too, and the vow she had uttered should be kept-yes, if all joy perished out of her life, if henceforth for her the sky lost its sunshine and the earth its greenness, she would keep her vow. No child of hers should ever shed such bitter tears as she was shedding now, no such horror as that now overshadowing her home should ever fall upon Harold and crush brain and heart beneath its hideous mystery. As this resolve ran with a shudder through all her nerves, she recognized the strength of her love, she felt and knew that beneath all her grief and morbid self-reproach it lay listless for the moment, but yet the great living fact of her life, the one source from which was to spring her joys and sorrows, her struggles, her temptations, and her victories. Without this jove existence would be a blank; she might seem to live, but the soul within her would be dead.

She felt glad to think of it and to acknowledge its strength; for, unless she loved, what would there be to renounce—what

would there be to suffer in holding to her vows? Nothing! It would cost her no more than the breath of her words, and she might at last grow to deem it a folly; but now, in the very might of her sacrifice, she would feel always its worth, and know that she had given up the best of her life rather than grieve Tristram's spirit or work a cruel wrong on Harold.

Ah, he would be angry at her resolve—he would grieve to part from her! But this was a grief time would heal, whereas, if she became his wife, she would be forcing him to share her terrors—grown larger through her perjury—and she would see him day by day shrink from her in dread of the hand that

through her would strike his children.

But she would save him from this pain; and in a little while, after the wrench of parting was over, he would forget her, and find some girl whose happier fate could be joined to his without the terror of death setting them asunder through their lives.

She wept as this bitter thought came; and the silent voice of her heart protested against it, and all her blood rebelled against the cruelty of it, and she was shaken to the core of her being.

What, if she was sacrificing her life to folly—a dream—a mere superstition with no more substance than the rack of a summer

cloud, which is but the shadow of a vapor?

Oh, if Harold returned with hope, with certainty, and this gloom was lifted from her heart and life grew natural again, how she would welcome his words of triumph, and fling her arms

around him, and own that love was dear?

A low knock at her door made her start up hurriedly and smooth her hair and wipe her streaming eyes ere she gave the intruder leave to enter. The thought of seeing Mr. Vicat roused her blood into rebellion, and she stood, with a steady light shining in her wet eyes and a close firmness about her lips, like a creature waiting to receive an enemy. But when the door was opened she sprang forward with a cry of relief, and flung her arms round the new-comer, and sobbed on her shoulder like a child soothed by its mother. She did not see how deathly pale the girl was to whom she clung; she only knew she was a comforter and strong and helpful and this was enough.

"Oh, Pleasance, my dear, he is gone! He was killed-cruelly

killed!"

She felt the straining of Pleasance Glendorgal's arms around her, and checked her vehement words.

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"Have they told you how it happened ?" she said more quietly.

"I have heard all there is to tell. Evidently it was an accident; and there must be great grief on board the ship that has

gone to sea."

"An accident!" repeated Estrild. "No, no; it was a murder! And Harold has gone to seize the miserable man who did it."

"My dear, there was no motive for a murder. What anger, what grudge could there be on board the King's ship against your brother? Do not torment yourself with such a dreadful idea. Harold will return with proof to satisfy you that the hand that has bereaved us was innocent of all evil intention."

Estrild drew herself from the sustaining arms that held her, and looked upwards with clasped hands and eyes full of terror.

"Oh, Pleasance, you sign my death-warrant in saying that! You mean that Tristram has been struck by the mysterious horror that haunts us and brings death to our house?"

"My dear Estrild, calm yourself! I mean nothing of the

kind! I mean an accident pure and simple."

"My father died by a seeming accident, and my grandfather. And how can I tell you of the long line of accidents that have snapped so many dear lives in the past, always the same circumstances of mystery, the same shadowy hand from the world be-

yond striking them down?"

"I answer you that all this is but a superstitious fancy, born of old legends and the long list of fatalities in your family, which has cast a gloom on you from generation to generation, and fostered in your mind a peculiar phase of thought, a fixed superstition which influences your lives and brings down upon them strange sorrows."

"Yes, that is true; it does indeed. It was this feeling which made Tristram give up all hope of happiness for himself. You

know, Pleasance, that he had resolved never te marry."

"I knew it years ago, when you were a child."

Something in her voice made Estrild look up quickly, and then she saw a quivering lip, a pale face, and eyes deeply shadowed by memories long past tears.

"Pleasance," she cried in a voice of sharp pain, "I did not know these things had touched you to the quick. I never

guessed——"

"Hush, my dear! It is an old story now, buried out of sight beneath a load of years, and I cannot talk of it. He and I both agreed that you should never be troubled with it." "Oh, Pleasance, he was too good to me, and you too! Who am I that lives should be excrificed for my small selfish peace?"

"Not for that, dear, but for what he thought right-for the

mistaken duty that is now misleading you."

Estrild gazed into the sweet pale face bending over her so tenderly, and wondered within herself whether she should grow to be like her. The curse that had blighted her fair life was ready to fall now upon her own; and in time she might become as pale, as calm, as joyless as Pleasance was, without her peace.

"Pleasance," she said, "I shall never be so good, so patient as you. I long for happiness; I feel that my life needs it, and

without it I shall grow bitter."

"Happiness is within you reach, Estrild. You have but to

stretch out your hand and take it."

"And you say that, who have had all joy wrenched out of your life by the same cause that threatens to make my existence barren? How can I believe you, with two such witnesses against happiness as at this very hour are beneath this sad roof—you the living witness, and the other the dead witness, of the terrible truth that we are—Pleasance, I must say it—that we are haunt ed and pursued and slain by some power outside of this world."

"It is a madness what you say now, Estrild."

"There you put your hand, Pleasance, on the sore spot in our hearts. You repeat Tristram's words. Either we are all mad who have dreamed this strange thing so long or it is a fact that some mystery—inexplicable, beyond our human ken—touches our lives and our deaths. Whichever may be the truth, marriage would be a sin."

Pleasance was silent. Her thoughts rushed back to the days gone by, when such reasoning as this had poured a flood of bitterness over her heart, and she had bowed her head before it, powerless to resist its force. The anguish had passed, and she still lived; but her life had lost its freshness, its joy, its spring-time, and the dead calmness of quenched hope that had settled on it made winter for her young years. She felt she was indeed a living witness to the reality of the mental terror—if it were nothing stranger still—that haunted the lives of the Carbon ellises.

She too had some of their blood in her veins; and it was not without its own peculiar influence in the formation of her character. Perhaps some other girl, a stranger ignorant of the

family superstithem, might he the very lightreshe a second of a Carbonellis; sat at her feet of the dread do She rememered how her father a friend whoming quarrel.

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to the days flood of bitd before it, ed, and she, its springhad settled was indeed if it were the Carbon-

d it was not tion of her orant of the family superstitions, and totally unprejudiced and untouched by them, might have succeeded in flinging away Tristram's fears by the very lightness of her own spirit and unbelief in them; but she a second cousin, could not do this. Her father's mother was a Carbonellis; and she remembered too well how often she had sat at her feet as a child and listened to the old Langarth story of the dread dark rider who brought ever a message of death. She rememered too the awed whisper in which the agcd lady told how her father fell in a duel fought foolishly and suddenly with a friend whom he loved before, and with whom he had but a trifling quarrel.

This unwilling antagonist had meant to fire in the air, but as he raised his pistol it went off, and Mr. Carbonellis fell dead, shot through the temple. Before they brought him home his wife knew that death was at her door, for the dark rider had sped on his journey, and his swift shadow had passed before her own

shrinking eyes in the park.

Pleasance was eight years old when Tristram's father was drowned, twenty years before. Her grandmother was still alive then; but the shock of her nephew's death and the revival of the old dread story snapped the slight thread of her aged life.

Pleasance remembered standing by her bedside and feeling the pressure of a trembling hand on her head, and hearing a blessing spoken in broken words—words which showed that she had a prescience of the love growing between the boy of twelve years and the little maiden of eight.

"May God bless you my child, and make you happy! Don't love a Carbonellis. Old sins have spirits, and they haunt us, child. Lift up your little face and kiss me, and say a long goodbye. I am going away. Don't forget me or my last words!"

But she had forgotten them till too late. She had loved a Carbonellis, and her life was pale and broken and maimed.

That night when Mr. Vicat stole late to his room, his heavy tread paused for a moment before a locked door. Within he heard the murmurs of low-spoken prayers and the sobs of a woman. He hurried on with a softer footstep, owning to himself that he would not so watch and weep over the dead even for the heaviest bribe his covetous heart could desire.

"Estrild is in that room," he said to his wife. "Girls, for all their tears, have nerves of iron!"

But Estrild was sleeping. Pleasance had not left her or withdrawn the clasp of her own soft soothing hand till she had seen slumber fall down upon her eyelids, and rest breathe a gentle

oblivion upon her pain.

If now her own grief seized upon her, and all the forced calmness of years was swept away in the first look, the first kiss of chill awe and anguish that fell upon a cold face, she knew that she was alone, and that no other human heart would be caused a pang by the sight of her sorrow.

CHAPTER XV.

The unmeasured wilderness of clouds and billows threatened black destruction. The solid sky rained hail like thunderstorms, which fell like one mass, battering and blending into one sound the clatter of its fierce onslaught. Muffled round by a raging darkness, into which the lightning leaped as though it were a demon of fire made with the joy of destruction, the Curlew laboured on with Daniel at the helm and Michael at the prow.

It was a battle between man and the elements. Harold recognized the fierceness of the struggle, and held his peace over the surging waves of gloomy thought which broke upon his mind as he saw the *Alert* go down. His quest now looked hopeless; but often from its own wreck hope creates anew the form it longs for—to strive and hope again. So, though his best chance had perished, and lay among the drowned and dead, he did not despair or dream of failure.

The little ship, tempest-winged, sped onwards wonderfully true to her helm; and, catching every point of wind from the north, Daniel steered her safely away from the wild western shore whose bristling rocks, like savage teeth, hungered for their prey.

Suddenly and sharply as it had come the hail ceased, and with its cessation the thick flaky ring of darkness, ever moving with them, that had bounded their horizon cleared, and a beam from the sun flashed across their wind-beaten track. Instantly it clothed the sea with light, and the prodigious waves, a moment before huddled in gray confusion, took shape and colour and grew lovely in their majestic strength.

This breaking forth of the sun fell like a glory on the drenched

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and weary men, penetrating their frozen frames with the warmth of its divine flame, and filling veins and hearts with new life. Dashing wet hands across their eyes, they looked out on their storm-driven path with the joy of men from whom blindness has been lifted, and they glanced at each other's faces with a smile.

It was an electric signal—a mutual recognition that the worst

was over, the danger past, the battle won.

It was at this supreme moment, when the breath of the hurricane stood suspended, that there rose from the abyss of waters a call, a voice of human agony, faint as the cry of a spent bird, yet audible through its unexpectedness and its unlikeness to all other sounds around them—creak of cordage and thud of scattered spray.

At the same instant Michael, on the look out, shouted-

"Boat ahead!"

The cry from the sea had struck all hearts with an electric thrill, and veins grew hot and brave longing to save a life. And now Harold rushed to Michael's side, and saw, right in the ship's path—now engulfed, now rising again—the overturned boat which had passed out of sight with two men clinging to it just before the Alert went down. How it had drifted thus far who can say? Perhaps it had been caught in some current racing southwards, and thus had been driven into the Curlew's path. One man could still be seen holding on to it for his life, the other was gone.

For one second Harold gazed at the drowning, clinging figure with breath held on his lips, the next he had flung off coat and

boots and sprung over the ship's side.

Daniel, who ever since his sight of a ghost had been a Methodist, and had not sworn for full ten years, swore now a round path.

"Damn the lad!" he cried. "Does he want to swallow the sea? Lower the dingey, Michael. We must save him if we lose the boat for it. A cursed, foolish, brave—the Lord forgive me!—but there—I'll say it out; it is a damned brave thing!"

"So it was," said Josiah Martin. "But arter thic there jump he took I ain't afeared of a little saalt waetur for

'un '

"Lower away!" cried Michael, as he and the boy took their seats in the boat.

And so Harold, in trying to save one life, risked two others besides his own. But the men were glad of the risk. A brave deed, rash as fire though it be—makes hearts glow with love of it. And, though the men were dead weary, yet their veins ran with sunlight now—turning them into giants of strength.

The dingey was lowered, and lived. It was a miracle; but there are times when miracles can happen. How they happen cannot always be told. There are no words coined to express the valiant deeds done by brave men in danger, when impossibilities shrivel up and smile upon their daring in quite another shape as victory.

With wonderful kill and seamanship Daniel tacked and twisted round the corners of the wind and brought the Curlew nearer the

drifting boat; then he luffed and waited.

Meanwhile Michael's little craft lived; and impelled by his strong arms, while Josiah took the tiller, it sprang swiftly after the struggling swimmer. Through what waves of water Harold fought or what a battle he waged for his very life he never knew, so intent was he on his purpose and so blind had he become to all sights save the one dark speck which, ever cheating him as to its distance, rose and fell before him as he swam determinedly forward.

At length he was very close. His drenched eyes scanned the distance and counted the strokes with which he could reach it. But, when he got to the spot he had counted on, the boat was gone! No, it rose again on a towering wave, and Harold flung out his arm wildly to seize it; but it drifted over the crest of the wave, and plunged downwards once more out of sight and reach.

Exhausted by this last effort, Harold was thrown back nearly senseless, and only instinctively able to keep himself afloat.

"Hold up, sir," cried a voice; and the dingey was close upon him, and Michael's sinewy hand was stretched over the thwarts to grasp him.

"Michael, for God's sake save that man, and leave me alone!"

Harold gasped. "I can take care of myself."

He said this as he hung on to the gunwale to gain his breath, but, not heeding his words, Michael by sheer strength dragged him into the dingey and thurst an oar into his hand.

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Harold saw the sense of this, and, though raging at the loss of time it had taken to pull him out of the sea he drew in a great breath of life and dipped his oar in the waves. They were not such mountains as those of an hour before. The tremendons downpour of hail had buffeted them and beaten them down some-

And now Josiah Martin, with a wide smile, drew a life-belt

from under his seat, and adroitly fixed it around Harold.

"I throwed thic in the dingey afore she was lowered, I reckon now your ghost won't haunt me," he said, as he resisted successfully the impatient movement made by Harold to hinder his officious attention. Not choosing to remove his hands from the oar, he had to bear the boy's adjustment of the belt rather than lose time.

Once more the drifting boat was neared, and so closely that now, drenched, storm-beaten, and dreadful, the face of the man clinging to it was visible to their strained eyes.

It was the face of Captain Arm-Harold recognised him.

strong!

His eyes flashed with the fire of burning hope, and the dingey

flew beneath the arms of the strong rowers.

Now they were but a hand-breath away, and Harold flung down his oar and dashed himself into the sea, right upon the drifting boat. For a single instant both men were clinging to the wavering, tossing support, and they looked into each other's eyes.

A darkening mist came before Captain Armstrong's sight, a black sea of things past thought swam before him, and the swell and rising of them in his dim eyes touched Harold, as a sword-point

touches, with an icy thrill.

He stretched forth his hand in desperate eagerness to save; he almost had him in his grasp; but the shadow of white death passed over the face of the drowning man, and, as the crest of a wave broke over him, he let go his fainting hold and sank as suddenly and instantly as a stone.

The waves/that buried him rolled on, carrying the boat with

it, and Harold was alone on the heaving waters.

CHAPTER XVI.

HAROLD had been gone three days, and no news of the Curlew or of the cutter had reached Langarth, but fears were in every mind for their safety. The storm that had raged for a night and a day left a huge swell upon the sea, and floating in on this came many a piece of drifting timber, telling of wrecks in the ocean beyond. As the change in the wind from north to southwest brought these to the ragged shore, the people seized them eagerly, and searched for some name or token by which to recognize the ship of which they were perhaps the sole remnants.

"It's American timber—or Swedish—or it's a piece of a Sunderland ship!" cried the men, whose practised eyes enabled them at once to read these strange stray records of the storm which the sea tossed careiessly upon the shore.

Upon every reading such as this hearts were delighted, and the word was passed on that the drift-wood lying at their feet did not mean the lives of men dear to them.

At the Coastguard station perched upon the cliff high above Langarth church tower the Preventive men stood, wind-battered, glass in hand, constantly on the look-out for the ship that would never return.

Rumours of disaster were floating in the air, and men and women, when they met and stopped to talk a moment on the surf-lined sands or on the windy heights above the sea, filled their speech with stories of wreck and storm.

Mr. Vicat picked them up as he strolled about in a prowling way, and brought them home to Langarth, and frightened his foolish wife with them, knowing she would carry them with a scared face to Estrild. But a Cornish girl who knows and loves the sea in all its changing aspects is not easily terrified by tales of its dangers and its wrecks. She had faith in Daniel Pascoe and his boat; there was not a better sailor between the Lizard and the Orkney Isles than he, nor a stouter little ship upon the five seas than his. No harm would come to Harold while he was with Daniel. She had known him weather much worse storms than this had been. After all, it was but a capful of wind; it was not a hurricane such as she had seen at times on this wild coast.

Pleasance listened with a slight wonder in her mind that a girl so naturally brave, so heedless of physical dangers, should quail in terror before the false alarm of imaginary fears.

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Mrs. Vicat had made herself friendly; she came at times to Estrild's sitting room and brought to her and Pleasance such cheerfulness as was in her power. Sometimes with a frightened air she delivered affectionate messages from Mr. Vicat, with entreaties that his "dear niece" would at last grant him an interview. But this Estrild still persistently refused. She would see her uncle, she said, when Harold returned, but not before.

Her resolve chafed that gentleman into a furious determination to prevent a meeting between her and Harold by means law-

ful or unlawful, as circumstances would permit.

Thus things went on till the fourth day, and then Mr. Vicat returned from his daily prowl with his mouth full of news-news so important that he considered himself justified in forcing his presence on his niece. Accordingly he betook himself to her sitting-room, and, without knocking at the door, walked in, big, pompous, and aggressive.

Pale to the lips, Estrild rose as he entered, and confronted

him with an undaunted mien.

"Sit down, my'dear," said Mr. Vicat airily; "I have some-

thing to tell you."

"I will not hear it, returned Estrild, still standing. "You and I have not been friends for a long while, uncle; and I will

discuss nothing with you until Harold comes back."

"Mr. Olver will never return here," he rejoined. "The Preventive cutter is gone down with all hands—not a soul saved. And report says that the Curlew, in trying to save two men drifting on an overturned boat, ran also on the rocks and went to pieces."

He had blurted this out with no more feeling than a pump has when it pours forth a stream of water. His voice was hard as iron, but Pleasance saw in his eyes a gleam of satisfaction shining like two little pin points of fire. She came forward to. protect Estrild, who stood as if turned to stone, her blood chilled, her heart tightened as by a grasping hand.

"Mr. Vicat," said Pleasance, "I must ask you to leave us.

My cousin is not in a fit state to hear further ill news!"

"I do but my duty in telling her the truth, Miss Glen-

dorgal."

"I doubt the truth of your statement," said Pleasance, taking Estrild's ' und in hers to reassure her; "you confess you have only heard a report."

"I do. But the loss of the Alert is, I assure you, confirmed. They have had certain information of it at the Coastguard-station. As for the Curlew——"

"The Curlew is safe," interposed Estrild, in a voice so calm that Pleasance looked at her in surprise. "Daniel is too good a sailor to run his boat on a reef. Oh, I am quite certain of seeing Harold again!"

Her words brought a twitch to Mr. Vicat's lip.

"You seem to possess a remarkable confidence in this said Daniel's skill," he said; "but I would nevertheless advise you to prepare your mind for the worst. The storm on the coast of Brittany—indeed on all western coasts—was much more violent, I am told, than it appeared on this southern beach."

"And therefore Daniel would exercise due caution, and not approach too near a dangerous coast. Oh, I am not at all afraid

of his safety and all with him!" 4

Here was an extraordinary girl! She was still white as marble, and evidently trembling from head to foot, yet she could brave him like this. Her fears then arose from some other cause.

"Upon my word, I shall have more trouble with her than I imagined," he thought, as he glanced furtively at her resolute face.

"Have you anything more to say, Mr. Vicat?" asked Pleasance quietly.

"A great deal more, Miss Glendorgal. I must discuss now

with my niece the question of the inquest."

"Surely not!" exclaimed Pleasance growing very pale. There can be no necessity to pierce Estrild's heart with these dreadful details."

"There is very urgent necessity," he returned angrily. "She has been sending letters to the coroner imploring for delay; she has been countermanding my orders in every way; and it is time now I should put a stop to this interference with law and decency!"

He had shown his cloven foot, and, what was worse he had taken his stand on it, as though daring them to shake him an inch from his position.

"Estrild," asked Pleasance suddenly, "has Tristram left no

will ?"

"I perceive the drift of your question, Miss Glendorgal," said

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Mr. Vicat with a smile of malice. "I am happy to be able to satisfy your curiosity. I ascertained two days ago from my nephew's solicitors that he has left no will. His father's will therefore stands. Indeed he had no power to set it aside unless he had married; provision was made in that case for him to execute a new settlement of certain lands and appoint a new guardian for his sister."

The sweet pale face, into which he looked with a smile of insolent power, had flushed painfully; his words called up dead hopes from their graves, and for a moment Pleasance was powerless to answer him. Mr. Vicat took advantage of her silence to assert himself again.

"Perhaps, Miss Glendoral, you can take in the situation now at a glance. It is a responsible one. In consequence of my nephew's death I become under his father's will sole remaining trustee and executor, also sole guardian of my niece."

The man swelled as he spoke with a venomous importance and sense of power. He had crushed Pleasance, who had sunk into a chair and covered her face with her hands in a burst of tears, but he had roused Estrild's courage, and she confronted him now with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks.

"If you insult my cousin by addressing another word to her, you will find, Mr. Vicat," she said, "that the servants in this house still obey me. I am perfectly acquainted with my father's will; and there is no provision in it requiring me to receive you as a guest at Langarth!"

Mr. Vicat was startled; he was unprepared for such language as this, and he was anxious not to quarrel downright with the niece whom mentally he called a headstrong termagant.

"My dear Estrild," he said, in a conciliating tone, "pray don't mistake me! I am your best friend, only too anxious to order all things for your happiness. I thought it right to let Miss Glendorgal know that I had the power to act as I thought wisest for your interest."

"That is quite enough," she answered. "I wish you also to know that I am possessed of exact information as to the length and stretch of your power. I can apply to the Chancery Court, if I choose, through my cousin, for the appointment of another guardian; and, if you stretch the cord too tightly, Mr. Vicat, I shall do it."

Here was another astonishment for that gentleman-and in

those days, when the ignorance of women was intense and complete, it was an astonishment that filled him with a ghastly yet ludicrous surprise; it took his breath with secret fear and rage.

"Who has been coaching you in law?" he asked, endeavouring to smile. "I fear your legal tutor was not very learned."

"It was my brother," she answered, her eyes filling with tears. "He made me perfectly comprehend what my position would be if—if he should be taken away from me. Pleasance, you know he always expected this."

The change in her face as she turned to her cousin, the sudden whiteness and quiver of her lips, the fear in her eyes, did not escape Mr. Vicat's notice. He put all this down mentally as the facts to be reflected on and understood by and by.

"Chancery is ruinous work," he said carelessly; "and, if I resisted any application of Miss Glendorgal to that court, the suit would most likely last out our lives."

But Estrild's interest was gone in that dispute; she scarcely appeared to listen to him.

"If the Alert is really gone down," she said, looking at him with that strange fear still shining wildly in her eyes, "this dreadful inquest need no longer be adjourned. Get it over if you will; I have no evidence to offer."

This sudden change of subject—this sudden submission—filled Mr. Vicat's mind with wonder. He pondered it a moment, fixing his gaze on her face, scanning the fear on it, and recalling the expression of terror which had flashed whitely over it on her hearing him announce the loss of the *Alert*. Dimly the truth broke upon him, and he felt he had seized a weapon that he could use with effect.

"No, there is not the slightest evidence to offer, so you must prepare yourself, Estrild, for a vague verdict: It is doubtless the old story—only an accident!" he said, as he shrugged his broad shoulders and glance at her furtively.

"Not that—oh, anything but that!" she answered, putting up her hands as if to shield her face from the sight.

"Would you prefer they returned a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown?" he asked, turning his head as he was leaving the room.

"It would be the truth, I think—I hope," she said drearily. Pleasance roused herself on hearing this.

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"Yes, mean to who drif Alert." "Oh, no, Estrild; you do not hope anything so cruel! You cannot wish such a terrible accusation to be flung at an innocent man who cannot defend himself—a man already before his Judge. Remember, my dear, the *Alert* is gone down."

"And with it all explanation of the mystery," observed Mr. Vicat, who was pausing at the door. "By-the-by, Estrild, I have omitted to tell you that my journey here came about through a singular occurrence. A stranger called on my wife and told her we should be wanted at Langarth. She was startled to recognise a likeness of him in a queer old portrait you have in the library."

One glance he took at her face, then he closed the door and went away.

"Estrild," exclaimed Pleasance, putting her arms about her, "you frighten me! Are you faint?"

"No," she answered, turning her blanched face towards her.
"It is a folly," continued Pleasance—"a device of Mr. Vicat's.
He tries to terrify you as he would a child."

Estrild made no reply; she stretched out her hand to the bell and rang it. Then she said quietly—

"We shall hear what Prior says. I shall only believe what he tells me."

When the old man appeared, strangely altered in these few days, curiously subdued and pitiful, a single question elicited the fact that the *Alert* was indeed lost.

You see, Miss Estrild, I had the news from the Swift—the craft, you understand, that the Alert went out to pursue."

Yes, Estrild understood; she knew the crew of the Swift would not bring a false report.

"So the Swift has seen the Curlew and spoken her?" she said. "That proves she is safe."

Prior hesitated; a wistful look was in his eyes. He glanced at Pleasance, and seemed to gather courage from her calm face.

"The Curlew is safe; I'm sure, miss. Daniel isn't a man to run his ship ashore. But the Curlew's boat was in danger when the Swift passed her."

"The boat?" repeated Estrild.

"Yes, miss—the dingey. Daniel lowered her to save—I mean to try to save—a man—or two men, maybe it was—who drifted by clinging to an overturned boat belonging to the Alert."

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Estrild hesitated a moment; her lips seemed parched. She drank a little water which was on a table near, then spoke.

"Was Mr. Olver in the dingey, Prior?"

The old man twisted his words warily to save his conscience. "I reckon, miss, the men aboard the Swift couldn't rightly say they saw him there," he answered.

"Then of course he was in the Curlew," Estrild said, as a sigh

of relief broke from her lips.

She was looking down, and had not seen Prior's face. Pleasance almost knew that behind the mask of calmness that the old man so resolutely were there lurked evil tidings or a terrible dread of evil. They both exchanged signals of silence before Estrild looked up and spoke again.

"Two questions more, Prior. Have you heard any strange account from Mrs. Vicat about a visitor to her who is

like---"

"Well, miss," said Prior, interrupting the question eagerly, in his relief to escape from demands harder to answer, "I have heard something of it. But she's a lady with a head like a barnacle—just a shell, like, with nothing in it Her stories be of no account—mere strams, miss!"

"But she said it?"—"Well, miss, I wouldn't say she didn't." Again Estrild hesitated, and again she drank some water

quickly.

"Prior, were the men from the Alert saved who were clinging to the boat?"

"The Swift asked that question too, miss; and Daniel signalled back they were both drowned."

He waited a moment, but Estrild said no more; then he went

away sadly, closing the door with a quiet hand.

After an instant's silence, in which Estrild uttered not a word, but sat with head resting on her hand gazing blankly out at the dim sky, Pleasance rose softly and stole away.

She found Prior waiting for her on the staircase.

"Mr. Olver was not in the dingey, miss. It was worse—he was drifting away on the wrecked boat. The dingey was labouring hard to overtake him, and Daniel was tacking and following as he best could."

Pleasance felt giddy; she held by the baluster to support herself.

"Could the Swift do nothing?" she said faintly.

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"The captain lowered a boat, miss, but it filled directly. Luckily there was no one in it. He had no other boat—one had been carried away in the storm. He sailed away then, seeing he could do nothing."

For a moment Pleasance made no answer; she passed her hand

across her forehead in bewilderment.

"You can guess, now, how it happened," Prior continued. "Mr. Olver was trying to save the man."

"Yes," said Pleasance vaguely. "Oh, yes, I know he is brave

and rash? This must be kept from Miss Estrild."

"And from Mr. Vicat, please, miss; he would rejoice to tell Miss Estrild."

Pleasance said "Yes" again in the same vague way, and hated Harold for a moment as bringing fresh sorrow to Languett

"Mr. Vicat mustn't hear of the Swift in no way at all, miss," resumed Prior uneasily. "The Coastguard-men are mad as fire against her because of the Alert, and Mr. Vicat has oogliness enough in him even to turn informer. She hasn't dared put in here, she's gone to a safer port."

At another time Pleasance might have smiled at the old man's outspoken sympathy with the smugglers; now she turned away, too sick at heart to say a word more than to simply promise

silence.

She returned to Estrild, and found her still seated in the same attitude.

Pleasance was afraid to speak, least her voice should betray her anxiety; but no doubt of Harold's safety had seemingly touched Estrild's thoughts. She looked up, saying in a quiet despairing way—

"Not one left living to clear away this horror from my mind! All drowned! And Tristram is dead; and Harold and I parted for ever! Oh, Pleasance, Pleasance, how shall we bear it and live?"

CHAPTER XVII.

In that moment of supreme agony, of bitter disappointment, as the life he had risked his own to save passed out of his grasp, sinking beneath the touch of his hand and the sight of his eyes, Harold felt nothing of his own danger. Neither at the time, in his passionately eager longing to hold and save him, had any thought touched him of the infinite importance to himself of Captain Armstrong's life. But now, as the huge herded waves gathered about him and folded him round, bounding his horzion from one pastureless height of liquid greenness to another, he awoke to the sense of his own peril, and to the remembrance of all that Captain Armstrong's death meant for him. He was not sorry that, at the passionate mement when he was burning and battling to save him, he had forgotten it; but all the stronger now was the rush of memory that flooded his mind with bitterness.

It was well for him that he had a life-belt on, for in his overwhelming sense of failure and disappointment he had for a second or two forgotten that his energies and presence of mind were needful to be used to their utmost powers if he wished to save his own life.

In plunging deeply down into the sea, as he had done after the sinking man, he had of course relinquished his hold of the wrecked boat, which had drifted fast away. Now he found himself in the same strong current that had carried this to the path of the Curlew, and he felt himself borne along by a resistless force from which there was no escape. Could Michael overtake and rescue him? This question seemed to be in the air, on the waves, and in his heart, burning away his strength. He could see ahead of him the derelict boat, sometimes as a mere streak far away, sometimes as a black wall deceiving the eye by its apparent nearness.

The Curlew seemed miles away, at a hopeless unapproachable distance; her boat—though he knew it near—was nowhere visible within his tossing, heaving horizon.

Born and bred on the wild West Coast of Ireland, he had practised swimming from a boy, and had often shown himself as much at home upon the sea as on the land; hence he had the courage and confidence of long custom, and the fearlessness of skill and strength. Yet now he felt these failing him in this swift current, where apparently all his skill and strength availed nothing. So he ceased efforts which were only useless and exhausting, and floated onwards, gradually losing thought of life as he drifted to the edge of that darkness that borders death.

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"Aise your oaar, and back waater for life, or the boat will go over 'un!"

The voice was close at his fainting ear, and he looked up with dazed eyes, and saw an oar held out in Michael's strong hand; and in an instant he had clutched it, and life with all its fulness rushed through his veins again.

Another moment, and with a strong pull Michael had got him into the boat, and laid him down softly in the stern, with his

head leading against Josiah's knees.

"I bet you feel whizzy and slaipy like," said that youth, looking down on him with immense satisfaction. "You've keeped on rolling and tumbling like a porpois out for a holiday, till Michael and me most broke our hearts rowing arter 'ee. I reckon you waen't forget this swim for a long spell."

"Hould your tongue, you young buffle-head," said Michael, "and let the wind blaw a little breath into Mr. Olver! He

cain't spaik yet."

"How long have I been in the sea?" asked Harold. "Is it

hours since Captain Armstrong sank?"

"Don't you trouble about he," returned Michael. "Nothing will vex he never more. He was born to be drowned; ef not, you would have saaved 'un—that's sartain. Here's a drop of raal French brandy. Lucky I had et en my pocket! There—that'll do 'ee good."

This was true, and Harold felt that he was himself again after

a pull at the flask.

"Your head don't feel se whirly now, I reckon?" said Josiah,

with great solicitude.

"Well, it still feels rather as if I had a swarm of bees in it," returned Harold, beginning to recover; "and I shall be thankful to get dry. It's a long pull, Michael, yet to the Curlew."

"Never you mind—we shall be aboard directly; and I'm not going to give you an oar," said Michael. "Just you hould 'un tight, Josiah, or he'll be jumping in the sea again arter something or other."

Josiah, doing as he was bid, clutched Harold's arm with one

hand.

"Lor', jimmeny, you be as could as a dead conger!" he said pitifully. "I shall look arter 'ee a bit now, since I'v saaved the life in 'ee by thic there belt."

"Well, Josiah, I believe that's about true, and I'm grateful;

but you needn't hold me as if I were a slippery live fish instead of a half-dead one."

"Have 'ee swallowed a good deal of say?" asked Josiah.

"No; I'm too good a swimmer for that; but I could not struggle out of the current—I got a little exhausted in trying."

"And you thoft you wes hours there, but 'twas aunly minutes. Me and Michael maade the boat fly, I can tell 'ee; and 'tes well the sea have dropped as it have, or we shouldn't have picked 'ee up so quick."

It was joy to be on board the *Curlew* again, and feel her stout deck beneath their feet, and in the warmth and comfort of food and fire forget the evil dream of danger and death through which

they had passed.

But it had cost a hard struggle on the part of all hands before this was done—first to get the boat close to the ship, and next to haul her to her old place on deck—and Daniel waited till this was done before he grasped Harold's hand and welcomed him back to life.

"I thought 'twas a poor job," he said, "when I seed you floating along like a bit of wreck. I gived 'ee up for a minute or two, and I couldn't do nothing; neither could the Swift."

"Have you spoken the Swift?" Harold cried eagerly.

"Iss sure; and I'm afeard it's a whisht story they'll taake back home about you, for they reckoned sure you'd be drowned."

"But they won't say that at Langarth, Daniel, surely?"

"Well, they'll say it; but the young lady won't be tould—never fear that!"

Harold drew a breath of relief; it would be consoling one day to let Estrild know that he had done his best, but not now, in the midst of her sorrows, did he wish any terror to come near her on his account.

"It was strange I never saw the Swift," he said. "In fact, I saw nothing but the wave coming and the wave going, and that horrible boat ahead like a black dream. And had the Swift no news to give you of the Alert?"

"None; we gave her the news, and they took it home with

em. There'll be whisht talk to-night at Langarth."

"And they had seen no boat belonging to the Alert?"

"Aw, my dear, how should they, when they put miles and miles of say between themselves and thic craft? They didn't want to see her—that's sartain,"

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in shore to some port?"

"Lor' 'a' mussy," said Daniel, "boats be running too much on your mind, Mr. Olver! In sich weather as the Alert met she wouldn't lower a boat, 'cept maybe to send a king ashore. I've heard say kings can't be drowned." Then he laid his brown hand kindly on Harold's shoulder. "See here, Mr. Olver—Captain Armstrong was a braave man; I'll give 'un his due, though he was risky in his way of sailing, and he wouldn't lower no boats to thraw away lives. When his ship was on the reef, he maybe tried to saave lives thic way, but——"

"But long before then, Daniel, to save one life, he may have

risked others."

Daniel look at him with that sort of pity that a man has for a sudden craze in another, and then shook his head

decisively.

"There's times when a boat is worth fifty lives; and in sich foul weather as poured down from the sky yesterday and laest night Captain Armstrong wouldn't thraw away his boat ef he would hes men. The *Alert* catched the storm hours afore we did; she was right in the paath of the oogly thing; and——"

"Yes, I know, Daniel; she had six hours' start of us, and the

question in my mind is, Where did she go in that time?"

"Come in the cabin 'long with me, and I'll show 'ee the chart

and every inch of the track she sailed on."

Harold went, and saw, and was not convinced. In his mind there lurked still, in spite of all reason, the latent certainty that Captain Armstrong would have run any strange and abnormal risk to save the man who had taken Tristram's life. It was in vain that Daniel, by arguments as to facts well known to sailors, proved the impossibility of any boat living and reaching the shore during the tempest that had beset the *Alert* from the hour she left Langarth.

"Well, she herself might have put into some port," persisted

Harold.

"Wouldn't she have stopped there ef she had?" asked Daniel.
"Nobody but a pattick would hoist sails to be blawed to rags

outside a harbor of they wes saafe inside of waun."

"But Captain Armstrong was just such a pattick or simpleton; you have owned he was a rash man. And the long and the short of it is, Daniel, that we must go back on the track of the

Alert, and I must visit every port she has passed into which she might have run."

Daniel whistled, and then stopped, remembering that is was unlucky to whistle at sea, as he might raise the wind again.

"Of course, Daniel," continued Harold, as he noted the old sailor's hesitation, "I shall make amends to you for lengthening my trip."

my trip."

"No, no, Mr. Olver—I baan't like that at all; for simming to me, a man that would take money for keeping to a bargain es no man at all. You hired the *Curlew* for a week—well, for thic time you're capen of her, and taake her where you will, and I'm pilot. Now, then, if you will, we'll maake for Morlaix; thic's the first port on our way back."

"All right, Daniel-Morlaix let it be."

Daniel walked forward at once to give orders, saying as he went—

"Aw, no, my dear, I hope I'm different to that, to take more money for sticking to a bargain! Aw, no; foul weather or fair,

no money for that."

Harold felt as though a load were lifted from his heart as the little ship tacked and turned to the west. His desire to hunt Tristram's assassin down was growing on him like a fever, and every step he took in the race made his veins bound with a sort of angry pleasure.

"There is no danger now, Daniel, in taking this course, is

there?" he asked.

"Danger?" repeated Daniel. "Why, the wind is chopping round from a lion to a lamb; and I'm going to turn in for a good spell of slaip; and Michael taakes the helm."

With a nod his tanned and weather-beaten face disappeared within the cabin, and, left alone, Harold paced the deck, full of

many thoughts.

It was marvellous to note how the trouble of the sea had subsided into calm, and how the swift green waves grew ever lower and lower, as though the *Curlew* in gliding over them smoothed them with her breast as they smiled back with the shadow of her white wings.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

With the cessation of the storm the wind had changed to the south, and thre was a softness in the air like the touch of flowers. But the sky was heavy with clouds, while fold upon fold descended on the sea, covering it with a white garment, fleecy, impalpable, and yet so insidiously strong that sky and sea and air were blended into one by the sweep of its fall.

"This is thick weather, sir," observed Michael, as Harold

passed near the binnacle.

His voice sounded curiously far away, though it was close by; and Harold stopped to wonder at it a little before he answered—
"The fog seems to make one deaf, Michael, as well as blind."

"Aw, iss; 'tis like a blanket round one's head: it stifles sight and hearing," returned Michael, in a tone of disgust. "'Tis a a French sea; and the fog is French oogliness, I reckon."

Mindful that Michael had charge of the helm, Harold moved away so as not to be drawn into talk; and once more his thoughts rushed back to Langarth and to all it held of dear and

precious and sorrowful.

The inquest, the funeral, would be over before his return, and Estrild, uncomforted save by her cousin, would have to bear all this alone. His presence would have upheld her and consoled her; yet he felt impelled to go on. He could not return and give her the history of his voyage as a blank failure; it would be too cruel.

An hour went by and he still paced the deck, his mind a prey to thought, while the *Curlew* sped onwards like a blind bird through her soft and fleecy path. The fog stood on her right hand and on her left, a white wall towering from sea to sky.

Suddenly, as they sailed thus quietly on, Daniel emerged from the companion-way with wild, scared looks; and, rushing forward, he thurst Michael violently aside, and, seizing the helm, dipped it with all his force.

Down went the Curlew into the waves; but the little ship rose gallantly again, and obeying her helm, turned sharply with

a raised prow, to starboard.

Instantly on the larboard side a huge black wall loomed out from the midst of the white mist, and towered above the *Curlew* portentous and dreadful. It was a tall East Indiaman, a giant for strength and size, her masts lost in the high fog, her hull a black monster ready to crush and devour.

She sailed slowly by, so close that the wash and spray of her path sprinkled the white faces of the men on the deck of the Carlew, who gazed out on her in pale amazement.

From their high vantage ground a group on her quarterdeck looked down on the little *Curlew*, and a strong voice cried out—

"A near shave! Another moment and we should have cut you down!"

This was not said without a few oaths, which the fashion of that time thought good, and the fashion of this time leaves off as bad.

Harold did not hear Daniel's reply; his nerves, he feared, were shaken, or he was suffering from some strange hallucination, for in the midst of the white mist he fancied he saw Estrild's face. In another second he perceived that the face that had given him the singular impression of being hers was that of a slight lad who stood a little apart from the group on the quarter-deck. As the figures in this group became more visible to his somewhat scared sight, the likeness of this young face to Estrild's vanished; but it bore a pale wistful look which still reminded him of her, and he glanced pitifully at the lad, deeming him in ill-health.

The dreadful danger of collision was over, the great ship had passed, but, by aid of his trumpet, the officer on deck was still exchanging words with the *Curlew*.

"How did you weather the storm?" Daniel had asked.

"We ran into Brest," was the answer. "What news from England?"

"None. But we saw an English ship go down off the Ile de Bas."

"What name? Do you know?"

"Yes; the Alert—Captain Armstrong. All hands lost!"
There was no audible reply; but a signal was run up, dimly visisble in the mist.

"What do 'em want now," said Daniel testily, as he peered at the little flag through the glass. "Ah, they be lowering a boat! Slacken sail!" he cried in angry humour.

"It was done; and the little Curlew lay to sullenly, her sails limp and the mist hanging about her shrouds.

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Very soon the measured beat of oars travelled through the thick air, and looming through its ghostly vapour appeared a boat, like a picture on a dream-sea, with six oars falling in the water in one sweep, and a young officer in the stern holding the snowy tiller-ropes. He half rose and lifted his gold-laced cap.

"We are sorry to hear of the loss of the Alert. Can you tell

us if Captain Armstrong is saved ?"

"He is drowned; we saw him sink!" And then rapidly Daniel told the story of his death, and Harold's efforts to rescue him.

The young officer as he listened looked at Harold, and raised his cap again.

"His friends will thank you, sir," he said.

"Mind you," observed Daniel, "Capen Armstrong stood by his ship till he was washed overboard. How he faaled in with the boat arter the Alert went down I cap't tell 'ca"

the boat arter the Alert went down I can't tell 'ee."

"There is no need to tell me that a British officer did his duty," said the young mate in answer. "There's a brave man gone, and brave men with bim; and their lives lost for a set of vile smugglers!"

The strong word in this speech brought a flash to Daniel's

eyes.

"Have 'ee got anything more to say?" he asked. "Ef so, my

son, you may as well say it civil."

Oh, certainly!" returned the other. "If you are going back to England at once, will you kindly take charge of these letters and post them?"

"I'm pilot. There's the capen; ask him," said Daniel.

Harold at this stepped forward.

"It will be some days before we reach an English port," he said; "but I will gladly charge myself with the letters and post them at the first opportunity."

"Oh, I am sure we are much obliged! And our captain is sorry to have stopped you and delayed you in this way; but you see he did not like to lose the chance of sending letters. Here they are!"

The packet was tied round with twine and handed up with some difficult. Harold took it and placed it in his pocket.

"I am glad to do you this little service," he said. "What is the name of your ship?"

"The Atalanta, bound for Calcutta with troops. You see,"

continued the young man, with a wistful tone in his voice, "it's a pretty long voyage out, and it's such a chance to send letters home, you know."

"Don't apologise. Good-bye, and a fair voyage to you!"

"The same to you!"

Caps were raised, oars dipped in the water, and the boat was gone like a dream, as it had come. The mist opened for it closed on it, and hid it so swiftly that, but for the sullen thud of the oars, it might have been deemed to have sunk beneath the colourless sea.

Afar in the whiteness the great ship floated, a dim strange vision—a spectre ship, with ghosts upon her spars standing in the clouds, wrapped in white garments of mist, and hollow voices wafted from out her stillness like thinnest echoes rising from graves.

Harold watched the ship fade away into the deeps of the glimmering white darkness, with a curious quiver of coldness upon all his flesh, and a sense of loss, as though a bird had been in his hand which had flown away, carrying some message with him which he ought to have gathered from beneath his wings.

He recovered from his strange feeling with a start, and knew he ought to speak to Daniel and thank him for their lives. But for him the Atalanta with one blow would have struck them all down to death.

He came to the binnacle, just in time to hear Michael say—
"Well, Daniel, I reckon I may ax 'ee now why you knacked
me down?"

"I didn't mean to do that, my son—I only wanted the helm. It's well you caaled me on deck"

"I never caaled 'ee on deck," said Michael, astonished.

Daniel looked grave.

"You do knaw I wes dead weary, and I slaiped sound, but I dreamed that I wes out of my bunk and hustling with a rush of waater. Then, simming to me, I woke, and heard a voice caaling, 'Daniel, came on deck!' With that I thrawed myself out of my berth and rushed 'pon deck. Then I seed the graate oogly black thing looming out of the fog, and I said to myself. 'Tis sink or save!' and I thrawed Michael aside and dipped the helm."

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"'Twas sink or saave, sure 'nough," said Michael, in an awed tone. "And you raaly dreamed that, Daniel, and heerd thic voice?"

"'Tis true as I am here this minute, stanning up alive, 'stead of lying down there dead!" said the old man, pointing with his left hand to the sunless waves.

"Then you be a man to dream dreams and see visions," returned Michael. "And I b'lieve now you seed this ghost. I

thought afore 'twas a stram."

Harold listened, pondering the subtleties of that inner sense that some men possess which gives them warnings or tokens of danger, and speaks in secret ways not understood by those of coarse fibre, whose nerves can never thrill with a mystic touch.

"Under Providence, your dream saved our lives, Daniel," he said, as he grasped the old man's hand in a hearty shake. "I wish a dream would come to me," he added, with a little wistful laugh. "I have the queerest feeling about that ship."

"And well you may, sir; she was nigh 'pon sinking us."

"No, it's not that;" and, feeling he could not explain the dim chaos of thought within him, he turned away.

That evening the Curlew anchored off Morlaix.

The next morning the earth seemed to have broken out into blossoms against the sun, and the sky was as the vast cup of a blue flower, and the little ripples that ran round the ship were all alive and aflame with sunshine.

Harold landed, and questioned and searched, and wearied, and earched again, and could hear no tidings of the Alert or of Eng-

lish boats or Englishmen rowing ashore.

Josiah went with him, and stared and wondered at the Bretons, their full nether garments, their many buttons and sashes. He looked up at the shops over which was written—"Butun Mad"—words which in Breton mean "Good tobacco."

"Button mad!" said Josiah. "Yes that's just what they be, and too lazy to hould their pipes 'cept with their teeth, for their

hands be always in their pockets."

The Curlew sailed away from Morlaix that night, and the

history of the day was a blank.

Again and again this happened, as, sailing from port to port, Harold wearied and questioned, and, heart-sick at failure, yet questioned again, and could learn nothing.

It became a certainty to him at last that no boat had crept

away from the Alert to land and save the guilty man who had slain Estrild's brother.

So he had gone down with the doomed ship, and the mystery of Tristram's death was unsolved and unsolvable now for ever. With this sad result for all his labour and risk of life, he reached Langarth with a heavy heart, after an absence of ten days.

He stopped not a moment to have speech with any one, but landed in the little bay he had compared to Jaffa, and hurried up the narrow rugged cliff-walk with every vein tingling with expectant love.

One touch of a soft hand, one kiss from sweet clinging lips, and he and sorrow would be far apart, and he should be repaid for those nights and days of weariness and danger.

Yet how chill and desolate the house looked as he appoached it! The day was bright, yet there was not a window open. In the little balcony by Estrild's sitting-room, at which he looked long ngly, there was a dead flower and a bird-cage. It was empty. His heart fell. Was it possible she could be ill.

He had come close to the old oak door unnoticed, unseen, and

now he rang softly. with careful but trembling hand.

A moment or two of feverish waiting, and Prior's face, pinched and pale, met his anxious gaze.

"Oh, Mr. Olver, I've whisht news for you! They are gone! Mr. Vicat has taken Miss Estrild away to London. There's only Miss Glendorgal here; she waited to see you."

CHAPTER XIX.

PLEASANCE GLENDORGAL came forward and grasped Harold's hand in silence. The pale hue of suffering on her face and the quiver of her lip told plainly that in the sorrow that had fallen on Langarth she had borne a full and perchance silent share; in her thoughts it was perhaps the most bitter pang of all that she had no right openly to grieve.

As she relinquished Harold's hand, he flung himself into a chair and began to question her with almost angry eagerness.

"Why is Estrild gone? Why did you let her go? I hoped you would protect her against this tyranny. I could not—I would not have believed it possible that, after sending me on such a

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"In leaving Langarth she was not a free agent," said Pleasance

sadly—"you must know that, Mr. Olver."

"I cannot say that I know it," returned Harold, in a bitter tone; "for I know Estrild is not without courage—not without spirit: therefore she could have resisted Mr. Vicat's will. She could have remained here—she ought to have remained till my return!" he added passionately.

"I think she feared the pain of seeing you again, since it would only have been to say that she and you are parted now for

ever.

Harold gazed at her for a moment in blank amazement; then

he smiled incredulously.

"Is that Mr. Vicat's decree! I think he will find himself mistaken. Estrild will never say such words to me of her own free will, and I care nothing for what her relatives say. I shall

carry her off in spite of them all."

"I am glad you feel like that," said Pleasance, "for you will have need of all you faith and courage; because it is not Mr. Vicat you will have chiefly to fear; it is Estrild's own terror and gloom which will separate you, unless you can hold your love in spite of the estrangement which she will assuredly deem it her duty to plant between you and herself."

The young man's face fell. In these words he recognised the fulfilment of the dark presentiment that had chilled his heart when he saw Captain Armstrong sink into the waves beneath

his outstreched hand.

"I fear you are right," he said sorrowfully. "I knew something of this before I went on this fruitless voyage. Estrild spoke to me of her superstitious terrors before we parted, but I could not believe she was in earnest, I did not think she would desert me from a motive so utterly unreasonable. I cannot believe it now—I feel I should be mad to believe it."

"I am not surprised to hear you say that"—and Pleasance flushed as she spoke—"but I have seen and known what a Carbonellis can do under the influence of the gloom and fear that have now become hereditary. It needs a little Carbonellis blood in the veins to understand a Carbonellis and to love still," she added, as the flush on her cheeks died away, leaving her very

pale.

"What can I do?" said Harold, pressing his hand on his forehead. "How can I knock down all this ancient pile of prejudice and gloom? I cannot talk of it to Estrild as I do to you, because, you see, poor Tristram, who fostered her superstitious fancies, was her brother."

Pleasance winced, yet answered bravely-

"You can do nothing for the present. The shock, the grief Estrild has suffered are too recent to allow of her listening to reason; be constant—that is the sole thing you can do."

"I am not afraid for my own constancy; it is Estrild's that I fear will be shaken. Influences will be brought to bear upon

her of which I will know nothing."

"But none of these things will move her," returned Pleasance.

"In my opinion Mr. Vicat's power is a mere thread in strength, which she would break in a moment for your sake; the danger of enstrangement between you lies solely in her own temperament; and unfortunately her very love for you becomes through this the means to that end."

"You are a Job's comforter, Miss Glendorgal," said Harold, with anger in his voice. "I am not going to believe that Estrild will play into Mr. Vicat's hands in that weak way. If she loves

me, she will stand by me."

Pleasance looked at him sorrowfully; in her experience she had known a Carbonellis love and leave his love, even for that love's sake. And now, like the shadow of her own sad past, she felt the darkness about to fall upon Harold's future years, and her heart was touched with grief for him.

"What you think and feel is natural and sensible," she said; "but you must remember that you have not to deal only with common sense and nature. In the Carbonellis blood there is a sensitiveness to things beyond our ken—things which appear to us mere shadows, but which to them are real and terrible."

"I am sure of it," said Harold, in the tone of a man who hated the subject touched on. "To fling down Estrild's delusion, I went on a wild adventure which has failed. I have nothing to tell her when we meet, and she will not thank me for having risked my life; apparently this has counted for so little that she has gone away without caring to see me—without leaving for me a word of kindness.

Pleasance saw that the leaven of bitterness was already working in him, and she hastened to speak.

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"No, no," she cried; "you are mistaken! Estrild left many words of love for you; she spoke them with tears—her heart was full of you. A thousand tender thoughts of you rose to her lips continually; in speaking of you she seemed at times to forget her sorrow."

"With me she would forget it altogether!" exclaimed the young man eagerly. "Can you not see, Miss Glendorgal, that a happy life filled with love and duty is the only safeguard for Estrild against these morbid delusions that prey upon her mind?"

"I see it all, and I see also the difficulties you will have to encounter. You know you can always count on my help," she added.

He took her extended hand gratefully, but a shadow of pained thought still rested on his face. In very truth he felt the difficulties of his position more keenly than he cared to acknowledge; his narrow means and Estrild's wealth, and Mr. Vicat's power and enmity were all tangible obstacles stretching like a wall between him and his love. Besides these, there stood that shadowy barrier, strongest of all, which Estrild had built up in her superstition, and which already had parted them, though his attempt to break it down had nearly cost him his life.

"What was the verdict at the inquest?" he asked abruptly.

"You have not told me yet."

"I feared to vex you; it was the very one that Estrild dreaded. The jury returned a verdict of accidental death."

"There was no evidence to that effect!" cried Harold

hotly.

"Pardon me—the only evidence offered pointed to that alone. I grant it was but hearsay; the men who were with you in the boat when—when you brought Tristram away repeated the statement made by the officer on the *Alert*. You will remember he spoke distinctly of an accident."

"I remember it," said Harold gloomily.

"And, the Alert and her whole crew being lost, no other witnesses were forthcoming," resumed Pleasance, "so necessarily the verdict was rather vague. The jury found that Mr. Carbonellis met his death by a gunshot wound, the result of an accident on board the Alert; but how it occurred or by whose hand the shot was fired there was no evidence to show."

"Of course the superstitious jurymen rejoiced in their ver

dict," said Harold, in contemptuous anger. "They were glad to add another cloud to the Carbonellis gloom. Oh, I can understand all the wild talk of a credulous people, and how it has added to Estrild's distress and terror!"

"I confess it has done her harm; and in her mind the verdict adds weight to her fear and makes it reasonable; it is impossible to argue agains the conclusion she draws from it or against the proofs the facts she brings forward to justify her beliefs."

"Oh, if I could only have saved one life—one witness from that accursed ship!" cried Harold, clenching his hand in his passionate pain. "Miss Glendorgal, I will live yet to prove that Tristram Carbonellis was wickedly and wilfully slain, and his death was no accident."

"Do not say that," said Pleasance, in a trembling voice.
"Who could mean him harm?" He was a man greatly beloved."

Then, to Harold's surprise, she gave way suddenly, and bending forward with face hidden in her hands, she burst into tears.

A light fell upon him instantly, and he saw now what an effort it had cost her all through their interview to hold herself calm and yet talk of Tristram. For an instant he let his eyes rest pitifully on her bowed head; then he rose and silently left the room.

"So her life too is ruined!" he said to himself bitterly. "And this is what a Carbonellis can do, and deem it right! A lovely and loving woman left to wither in the wreck—and for what? A fantasy, a phantom with no reality in it, except the suffering it brings. I shall grapple with the thing and kill it."

He said this as he went slowly in search of Prior, conscious at the same time of a cloud of images rising in his own brain antagonistic to this resolve and to his reasonable belief in its possibility.

Tristram's dead face and Captain Armstrong's sad eyes, for that one dread instant as they met his before the wave covered them, seemed to float before his vision in silent protest.

Unknowing, in this phase of thought, whither his steps led him, he found himself in the library, and started to see before him the potrait of the Crusader with the dark pale face and passionless eyes of the stranger who had crossed the ferry with him, and ridden in advance of the coach on the night, now seemingly so far in the past, of his journey to Langarth, "The like was real enghost," he in it than and find ou standing ne

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steps led se before and pasrith him, semingly "The likeness between them is at least no dream, and the man was real enough; there is no mistaking flesh and blood for a ghost," he said half aloud. "But it is queer, and there is more in it than I can understand, but not more than I will fathom and find out," he added quite aloud as he turned and saw Prior standing near him.

"I wish you would, sir," said the old man earnestly. "The family have been troubled long enough. 'Tis time such things

should cease, and that man's spirit rest."

Harold was in no mood for laughter, yet a short and somewhat bitter laugh might have broken from his lips but for the lines of grief on the old man's face, which showed him how ill-timed it would appear to him. His master—the last heir of an ancient family—was dead, his young mistress was an exile, her house shut up in gloom; and he was left here in solitude to brood over the strange events that had stricken from it at one blow light, love, and life. No; truly Harold could not laugh at Prior's beliefs, for they were inextricably mingled with his sorrow and with the grief lying heavy at his own heart.

"I suppose now this sort of notion that the family is haunted —or hunted down to death—has been going on for a long while?"

he said.

"Oh, for hundreds of years, sir—ever since the first Carbonellis was found dead in the wood yonder, with a tree that had been left half felled lying across his chest!"

"But that was evidently a simple accident, Prior."

"But he called the woodman away," returned Prior, pointing to the picture; and the dog who had been watching his master flew at it when it was shown to him."

"That's a very doubtful story," said Harold, stooping to examine the painting; "for this portrait is certainly not more than two hundred years old, whereas the first Carbonellis—as you call him—must have lived in the time of the Crusades, if he was brother to this man!"

"I can't count back like that, sir," rejoined Prior, with a puzzled air; but I've heard say the first picture of this poor wronged man was in a panel somewheres in the old part of the house which was tore down, and afore it fell to pieces, the Carbonellis who lived then had it copied by a rare painter in London. There's a piece of the old panel at the back of the picture, sir."

Harold turned it round to the light on hearing this, and on

brushing away a thick coating of dust, he perceived that two pieces of oak pannelling, blackened by age, were let into the back of the picture. On one, amid the smearings and markings of time, there gradually grew visible a face more haggard and worn than that on the canvas, and yet the same. As Harold gazed on it, he was fain to acknowledge to himself that this worn and marred visage brought to his mind even more vividly than the other the pale set face of the strange man whose mad ride to Langarth had apparently made him a messenger of doom.

"I cannot deny the likeness," he said, with a half-sigh, as he drew back a little, the better to gaze at the dim blurred portrait. "And now in this light I see a shadowy resemblance to Tristram

himself. Yes, this is undoubtedly a Carbonellis!"

"We all know that, sir."

"I mean," resumed Harold, carrying on his thought "that likenesses descend in families. Is there no other branch of the same name—"

"No one, sir," interposed Prior eagerly. "It would be a whisht story for Miss Estrild if there was, for then she would lose Langarth."

"How?" asked Harold.

"Because, sir, they could only be descendants of the Crusader,

and he was the elder brother."

Harold set this remark aside in his mind to be thought over and inquired about at some future, happier time, when he and Estrild should be together. Meanwhile he scrutinised the picture again.

"What is this on the other longer bit of old panelling,

Prior ?"

"That's the Crusader hand—the hand that brings death to Langarth—so the folks hereabout say," rejoined Prior unwillingly. "Tis mere talk, sir—not worth telling about," he added, as he lifted the heavy painting to replace it against the wall.

"Stop a moment!" interposed Harold. "There is a hand certainly holding a scroll, and there are some words written on

it. I want to decipher them."

"You'll never do that, sir," said Prior uneasily. "No one will till the right day comes. Times out of mind, I have heerd say, learned men have come to Langarth at its master's bidding, and none could ever read what's writ there."

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With pocket-book and pencil in hand, Harold knelt on one knee, endeavouring to copy the irregular half-defaced characters on the panel, while Prior, with evident unwillingness, held the picture upright.

Pleasance entered while they were thus engaged, and stood for a moment silently near them. She was perfectly composed and calm, and her sweet voice had no tremor in it when she spoke at.

last.

"The characters are Arabic," she said.

"So I am just discovering," said Harold, "but I can make nothing of them."

"I was sartain of that," observed Prior. "And 'tis a heavy

piece of work to hold up, sir."
"Stay one instant longer! There is a word or two I can read

and copy."

He scratched them into his pocket-book, and then rose from his knee and showed the page to Pleasance.

"You see the word I have made out is 'Cumberland.' It seems to have no bearing either upon Palestine or Cornwall; nevertheless it may be a help to me one day, and then perhaps I shall make out the whole"

"I hope you'll never do that, sir, if 'twould ruin the one you love best!" said Prior, as he hurriedly set the portrait in its old place against the wall. "I wonder the Squire Corbonellis who had this painted ever saved they gashly bits of wood from the prison-picture!"

"The prison-picture?" repeated Harold.

"It was so called," answered Pleasance, "because, as the story goes, it was one copied from the wall of his prison by the Crusader, who on his unexpected return was seized by his brother and held in prison till his death."

"How did he get his paints?" asked Harold, with all the

scorn of common sense.

"Oh, we must not question these old legends too closely! But it is said that he brought his pigments from the East, and was allowed to use them. It is added that they were so firm in colour and so strong that the wall of the dungeon had to be pulled down in order to destroy the picture; it always worked through every wash laid over it. At last, at the dawn of better times, when the then master of Langarth had the dismal cell destroyed, a travelled priest from Italy copied the prison-picture

on an oak panel; that in its turn fell a prey to time, except the fragments you have examined, which perhaps were preserved to prove the authenticity of the likeness, and also maybe because the painter could not copy the characters you have endeavoured te decipher. You perceive that in the painting of the seventeenth century the scroll is left out?"

"Ah, the Carbonellis of that day were afraid of what it tells," said Prior, "so they wouldn't have it put in the new

picture!"

"The London painter declined to tackle Arabic, I expect," said Harold. "Nevertheless I wished he had been as learned as the priest; I might have read the cabalistic message then."

"It is supposed to contain a threat and prophecy of the doom that awaited the wrongful holders of Langarth. Tristram had a doggrel verse which is said to be a free translation of the words.

Perhaps Estrild may know it."

"I do not think I will ask her," returned Harold. Then, as he and Pleasance quitted the room together, he added, "I can scarcely imagine how, on the foundation of a mere legend, such a wild, mad belief in fatality has been built up, to the injury and saddening of so many human lives!"

"It is strange," said Pleasance, "and not more strange than

true."

"What—do you believe in the imprisoned Crusader and his curse, his prison-picture, and all the rest of it?" asked Harold.

with some impatience.

"I believe that tradition ever has a germ of truth in it," said Pleasance. "And I know the Carbonellises die by fatal accidents; and strip this fact as you will of all that is mystical, the dark rider remains a mystery still."

"I see you have Carbonellis blood in you," said Harold, not

thinking his words were cruel.

"Yes; and so has Estrild. You must try to remember it in all your dealings with her."

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CHAPTER XX.

Estrild's journey from Cornwall to London was a prolonged torture. Shut up within the cramped space of a close carriage with Mr. and Mrs. Vicat, compelled to hear their wrangling voices breaking in upon her troubled thoughts, forced to bear the odious contiguity of a man whose touch, whose tones, whose whole individuality was repulsive to her, and obliged at times to suffer his civilities and hypocritical solicitude for her comfort, her nerves were rasped into fierce agony, and at last on reaching Salisbury, they broke down, and she was seized with a strong hysterical attack. This hindered her journey for some days, and it had the happy effect of ridding her of Mr. Vicat's presence. Growing impatient and angry at the delay, he hired a post-chaise on his own account, and left his wife to come on later with Estrild in the carriage.

"Mind, if that young Irish fortune-hunter follows us, I look to you to prevent an interview between him and my niece," he

said to his wife on parting.

"How can he follow us if he is drowned, as you have been continually reiterating all along the road?" asked Mrs. Vicat.

"He is no more drowned than I am," snarled her husband, with vicious emphasis. "Haven't you seen that the girl has taken no notice of my assertions? She has had secret information of his safety for certain."

"I am glad of it," said Mrs. Vicat.

"It is a pity for him that your gladness is of no importance either to him or to me," sneered Mr. Vicat, as, buttoning himself up in a many-caped great-coat, he betook himself to his chaise, which presently rumbled off, leaving a pleasant echo in his wife's

ears which spoke of a few days of peace.

His departure was an instant relief to Estrild; the tenison of her nerves ceased, and she rallied from the moment that the incubus of his presence was lifted from her mind. In very truth, in the present state of her nerves, weakened by grief and terror, she had been unable to endure the antagonism which existed between her nature and his, and which chased through every vein, rousing her into constant battle. Relieved from the fire of this warfare, peace grew about her again and soothed her into the calm sleep which for so long had fled from her over-excited brain.

"She is better—much better," said the dapper little doctor who attended her, to Mrs. Vicat; "and you can take her for a walk to-morrow. Let her see the cathredral and be interested in it if she can; and, above all, don't let her be worried about anything. She has had some great trouble, you tell me—well, don't let her have any little ones if you can help it. She is doing very well now. I only wish my other patient was getting on as nicely."

"Have you another patient in the hotel, doctor?" asked Mrs. Vicat, with a dull curiosity.

"Yes; and he too has had a great trouble—an only son drowned, gone down in a ship which perished the other day with all her crew. Poor man, he is half mad with grief; nothing soothes him but music, and that I can't give him. Ah, there are many Sauls in this world, but few Davids? My dear lady, we doctors are obliged to praise drugs, but there are times when I feel inclined to cry with Macbeth, 'Throw physic to the dogs—I'll none on't!'"

"Macbeth!" repeated Mrs. Vicat, pondering. "Oh, yes, I remember—that's Mr. Kemble! I saw him once, and was rather frightened. Mr. Vicat has not let me go to the place since."

The brisk little doctor stared at her for a few seconds, and a smile came into his eyes.

"Quite right not to go if you are frightened; there is no pleasure in fright. Ah, here comes the mail!" he cried, as the sound of a horn rang merrily in the street. "I wish it was bringing good news to my poor patient. Well, good-bye! I'll call again to-morrow."

He hurried off, and Mrs. Vicat went up to Estrild's room with vague ideas in her mind respecting Saul and Macbeth and the unknown sick man who wanted to give his physic to the dog.

"I wonder if you could sing to him, my dear," she said to Estrild, who was lying on a sofa not far from the window.

Being used now to Mrs. Vicat's ways, this question caused her no surprise; so she only said quietly—

"Of whom are you thinking, aunt?"

"Of Saul, my dear—I mean the poor gentleman who is ill here. He is always craving for music, the doctor says; and he throws his medicine to his dog."

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"Is he a little mad?" asked Estrild, with a slight fear springing into his eyes.

"No, my love-only trouble like yourself. His only son is

drowned—went down in some ship a little while ago."

"Was it the Alert?" cried Estrild, springing upright instantly. "Go directly—go at once, aunt, I entreat you—and find out for me if it was the Alert."

"My dear, I can't go into a strange man's room and ask—"

But here Mrs. Vicat stayed her speech, for Estrild, pale as death was gazing through the window with eyes brimful of sudden tears. In starting to her feet, the mail-coach, now standing in front of the hotel, had become visible to her, and she saw Harold just descending from the box seat. It was a surprise as full of pain as of joy. She had known he was safe by a sure word brought to her before she left Langarth, and she had schooled herself to leave without seeing him, deeming it best for both. And now he was here, close by—within reach of her eyes, her hand, her voice! One word spoken, and she could call him to her side, and sorrow and terror would be forgotten within the circle of his arm. Oh, to rush forward to the joy of his strong loving clasp, and full of that bliss, feel the earth once more light beneath her feet and the air warm and sunny about her! But it was not to be; the short-lived happiness would only make her lifelong woe the more bitter. Could the momentary joy appease the weary longings of the heart in the dull aching years to come? Oh, no, no; it would be but as a slow fire, wasting it!

"Harold, my love, my love, I will spare you this misery!" she cried inwardly, as, crouching low on the sofa, as if to hide from his gaze, she yet strained her eyes with fixed yearning upon

the window.

"What is there out there to alarm you?" cried Mrs. Vicat. "The mail is only changing horses, and the passengers have alighted to dine. Why are you frightened?"

"I am not frightened—I am not ill," said the girl hurriedly. "How long does the coach wait here? Can you tell me that?"

"Why, just half an hour, my dear! And short enough time

too for the passengers to bolt their dinner in!"

Thirty minutes of agony! How should she bear it? Thirty minutes to be within the reach of his voice, within the touch of his warm hand, and yet to refuse both—thirty minutes of great possibilities of intense happiness, and then the black impossibility

of it, and the seeing him be driven away, departing out of life for ever!

Thirty minutes? Why, ten of them were gone already!—and dragging her watch from her belt, she fixed her eyes on it in a sort of terror; and then, falling upon her knees by the window, she leaned upon the sill and kept watch upon the coach, as though holding it back by the cords of her strained heart.

Meanwhile Harold, unconscious of her being so near him, had entered the dining-room, and, in compliment to the box seat, found a place reserved for him next the landlord—who, unlike landlords in general, was a thin nervous man with an anxious face.

"Yes, sir," he was saying to a passenger on his left hand, "I remember your travelling down on the night I lost my bay mare."

"Well, and have you recovered her and found the thief?"

"Oh, I've got the mare again! It was not a thief that took her—it was a gentleman who—who was very hurried, I suppose, since he took the mare on French leave. However, he paid well, so I've no cause to complain."

"And so there was no mystery about the business at all?"
The landlord did not appear to hear this question, but turned to Harold, who had eagerly addressed him.

"Since you were paid for the horse, you will of course know the name of the gentleman who rode her."

"No, I don't," said the landlord doggedly.
"But how did the money come to you?"

The landlord grew a little uneasy, and asked several people if they wanted gravy. This business over, Harold repeated his question in a lower voice.

"Well, as my wife says, it isn't of much use to ask questions over good gold. But certainly the money came in a queer way. I found a packet of guineas, sir, on the table early in the morning." He lowered his tone to a whisper in saying this, and glanced round him with a scared look.

"The horses are being put to, gentlemen," said the guard's voice at the door.

"The bay mare will be one of the team to-day, sir," continued the landlord. "She's all right now, but she was terribly done up, to be sure, when she came back to me from the Yeovil stable where that queer rider left her."

"And where he took another horse, I suppose?" observed the

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gentleman on the left. "It is very odd, but this is the third or fourth time in my journey up frem Exeter that I have heard of this eccentric traveller and the queer way in which he choses to pay for his misdeeds."

"The same thing has happened to me," said Harold, "in my long journey from Cornwall; but this is the first time I have heard of the money being found on a table. In the other case it was in the pocket of the saddle, or some little child brought it, who would give but a very imperfect account of the person from who he received it."

"The coach waits, gentleman! The inside passengers are already seated!" said an ostler, appearing suddenly at the door.

The two or three men who had remained at the table rose instantly and rushed off to secure their seats. Harold alone lingered. A strange desire had seized upon him to renounce his place, give up his journey, and remain where he was. A strong feeling had rushed upon him that he should find here a solution to the mystery that was wrecking his life. There was a voice within him calling upon him to stay, or to repent for years if he would not listen; there was an indefinable longing at his heart to remain. The electricity of Estrild's near presence was around him, holding his feet by invisible chains.

For an instant or two he stood irresolute, instinct and reason waging a fierce war within him. The guard's horn sounded a note of warning, the ostler's voice called upon him in hurried accent to be quick, the landlord's hand urged him gently towards the door. All these were the coarse, visible audible adjuncts of reason; and they prevailed over the subtler, truer sense which had neither hand nor voice, and which yet protested in every nerve, as with unwilling feet he pushed his way through the little crowd at the inn door and mounted hurriedly to his seat.

The guard drew a sounding blast from his horn, the coachman held his whip aloft with a flourish, the team dashed off, and his Majesty's mail had started on the road to London.

Then a window was dashed open and a wild cry went out to the unheeding wind.

"Harold—Harold! Oh, my God, he is gone! It is too late!"

The despairing cry rang through Mrs. Vicat's kind heart and dull brain. She lifted Estrild from the floor, to which she had fallen, and laid her on the sofa.

"Was Mr. Olver on the coach, my dear? Well, well, cheer up—it is all for the best that he is gone! I could not have let you see him, you know, because Mr. Vicat gave me strict orders that you were not to meet; and I should not have dared disobey him. I am sure it was very good of you, my love, to avoid an interview with Mr. Olver for my sake. I shall not forget it." And Mrs. Vicat stooped and kissed the pale cheek of the girl, whose anguish, being past the relief of words, was borne in silence.

So perhaps this was the light in which Harold would regard her conduct! He would be told that she had sacrificed him in obedience to Mr. Vicat's commands, and in consideration of his wife's dull peace. Oh, it was bitter! And she had done foolishly in letting him go without a word! Might they not even speak to each other? Might they not love a little longer before parting for ever? And turning her face from the light, Estrild wept bitter and remorseful tears.

CHAPTER XXI.

Postage in those times was so heavy that it was looked on as a meritorious act to cheat the Post-Office in any possible way. Travellers carried bundles of letters in their pockets or portmanteaus to distant friends, and members of Parliament availed themselves to the full extent of the privileges of franking which then prevailed. It was therefore under quite a conscientous sense of duty that Harold, during the few hours of his stay in Cornwall, abstained from posting the letters delivered to him by the officer from the Atalanta, preferring in all kindness to take them with him to London, and thus spare the receivers their expensive postage. They nearly all bore London addresses; and Harold thought it would not cost him much trouble to deliver some himself, and intrust the others to the twopenny post, as that cheaper metropolitan branch was then named.

Looking them over late on the evening of his arrival at his chambers, he was shocked to find, on untying the string which bound the bundle together, that one of them was addressed to Mrs. Armstrong. He could not imagine how he had overlooked this letter on first examining them; and he stood now with it in

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l at his g which essed to erlooked ith it in his hand, wondering if it would be possible to deliver it to her that night. A flush of painful vexation rose on his face as he reflected on the time lost and felt that he had acted wrongly in not at once forwarding by mail a letter so momentous. Perhaps it broke gently to her the tidings of the wreck of her husband's ship, with the dire result of his death and loss of all the crew; now in all likelihood the blow had fallen on her roughly in the words of some newspaper paragraph.

Hot with a sort of angry grief at this thought, Harold thrust on his hat, caught up all the remaining letters, and ran into the

street in search of a coach.

"Stop at the first post-office!" he cried to the driver of the

lumbering machine into which he got hastily.

"I'll not wait till to-morrow to deliver these!" he said to himself, as he posted every letter except the one to Mrs. Armstrong, thus in the revulsion of his feeling gladly relieving himself of his postal responsibility.

At Mrs. Armstrong's, on asking for her, he was told that she was ill, stricken down by the dreadful news that had reached

her.

"I have a letter for her," said Harold, hesitating and sorrowful. "Is there no one I can see to whom I can explain how it reached my hands?"

Yes; the servant thought he could see Miss Armstrong.

So he entered and waited in the half-lighted dining-room, where a fire, just dying out, only added to the gloom which seemed to pervade the house.

"I hear you have a letter for my mother?" said a young voice; and, turning quickly, Harold saw a child-girl of apparently about thirteen, whose eyes and face were disfigured by weeping.

Harold told his story rapidly, relating how the fact of his being kept ten days at sea had delayed the delivery of the letter. He spoke only of his meeting with the Atalanta, naturally abstaining from any mention of Captain Armstrong or his own chase of the Alert or subsequent search in the French ports for the man whom he imagined had been landed before the wrecking of his ship.

The girl listened intently, and then begged him to wait till she had carried the letter to her mother, and could return to him

with any message she might have to give him.

Left alone, Harold sank into a chair by the fire, while his

thoughts naturally recurred to the terrible scene of the wreck of the Alert and the death of the man by whose hearth he was now sitting. Like a vision the whole scene rose before him, till the room seemed filled with the surge of the sea, and Captain Armstrong's face rose from out its heaving darkness.

"I wish I had not come to this house!" Harold said within himself. "It was an officious, foolish, impulsive act! Everything has gone wrong with me since I left Salisbury! I am out of tune. I want sleep, I suppose. Two nights on the top of a

coach unstring a man's nerves."

The door opened, a light flashed inwards, and Harold started, for Captain Armstrong's face was indeed present, looking down on him from the wall. He gazed at the portrait for an instant with feelings of strange irritation.

"Would to Heaven the man were alive!" he thought. "I would grapple with him this instant, and tear the secret of Tris-

tram's death from his throat."

"My mother wishes earnestly to see you," said Miss Armstrong.

"Will you kindly follow?"

Her voice had broken in upon his reverie like the jar of a discord, and again he felt that all his feelings were at war with the position in which he had placed himself.

"I trust Mrs. Armstrong will excuse me," he said constrainedly. "As a stranger, I would rather not intrude on her."

"Oh, don't call yourself a stranger!" cried the young girl, seizing his hand suddenly and pressing it against her lips. "We know the truth now; you nearly lost your life in striving to save my father's!"

Harold's heart gave a great bound—it was full of repulsion and angry—and he flushed hotly at the thought of receiving thanks for his endeavour to save a man whom secretly he was hating and condemning for shielding an assassin. But the impossibility of letting his feelings appear to the man's wife and daughter, and the fear of seeming hard and ungracious to them in their great grief forced him to accept the situation silently.

"You will come to mamma?" continued the girl in her sweet entreating voice; and Harold yielded to the prayer.

In the glare of light in the hall, where he saw her face distinctly, he could not help noting a great change in it from its first aspect of dead dull grief. Her eyes were now bright and shining, her celectric to Dimly change, He pale lady

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ce dists first shining, her cheeks flushed—she seemed transfigured as by some electric touch of hope and life.

Dimly wondering if gratitude to him could be the cause of this change, Harold followed her up the staircase to a room where a

pale lady rose from an arm-chair to receive him.

She caught both his hand in hers and held them tightly, but could not utter a word Her lips moved, but only to quiver with unspoken pain; anguish was written in every line of her deadly white face. Inexpressibly touched, Harold held her hands still when she would have relinquished his—otherwise she would have fallen—and, gently replacing her in her chair, he waited in silence till she could speak.

"You have bound Mary and me to you for ever," she said at last brokenly. "It is not your fault that he is not alive himself

to thank you. I know you nearly died to save him."

"I desire no thanks," returned Harold hurriedly. willingly have given half my life to save any one on board the Alert. I had reasons—

But here he stopped, for Mary Armstrong's eyes met his, and the expression in them startled him not only into silence, but into the consciousness that she knew his thought. A burning colour covered her face as she withdrew her eyes, but not before they had uttered a prayer to which he listened.

"She knows something of which her mother is ignorant," he said to himself. "Can it be the fact of Tristram's death and the way in which he met it?" No; that last is impossible, for the Alert was at sea from the hour he was slain till it went down in-

to the deep with its secret untold." "Ah, do not search for reasons why I should not feel grateful!" said Mrs. Armstrong, as her voice grew firmer. "It soothes me to think there was a good brave man willing to risk his life for a man as brave and as good as himself."

"His only reason is that he hates thanks—like all men that do a worthy deed," said Mary Armstrong abruptly. dear mother, tell Mr. Olver why you wished to see him."

For an instant Harold felt surprised at her knowledge of his name, then he remembered that he had given his card to the servant, and his mind dwelt only on the adroitness of her speech. She had turned the current of her mother's thoughts and given a reason for his own words which drew her mind safely away from the truth which, in his haste, he had half uttered.

"My dear, you are right," said Mrs. Armstrong to her daughter; "Mr. Olver knows what I feel, and I will not trouble him with further words. In the hurried letter written to me on board the Atalanta," she continued, turning to Harold, "I am told that many letters were entrusted to your care. One of them is addressed to a dear friend of mine—in fact, a cousin. Will you then let me look over them and take charge of that one? I have urgent reasons for wishing to give him that letter myself and break the news to him which it contains."

"I am truly sorry I cannot oblige you," Harold answered, with a vexed air. "I no longer have the letters in my possession.

I posted them all on my way hither."

"Oh, what a pity!" exclaimed Mrs. Armstrong, clasping her hands together, as her face flushed painfully. "Can nothing be done now to get the letter back?"

Harold did not reply to this unreasoning question; it added another jar to his unstrung nerves; he was out of sympathy with

his situation, and every note struck was a discord.

"Of course I was wrong there too," he said to himself, with exasperation. "I should have let the letters wait. A day's delay could be of no consequence, with the loss of the Alert known all over the kingdom."

"Nothing can be done, mother; we must have patience and hope for the best." Mary leaned over her mother's chair in saying this, and spoke so low that her voice sank almost to a

whisper.

And now Harold rose to go, feeling a sudden accession to the strength of the discordance within him, and longing to escape from the voices and the hands that played so ill upon his nerves.

"I wish I could have obliged you," he said hurriedly. "I am sorry for my haste, since by soms means it increases your trouble. But I assure you, in posting the letters just now, my only feeling was regret for not having discharged that duty the moment I landed in Carnwall."

Mrs. Armstrong gazed up at him with face grown very pale now that the fiush was gone, and she took his outstretched hand with tears in her sad eyes and clasped it again tightly with both hers.

"You are right—quite right! All you have done is right and true and brave. I know you do not like thanks—I will not weary you with them; but yours were the last eyes that looked

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ight and will not looked on my husband's living face, yours were the hands stretched out in deadly peril to yourself to save him. I cannot forget this-I can never forget it! If ever in the time to come you should need a friend true as a mother, promise me that you will think of me and come to me."

"I trust I will never trouble you with any grief of mine," Harold answered; "but if ever a time should come in which I

feel you can help me, I will not forget your wish."

While her small feverish hands were clinging to his and her grief-worn eyes were fixed appealingly on him, he could not have answered in any other way, yet his promise rubbed against the grain of his mind, and he turned away with soreness at his heart.

"You will be faithful to your word, I know," said Mrs Armstrong, as she relinquished his hands. "I leave Londen to-mor-

row; but on my return I hope we shall meet again."

"I hope not," was the echo in Harold's mind as he descended the stairs, not perceiving that Mary Armstrong had preceded him till he saw her standing at the door of the dining-room.

She beckoned to him to enter, and then closed the door with a quick light hand.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Mr. Olver, you are vexed with me-you are angry with us all, even with my poor dead father," said Mary Armstrong, in accent that touched both his heart and conscience.

" I assure you," he began hurriedly.

"Oh, do sit down and listen to me!" she interposed, leading him submissively to a seat. "I know what you think; you imagine that he is to blame for an accident in which he had no share, but which, as surely as we two are alive to speak of it, was the real cause of his own death."

"I know you speak truly there," returned Harold, in a pained voice. "I am aware that he perished in his attempt to save a guilty person from justice."

"No, no-not guilty!" she cried, with eager passion. innocent as you or I of that unhappy death!"

"Have you any reason for your words?" asked Harold; and, unconsciously to himself, his tone grew hard.

The girl shrank back at this, resting one hand on the table

for support.

"Reasons? Oh, a thousand; but I cannot tell them to you! They are in my heart and in my veins. You must know and feel all I know to understand them. One reason I can give you —my father was not the man to shield an assassin; he was too honest, too brave to risk a duty, however painful. There is his face looking down on us;" and she flung out her hand with sudden energy towards his portrait. "Look at it, and say if it is not the face of a true gentleman!"

"Doubtless a gentleman and a brave man," returned Harold soothingly to the excited girl, "but a mistaken one. And perhaps, Miss Armstrong, it is well for him and for me that the slayer of my friend is gone down into the depths of the sea, for, if he had escaped drowning, he should never have escaped my hand. I would have hunted him down if he took refuge in the uttermost

parts of the earth."

The moment he had spoken Harold felt sorry for his vehemence before a girl who was a mere child, and her terror-stricken eyes as she gazed into his face haunted him for many a day after-

wards in memory.

"Pray excuse me!" he said, with eagerness. "I am wrong to trouble you with my indignation at such a time as this. But you cannot dream of all the dire consequences that have arisen for myself and others from my friend's cruel death."

Mary Armstrong pressed her dry lips together, as if forcing

them to cease quivering before she began to speak.

"I know he has a sister. I hope she will live long and be happy."

"How can you know anything of Miss Carbonellis?" asked

Harold, almost fiercely.

"I wanted to tell you that we had heard of her—I wanted to tell you how we came to know that you nearly lost your life in striving to rescue my father. Oh, we have heard all that you did! I will not be angry with you though you are so angry with me. My mother had a letter from an officer this morning; he told us all the story. He heard it from Daniel Pascoe."

"And how came he to write to you?" Harold asked in some

amazement.

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"I will tell you. When the report reached us that the Alert was wrecked, we would not believe it. At the Admiralty nothing was known, so mother wrote to the Coastguard-station at Langarth, and the officer there replied that the report was too true, and he enclosed an account of the wreck related by a man who was an eye-witness of it. That man was Daniel Pascoe."

"It was wrong of Daniel to mention me," observed Harold.

"Oh, no—he knew we should be thankful to him! He feld we should like to hear all the details, even though they wrung our hearts; and, above everything, it was fair and right, the officer said, that we should hear of your gallant deed."

Harold for a moment kept a vexed silence, while his gaze rested curiously on the slight girl whose demeanor showed so

strange a mixture of timidity and determination.

"You can understand now," she continued, "why my mother wished to see you on knowing your name. And she was anxious to ask about the letters too," she added, with a quick breath.

"Why have you troubled yourself to explain all this?" asked Harold. "I shall hear it later from Daniel, when no doubt he

will apologise to me for his officiousness."

"Now you are angry with me too! Oh, what can I do to make you sorry for us—to make you hate us a little less?" cried this strange girl, her large grey eyes dilating as with fear, and her white face flushing a pale pink.

"Miss Armstrong," exclaimed Harold, "you really have no right to suppose me so full of ill-feeling towards you!"

"No," she answered pitifully. "Oh, Mr. Olver, I am so afraid of your hatred!"

"You have nothing to fear from it, even if it existed," said Harold, half smiling. "I am not likely to make myself a formidable enemy to you, Miss Armstrong;" and he looked at the pale, delicate, slight child, with her big imploring eyes, much with the some look he might have for a butterfly or a small bird in his grasp.

"Oh, but I want you so much to like me, and to be sorry for my mother; and I can feel you dislike us!" she said, clasping

her hands in piteous entreaty.

"Well, and if I did," said Harold, smiling outright now, "surely it would not hurt you very much?"

"Not hurt me? Why, it might kill me!" said the girl

"If you hated me, you would not mind doing things earnestly. that kill one."

"Take my assurance, then, that I don't hate you; and I should as soon think of harming a fly as of hurting a child like you."

"But I am not a child," she said, with a sudden vivid blush;

"I am nearly seventeen."

Harold looked at her in surprise. Nearly seventeen, that small frail creature, who in his eyes scarcely seemed more than twelve! He could not believe her, and he smiled into her great gray eyes incredulously.

"You are a very young seventeen," he said. "Neverthless I will take your word for the fact, and hope you will take mine that I mean you no harm in the world. Are you satisfied?"

"No, not quite," she said, drawing back from his outstretched "I wish you would say you like me, and will think of me sometimes when you are far away, and say to yourself, 'I won't do this,' or 'I can't do that,' 'because it would kill that poor little Mary Armstrong."

"I could not possibly say all that," returned Harold gravely, "unless you set upon my knee while I was making my little

speech."

She looked up at him with the strangest light in her great pathetic eyes. Was it reproach, was it the sheen of tears, or was it mere childishness that he saw in them? At all events she came towards him, where he sat in an arm-chair by the dead fire. and, with simplest bravest frankness, put her small thin hand in his.

"I will sit upon your knee," she said, "if you will like me better for it, and if you will say those words and remember them when the sea rolls between us, when the memory of them will keep you from doing some cruel thing that would hurt me."

"So you will persist in thinking I am an ogre!" returned Harold, in an amused tone. "Hurt you, child? It would be impossible; no man could hurt you. Why, the shadow of a blow would crush you, a cruel word would break you down!"

He said this as he put one arm around her and set her upon his knee. He still held her hand; it felt like a tiny soft bird in his grasp—a bird with a trembling heart, palpitating in every vein.

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be safe. Now do you like me better? 'And will you promise me all I asked?"

She said this in an eager childish way and with her eyes so fixed on his that for a moment they held Harold's as by chains of vivid light.

"Not yet," he said. "I think you ought to give me a kiss

first."

She took this suggestion as a child of six years old would, with

the utmost calm gravity.

"I would rather not, thank you," she said; "but, if you insist—if you will not give me your promise without it——" And, heaving a little sigh, she looked at him with such a p teous expression on her small white face that Harold could not forbear smiling.

"I will excuse you the kiss," he answered; "and I promise you that, if seas and mountains and all the dreary plains of the earth stretch between us, I will still remember little Mary Armstrong, and never put even the shadow of my finger to any act or

deed that could do her harm."

A gleam of intense happiness shot into the big gray eyes, still so entreatingly holding his in their gaze, and all her face grew glorified with joy.

"I am content now, and I will never be afraid of you any more," she said, putting her small soft arm around his neck with the unconscious confidence of a bird.

"So you confess you have been afraid of me, and the hatred was on your side, not mine?"

"No, no, not hatred," she cried eagerly; "and you must not think it was dislike that made me refuse to kiss you, for I like you very much—I do indeed."

"Then what was it?" asked Harold; and involuntarily his arm pressed her more tightly, and, bending forward his face touched hers.

She drew back instantly with a surprised look in her eyes, but there was no blush on her cheek or quaver in her voice.

"It was because I promised before the Alert sailed that I would not kiss any man."

"Your father was very wise to make you give such a promise; but sitting on a man's knee is worse than kissing," said Harold, with assumed gravity.

"Is it?" she asked anxiously. "Then let me go please, will

you?"—and, starting up, she moved to a little distance timidly, as if deprecating his anger.

"Now you are disliking me," said Harold, detaining her with

one hand.

"No, no; I have said the truth. I like you very much, and I can understand that the lady you love must love you very

dearly."

"The lady I love!"—and the laughter in Harold's eyes changed to pure amazement. "That's Daniel's officiousness again, I presume. I perceived by what you said to me respecting the accident—so called—on board the Alert that he had mentioned the sad death of my friend, but I did not suppose——"

"Oh, don't be angry! He meant no harm," interposed Mary Armstrong, with that intensity again in her voice which made it so pathetic. "And we are so thankful to him; but for him we

should have known nothing of what you had done?"

"Did he mention, too, why I hired his boat, and why I was at sea?" asked Harold, resuming somewhat of his old hard tone towards her.

Her face flushed now, and her lips trembled.

"I thought you would not be unkind again," she said piteously. "You were so good to me only a minute ago!"

"I am really not unkind; but I should like an answer to my

question," said Harold.

"And you won't hate me if I say 'Yes'?" she answered, clasping both her hands together.

"Certainly not. How can you help what Daniel Pascoe chose

to say ?"

"Then yes; he said you went in pursuit of my father's ship."

"And did he tell for what purpose?"

"Yes." Her voice was so faint and low that he scarcely caught the word, but he saw that she was deadly pale, and her eyes, dilated with terror, looked past him, as if beholding some appalling sight.

"There is nothing here to alarm you," he said soothingly.

"And I am sorry Daniel has given a history which can only

distress you."

"I have not told my mother. I am bearing it all myself," she

said, letting her clasped hands fall with a shiver.

"By yourself!" exclaimed Harold pityfully. "Then this is the meaning of your imploring look when I was about to speak any ma

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to your mother of my reason for willingly risking my life to save any man from the Alert?"

"Yes; I thought you understood that; and my mother must

never know anything of this story."

"I shall not tell her," said Harold. "But perhaps she saw an account of the inquest in the papers, if Cornish events travel so far."

"I kept the paper from her. The Alert was mentioned in it,

you know, with the rumour that she was lost."

Harold glanced at the girl with a renewed curiosity; the mixture of womanhood and childhood in her perplexed him—at one moment sitting on his knee like a mere baby, at another showing him that she had foresight and caution beyond the powers of many women.

"But it was not for that only that I burnt the papers and and have erased so much of the officer's letter," she continued. "It was to spare mother worse grief; she would think it so

wicked to-to kill your friend I mean."

"And was it not wicked?" asked Harold in amazement.

"No," she said determinedly. "An act that could not be helped is not wicked. You are stronger than I am, and, if you were to force me to do something that I hated and abhorred, it would be cruel to call me wicked for it."

"Perhaps it would; but I cannot imagine such a thing happening. And an accident—if it was an accident that took my

friend's life-would not occur in that shape."

She was silent, but beneath the pale shell-like clearness of her skin the blood mantled feverishly, and her eyes filled suddenly with tears.

"But it was no accident," continued Harold, breaking into vehemence again; "and it is well for the man who fired that cruel shot that he is drowned, for, if he lived——"

"Would you kill him?" she exclaimed.

"We don't kill criminals," said Harold. "We hand them

over to justice."

"Which kills more slowly and cruelly," said the girl, in a bitter tone. "Oh, Mr. Olver, I wish you had more merciful thoughts! Surely to believe what my father told you would be a happier feeling!"

"Not for me," interrupted Harold impatiently. "To believe in such accidents would destroy every hope of happiness that I

possess. There, there, child," he added quickly, as if pitying the grief and whiteness of her looks—"I cannot explain to you what I mean. It is a matter of feeling, not of reason or of argument."

"I understand you," she said slowly; "and my belief, if true, destroys you, and your belief, if proved, would kill me. Oh, we must be enemies—we must hate each other—you will not keep

your promise!"

"My dear child, I assure you I will keep it," said Harold soothingly, as with gently force he took down her hands from the small white face they covered. "And I make you a new promise—if ever you and I should come into antagonism through this strange affair, then I will respect your father's memory. I will not throw a shadow over his name. Now are you comforted?"

"A little; but I like your first promise best—that, happen what may, you will remember little Mary Armstrong and never do her harm."

"Then take my first promise again," said Harold, holding her within the ring of his arm, and feeling the beating of a great child-heart against his side."

"Write it down for me," she pleaded; "and I will put the slip of paper into my locket with my father's portrait and wear

it always."

"You are a strange child," said Harold. "I think when you grow up you will be a dangerous little woman. You will get

your own way with any man."

She saw that this meant yielding; so in a moment pen, ink, and paper were before him, and his own words were dictated to him in a soft sweet voice, and with a clear memory that surprised and amused him.

She blotted the paper, deliberately folded and placed it in her

locket, and then held out both her hands to Harold.

"Let us say good-bye while we are friends. If it were not for my promise, I would kiss you a good-bye—I would indeed; but will you take this instead, and as a remembrance of me?"—it was the pen with which he had written, a gold one, prettily embellished with turquois; and, closing it, she placed it in his hand.

"I cannot take this," said Harold hesitatingly.

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give it away. If I kept it, I should never use it again; it is sacred—it is dedicated to you."

"Then it may as well be mine outright," returned Harold gaily; "and I will take great care of it for your sake. Good-bye, little Mary!"

He held both her tiny hands in one of his, and looked at her with odd feelings stirring in his veins. She was such a queer mixture of child and woman that his thoughts of her were continually on the swing, and as they swayed so he treated her. At that moment he had a quick desire to treat her as a little child—catch her up in his arms to the level of his lips, kiss her, and set her down again. But, as his eyes fell upon the small wistful white face upturned to his in such calm gravity, the desire fled with something of the darkness and swiftness of a bat in it, and, relinquishing her hands with an earnest pressure, he said one more good-bye and hurried away.

As he flung himself into the lumbering coach that he had kept waiting so long, he was conscious that his irritated feelings had been soothed away, and all the antagonism which had heated his veins as he entered the house which he was now leaving was calmed into peace.

"Well, she is a queer little thing," he observed to himself; "and—and I don't think I shall tell Estrild anything about her."

Then he gave Mr. Vicat's address to the coachman, and the old vehicle which he drove lumbered on through the dim streets till it reached that gentleman's door.

Harold looked at the house with an angry eye. The whole front was dark from attic to basement.

"Knock loudly!" he called to the coachman.

The fumbling old man obeyed; and, after many loud raps had waked up the echoes and brought a watchman out of his box, a sleepy servant came to the door.

"Master is gone to the play," she said sulkily, as if anxious at

once to get rid of such untimely visitors.

"I must apologise for calling so late," said Harold; "but I have come only to inquire for Miss Carbonellis. And will you kindly give her this note?"

"She ain't here," said the sleepy servant sharply.

"Not here!" exclaimed Harold, with consternation in his

voice. "Then will you ask Mrs. Vicat if she will kindly see me for a moment?"

"She ain't here neither," returned the aggrieved servant; and, saying this as if she felt herself insulted in being called up so rashly from her slumbers, she endeavored to close the door.

"Stay a moment!" exclaimed Harold, speaking to the palm of her hand with that universal language—coin. "Can you tell me where Mrs. Vicat is?"

"Yes; she is down at Salisbury with the young lady you h'ast for, who was took ill there."

Bang went the door, and Harold stood before the blank silent house with feelings within him that would have knocked it into dust could they only have expressed themselves in lightning.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"My dear lady, this relapse is a sad affair," said the Doctor, in grave tones. "Can you explain the cause of it?"

"Well, yes, Doctor. You see there was a gentleman on the

top of the coach who—who——"

"Was her friend or her lover perhaps," interpolated the Doctor, who had long discovered that Mrs. Vicat's slow mind ever needed a little prompting.

"Yes—but not a suitable person, Mr. Vicat says; and I am

bound of course to obey his wishes."

"Well, well-and what happened?" asked the Doctor impatiently.

"Oh, nothing! The gentleman went away on the coach after

he had eaten his dinner."

"He must be a strange kind of lover! Then he stayed scarcely a minute with her?"

"He never saw her, Doctor. Mr. Vicat had ordered me not

to let them meet."

"But I ordered you not to permit her to be troubled," resumed the Doctor; "and mine were the orders you were bound to obey. I won't answer for the consequences of this renewed agitation."

Much frightened, Mrs. Vicat burst into tears.

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resumound to renewed "I'll send for Mr. Vicat; I'll write to him directly," she said.

"You had better write for the gentleman who was on the coach, and desire him to come," said the Doctor. "His presence

will do her more good than Mr. Vicat's."

"I don't know where he lives," said Mrs. Vicat helplessly; "and, if I did, I couldn't dare write to him. Mr. Vicat would lead me such a life! Oh, dear, why didn't Estrild speak to that young man herself if she wanted to? I am sure I didn't prevent her; and it's cruel to put the blame of all this on me!"

This incoherent speech led to further explanations, and the Doctor now discovered that it was Estrild herself who had

allowed her lover to depart in ignorance of her presence.

"It was very good of her," resumed Mrs. Vicat, still sobbing. "It isn't often anybody gives up a pleasure to save me from trouble; it is a thing that never happens at home."

"And it did not happen here?" thought the Doctor, as, rising

he said he would go and see his patient again.

What words passed between him and Estrild he did not repeat to Mrs Vicat, but he posted a letter on his way home, addressed to Harold Olver.

"I wish I could send him a message instead on the lightning or the wind," he said to himself, little dreaming then of the

miracles the new century held.

We who live in these times cannot guess how many hearts were broken, how many eyes were closed in death, ere the slow-coming message or the bellated traveller could arrive to heal the sick heart or to strengthen the breaking thread of life.

"He'll get the letter to-morrow," said the Doctor. "And—let me see—there's a coach starts at five in the morning the next day. Yes; he'll come by that, and he'll be here in the evening."

But the days passed, and there was no Harold, and no reply

to the Doctor's letter.

"This lover must be a poor half-hearted fellow," said that gentleman to himself. "I am glad I did not tell the girl I had written to him. Now she must get well without him; he is not worth the grief she is wasting on him. Well, there is one comfort—Saul has got his music and his David, and so that queer patient of mine is doing me credit, although the recovery has no more to do with me and with medicine than the moon has with mad dogs!"

Yes, it was true—there was music in the hotel, and music of the best or ler. There was a harp played divinely, and a voice blending with it soothing and full as the murmur of the sea in summer.

Estrild often sat her door a little open to listen to it, and felt the influence of its exquisite melody sink into her very heart, lulling its hot cares to rest. Often too she found herself waiting and watching for the sweet sounds; and she would lie back on her sofa with a sigh of satisfaction when they fell upon her long-

ing ear like the healing touch of an angel's wing.

She was too ill, too weak to ask who the musician was; but Mrs. Vicat was curious, and questioned the landlady, eliciting only the fact that it was a friend of the invalid gentleman who played so well. And she was glad that some one had come to look after him, as at one time she had thought that he would die, and his corpse would be left on her hands to bury. And she did not know his name or where he came from, or who he was from Adam.

Sometimes on the staircase Mrs. Vicat met a small thin girl with pale face and gray prominent eyes, and hair so light that it might be called flaxen, but not golden, falling about her shoulders wildly, giving her an uncanny look; but it never struck her that this could be the musician; and yet it was so. From the touch of those small slight fingers sprang the music which soothed yexed spirits into peace.

At length one morning, instead of the sweet hymn which had risen daily to Heaven as a prayer for pardon and love, there was a blank silence—an emptiness in the air which made it cold

and dull.

Estrild missed the music, and asked eagerly why it had ceased.

"Did you care for it?" demanded the Doctor, to whom she had put the question.

"Yes it has cured my sick fancies. A little while ago I was

longing to die, as you know, but now I wish to live."

"My dear, young folk are very much in love with Death—old folk hate him. You are full of life and of all its possibilities of happiness; and when, in old age, these shall cease you will still find something to live for—something for which Death must be fought off to the last."

"That's a melancholy picture of old age, Doctor;" and Estrild

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smiled at it, as the young will when age is so far from them; then, with a sigh, she added, "I might tell you there is no possibility of happiness in my life but I will not say so. When that lovely music breathes around me, going up to Heaven in prayer or praise, I feel that joy and hope and peace do not depend only on gaining the earthly happiness we long for. If we lose it, there are still consolations and duties——" But her voice broke and her eyes filled suddenly with tears, which she dashed away hastily, saying, "You see I have need of David's harp at this very moment. When it ceases to sound, up rises my old spirit of discontent to tear and wound me. Set the door a little wider open, Doctor, and I shall hear it soon."

"No, my dear, you will not hear it any more. Saul and

David have both gone."

"Gone!" exclaimed Estrild. "But I have heard no carriage

depart this morning."

"That is because they left in the night—they all preferred it. Saul is a man who hates to be gazed at; the thought of a gaping crowd fills him with horrors. I believe he would live underground if he could."

"Then is he half mad?" asked Estrild shrinkingly.

"My dear, that is a wider question than you can dream of. He is not madder than you or I, but he has a different sort of madness from yours and mine—that's all."

"But I will not allow of any madness in myself," said Estrild.

"Ah, are you quite sure that you do not cherish any deeplyplanted illusion or passion which is a root of bitterness to you? Come now—a something which threatens happiness with both hands, and yet which you will not let go?"

Estrild was silent, but a flush spread over her cheeks, brightening them with a feverish rose. The Doctor saw that he had touched the wound; but he would not probe it, for his mind was set on a distant lover, who was careless, or faithless, or both; and time, he knew, was the only healer for such a grief.

"Now these people have interested me very much," he said cheerily; "and I have built up one of my pet thoeries on them. In my opinion each individual holds another and secret self within him; and sometimes that other self is a dangerous creature who has to be held down, and sometimes it is a shrinking and timid creature who hides and vanishes into the dimmest recesses

before the glance of a human eye. And this last kind does more evil than the first."

"Yes?" Estrild said.

"Yes; it is too much like a snake, you see, which glides off at the sound of a step, but which is not the less deadly because a coward."

"Dear me, Doctor Arnold, what horrible notions you have!" broke in Mrs. Vicat, who had been industriously reading a curt and dictatorial letter from her husband. "The idea of thinking that poor unhappy gentleman and his friend to be snakes is quite

dreadful."

"Wait till I say so, and I'll grant it dreadful," resumed the Doctor. "There are many kinds of dualties besides those I have named, and one among them is rare and peculiar. It is sensitive to occult influences, it hears voices we cannot hear, it sees visions invisible to coarser sense, and through these it can be acted on in a way past our small understanding. Now Saul, as I call him, has this rare temperament which stands on the border-land, and his second or dual self deals at times with things past human ken. Yet he is not mad—don't think so—but there are periods in his life when he has sore need of a David."

"And he has just gone through such a time?" said Estrild.

"Yes. When I was called in to see him, he was completely exhausted as by some great struggle, like a man who has fought through a stormy sea for his life. At length, when he had recovered strength a little, he told me that he had been called away from his home by the voice of his only son, declaring that he was in deadly peril. And he was on his way to Southampton, where he expected to meet his son's ship, when news reached him here that she had gone down with the loss of all hands."

"Was the ship the Alert?" cried Estrild.

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I have been longing to ask this question ever since I heard that his son was drowned, but somehow I have been afraid, and the words have hung back on my lips!"

"But why, my dear young lady?"

"I had not courage;" and Estrild clasped her hands tightly together. "It was on board that doomed ship that my brother lost his life. He was shot. Captain Armstrong—oh, the cruel, cruel man!—sent him home to me dead."

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tion her brother; he knew it was best for grief to find speech and tears.

"Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break."

The secret cause of her silence, which lay in the gloomy history of her family and in the fear which was the canker now lying at the root of her happiness, he could not guess at.

"You should not blame Captain Armstrong," he said sooth-

ingly, "for an accident he could not help."

"Now will you believe it?" asked Mrs. Vicat, with unwonted warmth—"she positively hates to hear it was an accident; she likes to think her brother was murdered."

"That would be a strange thought! A little unreasonable, is

it not, and not compatible with the facts?"

"No facts have come to light that contradict it. The Alert has carried her secret with her down to the depths. We only know that Captain Armstrong put to sea rather than face an inquiry—rather than give up his friend," Estrild answered bitterly, her voice touched with a slight tremble rising from the black wave of thought within her.

"Then you know what Shakespere says—'Beat not the bones of the dead.' Let the poor men rest whom the sea devoured. You must try to think better things of Captain Armstrong than to believe him an accomplice in an evil deed. If you had seen the grief of his wife and daughter, you would feel sure that only a good man could be so loved."

"And was not Tristram beloved?" cried Estrild passionately. "My grief is as great as theirs," she added jealously, "and with

deeper cause."

"My dear young lady, I did not mean to wound you. I thought you would sympathise with their sorrow. I thought too you were a little grateful to Miss Armstrong for her music."

"To Miss Armstrong?" Estrild exclaimed, as her face flushed

painfully.

"Yes; she was the David who came to the succour of my Saul."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Vicat. "So those two ladies were Mrs. and Miss Armstrong. And the landlady would not tell me their names, neither would the servants."

"They had orders to be silent. The fact is, Mrs. and Miss Armstrong feared Miss Carbonellis was not well enough to bear the mention of their names."

"So they knew mine?" said Estrild, in an accent which show-

ed she felt it as a wrong.

"They knew yours through me; and they asked for you continually. I never saw people so interested in a stranger as they were in you. In all your grief remember they had a full share; and Miss Armstrong played as much for you as for Saul. She used to ask me what music you liked best, and she was careful to place her harp near her open door, that you might hear it."

Tears rose in Estrild's eyes. There was something in all this that touched her to the heart, and yet, like the bitter drug that

heals, it was a hard cup to drink.

"So I am indebted to Miss Armstrong," she said—and her lip

quivered—" for a pleasure—"

"Say a medicine that has soothed and healed," interposed the Doctor, "and given by a hand that refused to be known. She made me promise on no account to tell you her name till she was gone."

Estrild was silent, but tears were in her eyes again.

"What an odd girl," observed Mrs. Vicat; "and she is very

odd to look at too!"

"She is a dear little David," said Doctor Arnold—"a rare combination of genius, simplicity, and shrewdness. She placed herself in sympathy with every human being she meets. Upon my word, I believe she could soothe Satan himself and quench his burning spirit with tears of pity."

"Don' frighten me!" said Mrs. Vicat. "I hate such notions as that. I can't bare any talk about Satan—it puts me so much

in mind of Mr. Vicat."

With this compliment to her husband, she went on knitting placidly. The Doctor regarded her with a half-smile, saying

quietly-

"One feels likenesses at times which are not visible to the eye. In fact, all the world is akin. There is a shadowy passing resemblance now and then in Miss Carbonellis to Saul, and I am like a hundred people whom I jostle, stare at, and never see again."

"And what is Saul's real name?" asked Mrs. Vicat. "The man has been as mysterious and close as a mummy ever since he

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came here. No one seems to know who he is or where he came from. When I asked the landlady, she knew nothing; when I asked the landlord, he grew scared, and hurried off, like the shadow of a wisp of straw."

"When I first attended Saul," said the Doctor, "he was too ill to tell his name; and he had no letters with him—no clue by which I could discover it, and let his friends know of his condition; so I had an anxious time. At length, when the delirium of his fever had passed and I could question him, I elicited the fact I have told you—that he was on his way to Southampton to see his son, in obedience to an imaginary voice; and, being met here by the news of his death, he was seized with fever, and wandered he knew not whither. During this time, he declared, a strange event occurred; he met a man who put a packet of guineas in his hand, and told him to lay them on a table in this hotel. He assured me that the man led him to this inn, saw his behest fulfilled, and then vanished, Now the strange part of the story is—Miss Carbonellis, you are feeling faint?"

"No, no, not at all! Go on, Doctor Arnold, I entreat you. I must hear the rest of this history."

"Not if you look so pale over it. I shall give you your bark and port-wine before I say another word.

This was done, Estrild swallowing the bitter mixture with a feverish impatience which she did her best to conceal.

"Now, Doctor Arnold," she said, "I am flourishing like a baytree, so don't keep my curiosity on the stretch."

"Well, I was about to say that this story, which I took for absolute delirium, proved to be true in so far as the guineas were concerned. The landlord assured me that he found the packet on the table. No one had seen it placed there; and the money was really owing for the hire of a horse which had been taken from its stall secretly by some unknown individual, and nearly ridden to death. This accounts for the man's scared looks, Mrs. Vicat; for nothing can shake his belief in the whole affair being of a ghostly order, and he can't bear to be questioned on it. Saul, on the contrary, answered every interrogation I put to him; but he never wavered from the original story—only I saw that his horror of the figure or man whom he obeyed was so great that I thought it wise to

drop the subject. Then, too, his grief for his son was dreadful;

it was an agony which I verily believe would have killed him but for the arrival of his friends. It was when I thought he was dying that I at last asked him, as a duty, to give me an address to which I could send word of his state. Then it was that he named Mrs. Armstrong; and I wrote to her at once. And, in spite of her own mental distress, she responded to my letter by coming here. That was good of her, you must confess, for she was ill and weak herself through her great sorrow."

"No doubt it was good of her," said Estrild grudgingly; "but

perhaps the gentleman is her brother."

"Oh, no—only quite a distant connection, she told me!"

"Well, but why don't you give us the man's name?" persisted Mrs. Vicat. "He is still as nameless as a mummy to me, and just as shrouded up, for I never once caught a glimpse of him."

"Oh, his name is as uncommon as his nature!" said the Doctor, laughing. "He is called Irien—Andrew Irien. He gave me his name when I wrote to Mrs. Armstrong. He had made up his mind then to die; and he said she would know what to do at his death, and her daughter was his heiress now his son was gone."

"Poor man, it is hard for him to have to give his wealth, if

he is rich, to that queer little girl," remarked Mrs. Vicat.

"Queer little girl," repeated Doctor Arnold. "Why, she deserves all his money, even if he is a Crœsus, for she saved his life! He rallied wonderfully from the day of her arrival. I saw the light of hope and life in his eyes the instant that I looked at him after their first interiew. And then her music completed his cure. She played indeed like David before Saul."

"Well, I don't admire her as much as you do," observed Mrs. Vicat, clicking her knitting-needles together snappishly. "Estrild, you are looking like your own ghost; we have talked too

much."

At the strong hint the chatty Doctor rose to leave, but Estrild,

when she took his hand, detained him.

"I want to ask you," she said, hesitating, and then by an effort speaking calmly, "if—if this strange patient of yours described to you the man or ghost whom he asserted he saw, who gave him the packet of money?"

"Now that is the very question little Mary Armstrong pestered me with so often," cried Doctor Arnold; "and I was obliged to answer her as I must you, with a negative. He gave me no

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"That is answer enough for me," said Estrild, holding herself bravely, though her heart was beating like the tolling of a bell.

"Well, I wish I could tell you more; but the Armstrongs begged me not to mention the matter again to Saul, and I never did. He evidently had a great horror of the subject. He would not talk of his son either. And I understood from Mrs. Armstrong that this was because there had been a quarrel between them, and it was greatly his fault that the lad had gone to sea—in fact, he had run away from home, so there was remorse, you perceive, in the father's grief."

"And Saul, as you call him, is gone home now, I suppose?" observed Mrs. Vicat, whose curiosity had been greatly stirred by

these fellow-guests of hers at the inn.

"I really cannot say. I rather think they are all gone to London."

"Do you know where Mr. Irien's house is?" asked Estrild.

"Let me see," said the Doctor, reflecting—"I think it is in Cumberland. 'Yes; and his place is called Trame."

"Oh, then he is not quite so mysterious as I imagined!" remarked Mrs. Vicat, who, when away from her husband, liked to indulge herself with the sound of her own voice. "Really I believe that witch-like girl is the deeper mystery of the two."

"If a witch, then a lovely and beneficent white witch," return-

ed the Doctor gallantly.

"Will you kindly give me Mrs. Armstrong's address in Lon-

don?" said Estrild.

"Oh, certa nly!" he answered; and, taking one of his own cards from their case, he wrote it rapidly on the back. "I am sure they will be pleased if you call on them. Your name had an attraction for them; and they were full of gratitude towards some friend of yours who had bravely risked his life in a vain but noble attempt to rescue Captain Armstrong."

"Were they?"—and Estrild spoke drily. "I wonder how

they heard of that."

"Oh, I can't say! Well, good-bye; I have stayed much too long. That comes of my foolish liking for Saul and David; when I begin talking of them, I loose all sense of time."

"Saul and David!" repeated Mrs. Vicat, with angry emphasis, as the door closed on him. "A half-crazy man and a chit of a

child! It's my belief his mind is full of that girl; and it's my belief too that she flirts with any creature that doesn't wear petticoats."

"Aunt, have you time to write a letter before the mail leaves?"

"Yes, my dear, if it is a short one."

"Then write to Mr. Vicat and tell him that I am well enough to travel, and that we shall both be in London on the day-after to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Harold drove back to his room with thoughts like tempest-tost and rolling clouds—now showing a gleam of light, now covering all things in darkness. At length, through the fierce rage and vexation of his mind, there broke the resolve to travel down to Salisbury by the first coach that started in the morning. This determination somewhat calmed him, though his heart still beat hotly at the remembrance that he had been close to Estrild and had not seen her; and he still raged against himself for having quitted Salisbury in blindness, and in resistance to the feeling which urged him to stay.

"If Estrild hears that I was on the coach, what will she say? Will she think I was aware of her presence, and yet would not see her out of sheer cowardice, because I cannot relieve her distracted mind from a single fear? No; surely, warped though all her thoughts are in that one gloomy direction, she will not do me such an injustice. And in a few hours I thall see her, and set all things right."

This was his thought, as, impatiently fumbling with his key at the door, he at length opened it, and found the passage in black darkness, and filled with the smoke of an oil-lamp which had declined to burn.

Language even of the strongest kind being useless to produce a light, Harold groped his way to the staircase, knowing that he should find one in his own room. But he had scarcely ascended three steps ere he first stumbled and then fell over some reclining body which appeared to be taking its ease in a profound slumber. The rough treatment however of being walked over

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"Confound the dog! Go down, Lion!" cried Harold, in a

sharp voice.

A chuckle of laughter was the answer; and, since quadrupeds, though they sometimes cry, have never been known to laugh, Harold concluded that the intruder was a human being. Something in the laugh too struck upon his ear in a familiar note.

"Martin," he cried, "it can't possibly be you!"

"Yes, it be, though you've most stanked the life out of me!" responded that youngster, rubbing himself down to ascertain that his limbs were safe.

"What in the world has brought you to London, Joe?"

"The Curlew have She's at a ramshackle dirty ould place nighthe Tower of London, where the lions be and the King's crown, and a few sojers trapesing up and down like as if they were a Whitsun show and all the world ought to come and gaaze at 'em."

"And Daniel-where is he, Joe?"

"Aboard the Curlew, in course. And he do want to see you slick right away to waunce. He set sail a-purpose all of a hurry, and we've had a fair wind all the way. My, the Curlew have flown this time!"

"Flown indeed!" said Harold. "Why, it is only five days ago since I saw her safely anchored at Langarth! What does Daniel want of me, Joe?"

"Thic's more'n I can tell 'ee, seeing he be close as a dead con-

ger; but I reckon 'tis news you'll be glad of."

"Has it to do with the Alert?" Harold cried eagerly.

"Well, maybe it have, or some man who was aboord of her."

This answer brought a rush of hope with it, flowing with new light through his weins, and for an instant Harold stood silent, revolving in his mind all the consequences that might arise through his next resolve. To meet Estrild, bringing comfort with him and the certainty of happiness, was a prospect not to be forgone for the mere sake of seeing her at Salisbury and giving her the barren news of failure—a failure which could but harden her gloomy resolution to keep her promise to her dead brother. Harold shrank from the thought, and, turning to Josiah, he seized him by the hand.

"I'm off with you in five minutes, Joe. I'll sleep on board the Curlew to night. Here—let me lead you out of the darkness. I ordered supper to be laid in my room, and I'm dead beat for want of food. You need something too, no doubt."

Josiah proved that he did by his appetite, while Harold ate as a duty, not knowing how his strength might be tried. Between them the viands were soon dispatched, and both started up in eagerness to depart.

"Stay a moment," said Harold, as the thought struck him that Daniel's news might detain him longer than he expected; "I'll write a line before I go, or the old woman who looks after these chambers will raise a hue and cry after me."

Accordingly he scratched across a sheet of paper-

"I am obliged to leave unexpectedly on urgent business which may detain me for a few days."

Throwing down the pen when he had signed this, he extinguished the lamp, and he and Joe groped their way through the darkness into the dimness of the night.

"Does nobody live here but you?" asked Joe, as he looked up at all the closed windows.

"I believe I am the only fellow in these chambers at present, Joe; the others are all off on circuit. Now I vote for going by the river; it will be quicker and safer than walking, and there's no coach to be had so late as this."

"I comed by the river. I should never steered my way here by land, pooting in and out among hooses and carriages like a dog at a fair; I should have been rouled ovver and knacked to jouds. Why, here's your dog follering us, sir!"

"Go home, Lion!" cried Harold to the big mastiff, who now

rubbed his head against him.

But his command had no effect; so, when he and Joe jumped into the boat at the Temple stairs, the dog followed and curled himself up at his master's feet.

"Poor old fellow—he is so glad to see me back that he won't part from me!" said Harold, in a tone of apology to Michael, who had charge of the boat.

Michael did not respond with his usual cheerfulness; he seemed half asleep, and inclined to be silent.

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"What are 'ee poor-tempered about?" asked Josiah, as he took up an oar.

"Simmin to me," returned Michael, "you'd be poor-tempered too if you had bided here for two hours with langwidge 'round 'ee that the screech-owls thrawed away as not decent enough for their throats."

"What has happened, Michael? The river-boatmen have been chaffing you, I am afraid."

"Aw—chaff they call et, do 'em? Then I reckon 'tis the chaff that will be burnt etarnally—thic's the sort of chaff it is."

And with this Michael thrust his oar against the pier, and

pushed off the boat with a strong hand.

Another moment, and with steady strokes they were gliding down the river swiftly with the fast-ebbing tide—past slowlytoiling barges, on which fires glimmered, and on whose heaped decks swarthy men and begrimed women stood like dark ghosts against the starlit sky; past tall ships looming upwards in the silent blackness, whose shadows made deeper night upon their path; past the grim and slimy shores, where, amid dens of misery, squal and squalor lurked, and whence sat time a wild cry arose, startling the stillness with a hurried fear, till it died down again into the old thrilling silence of the brooding night, whose dark wings were spread over the throbbing life, the sin, the sorrow, and the sleep of the mightiest city of the world. And night made all things beautiful, from the stateliest of ships to the smallest raft chafing in the tide against its chains, from the towering wharf and warehouse where richest goods lay piled to the lowest house where rags were heaped and wretchedness hid among them; all were glorified by the vast starry canopy, whose light bedecked unsightliness with jewels, and hung castanets of gems on every ripple of the dark river.

"Mr. Olver," said Michael, in a quick sudden whisper, "just look back, will 'ee, please? Esn't there a boat following us?"

"There is a boat behind us certainly, but I don't see why it should be following us."

"Ease a bit, Joe; we'll slacken speed and let_'em pass us."
Through this manœuvre the boat on their track drew much nearer to them, but abstained from passing; on the contrary, she slowed down to a snail's pace, as if anxious to keep back in darkness.

"Ah. I thought so!" said Michael. "You see, sir, they don't

want to go ahead of us. But by that trick of mine I catched sight of their figureheads afore they could draw back, and they've got the same oogly chap with 'em that chaffed me—as you called it, sir."

"Likely enough, Michael. There is a mixture of all sorts on the Thames—honest men and river-thieves. But, if these are

sca mps, we can pull away from them in five minutes."

"They've got a 'wherry,' as they call it," responded Martin, "light as paper, and we are in a boat that can weather a sea. They could be in upon us in a minute, ef they had a mind to; but they're up to sumthing deeper than that, I reckon."

"Perhaps so," said Harold. "There are men whose employment it is to fish for the dead in the river. There is scarcely a

night without some poor wretch finding a grave here."

"There's the Curlew?" cried Josiah joyfully, as the tight little

ship loomed in sight after their boat had shot the bridge.

"Well, I'm glad we are through that," said Michael, looking up at the frowning archways. "My mind misgive me that them chaps meant to run us down in there. At the stairs I offered to wrastle with thic oogly waun; but he shaked his head at that like wheat in the wind."

"But what did 'a say to 'ee that was so galling?" asked Josiah.

"Say? He had the imperence to ax me from what man-o'war I had desarted. And, when I answered sharp that I wasn't one of thic sort, he turns round with a laugh to the other white-livered fellows, and says, 'A man don't get a face like that on land—that's a seafaring face,' he says. 'You should chalk your cheeks, man, if you don't want to be cotched. Or maybe you are looking for a crib to hide in; if so, I'm your man;' and he jerks his thunb over his left shoulder, and winks with a thick eye as full of wickedneas as a egg is full of meat. 'I don't want none of your help—I can take care of myself, thank 'ee,' I says in answer. 'I'm as used to the land as I am to the say. And maybe the land I live in have got fresh air and sunshine in it—not fog and bastliness like this here gashly wilderness of yeller bricks.'"

Harold listened to this talk with mind so intent on other things that it passed over his understanding, and did not enter it till too late to be useful to him.

"With that," continued Michael, "he growed ooglier than

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ever. 'Ef you won't 'ave my 'elp,' he says, 'you'll find wuss luck than you looks for, unless you 'ands me over a guinea and keeps a civil tongue in your 'ead.' 'My guineas are hard-earned,' I says to him, 'and I don't chuck 'em away to loafers whose hands never worked for an honest shilling.' 'There's easier ways than working to get money in this town; and I'll make you pay yet,' he says, looking at me like a sarpent with his head screwed to waun side."

"Josiah," sang out Daniel's voice, "row round to starboard, my son; there's crafts in the way to larboard; we've slewed round a bit with the tide."

In another moment or two Harold stood onee more on the deck of the stout little *Curlew*, and was grasping hands with her brave captain.

CHAPTER XXV.

Daniel led the way to the small cabin, and seated himself opposite to Harold, with gravity and purpose on his resolute face.

"Now, sir, you and I don't want no roundabout talk. I know where to set my hand on the man that shot Mr. Carbonellis, and, if you like, we'll seize him this night."

"If I like, Daniel? Great heavens, I'm burning to get that man in my grasp! Where is he? Must we go ashore for con-

stables and bring them with us?"

"This isn't constables' work; 'tis our work, sir, and no other hand can touch it but yours and mine. The man is in a place where constables won't go with their lives in their hands; such poor ould worn-out bodies as they be aunly fit to sit in a box and shake a rattle."

"But there are others, Daniel—good, honest, strong fellows, not like the watchmen you have seen in the streets."

"And by the time we fetched they where would our man be? I knaw where he is to-night. I don't knaw where he'll be to-morrow."

"Then let us start at once, or we may lose him!" Harold cried impetuously.

"Stay a minute, sir! You must have pistols, and you must change your clothes. Dressed like a gentleman, you'd never get inside the door of thic den."

"But how can I dress otherwise?" Harold asked impatiently.
"I have not brought a kit with me."

"You must go in sailor's toggery, sir, or there's no chance for

as. Will ye mind changing clothes with Michael?"

"Mind? Of course not!"

So Michael was called, and the exchange of suits was soon accomplished. As he was dressed now, Harold looked every inch a sailor, and none but a very practised eye could have discerned that he was not "to the manner born." The versatility of his Irish nature enabled him easily to assume a part.

"Here's your pocket-book and purse, sir," said Michael, handing them to him. "It won't do to leave them in these grand pockets of mine. Aw, my dears, I feel as big as a lord! Fine feathers maake fine birds, you knaw."

"Don't let 'em make a pattic of thee, Michael. Look arter the Curlew—that's your work while I'm away 'long with Mr. Olver; and, if we bain't back by five o'clock, you'll knaw we are both dead men."

"Don't 'ee tell up no such strams as that to me," responded Michael. "Where 'ee going to, then?"

"Into a den of divils," said Daniel—"a place I got acquainted with years ago, afore my beard and my wits were growed. You'll find the name of it, sonny, writ out plain on this here scrap of paper; and ef we don't come back by the time I tell 'ee, you go to the Lord Mayor, or, better still, go to waun of the King's ships lying round here, and tell the cap'en of her where we be."

"You be sure I won't fail," said Michael, looking grave. "It will be a whist time for me till I see 'ee both back saafe."

"Now, sir, I must have one word with you before we go,"

said Daniel. "Michael, get the boat ready."

On this Michael left them; and Daniel took from a case a big square bottle, from which he poured two glasses of golden liquor.

"It isn't for Dutch courage, sir, though 'tis Dutch-made," observed Daniel, as he pushed the glass towards Harold; "but 'tis just to warm our hearts for the fray, because—I won't deceive you—we may have to have to fight for our lives. "Tis like this here, sir—the man we are arter escaped from the Alert—"

"I was certain of it!" exclaimed Harold, growing pale with excitement.

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"Stay a bit, Mr. Olver! He escaped afore the wreck, in the confusion aboard when Mr. Carbonellis dropped dead."

"And he is the murderer? He fired the shot?"

"I believe he did," said Daniel slowly; "but I ain't by no means sure. Not but what he's bad enough for murder when his blood is up; though I can't see no reason why he should shoot Mr. Carbonellis."

"Oh, Daniel, don't search for reasons! He did it—that's

enough! Let us start at once."

. "You are too hasty, Mr. Olver;" and Daniel set his huge watch on the table. "I know what time to start, and it wants ten minutes of it yet. No need to hurry into the fire."

"Daniel, you know perfectly that I'd go to the mouth of hell to seize the man who murdered my friend," said Harold, with set

lips. "So there's no need for this delay."

"Yes, there is; strangers and drinkers don't clear out of that crib till about two in the morning. We can't fight a dozen, Mr. Olver, though we may tackle three or four."

"You are right, Daniel, as you always are. So the man will stay—he is a lodger there?"

Daniel said "Yes," and then quietly lighted his pipe.

"I wish you to understand the rights of it, sir," he said, after taking two or three strong whiffs. "This chap we are arter has been a scamp and a runaway even since he was old enough to cuss and swear. His name is Travel—which means trouble—and a trouble he has always been; and his father is a small farmer—a tenant of some of the Langarth lands—and maybe a bit of a smuggler too."

"And he owed Mr. Carbonellis a grudge?" interposed Harold,

with a quick breath

"That may be, sir—the father, I mean—but Squire Carbonellis going against smuggling was a matter that didn't touch the son, who, after running away a dozen times from every honest trade he was put to, was a sailor aboard the *Alert* when the Squire met his death."

"Yes, yes; go on, Daniel."

"Well, when that happened, the fellow, being wild to run away again, jumped overboard and swam ashore—desarted, in fact."

"You mean he feared Captain Armstrong would give him up,

so he took his escape into his own hands?" said Harold eagerly.
"That exonerates Captain Armstrong, and I am glad of it,"

He uttered this in giving one swift thought gladly to Mary Armstrong; but Daniel's next words made him hold his breath in amazement.

"He escaped to get money out of Captain Armstrong by threatening to tell all he knew; and, when news came that his ship was gone down with all aboard, he let this out in cursing his ill-luck."

With arms resting on the table, Harold leaned forward in

breathless impatience to hear the rest.

"Well, sir, the first five days we were at sea the fellow kept in hiding; but, when the loss of the Alert was known for sartain, he wasn't afeard to show himself, thinking naturally there wasn't nobody alive to prove he was a desarter. Then it was that down at the Carbonellis Arms he got drinking; and, while swearing at his bad luck, he let out that he could have made money if Captain Armstrong were living."

"But how—in what way!" asked Harold, with a heavy sigh of disappointment. "I was in hopes he himself was the guilty

man—as you first declared, Daniel."

"Don't be too hurrysome, Mr. Olver; let me go on quiet-like. I heerd tell of this talk of his the very first evening after the Curlew comed back; and I was vexed as fire you was gone off so quick that I couldn't let 'ee knaw nothing about it. But, thinks I to myself, I'll go and hear this chap's talk, and then I'll see what's to be done. So I gives him a stiff glass of grog or two. and he lets his jawing tackle spin ahead with his drink. He begins first by saying he wasn't afeared of Captain Armstrong living or dead, for he knawed something that would ruin him, and, if his ship was in harbour this minit, he wouldn't have him up as a desarter for fear of what he could tell. 'Well, what can 'ee tell, my son ?' I says to him quite civil. 'Something bout the bullet that/killed Squire Carbonellis,' he said. And I swear as he spoke his face got as white as the ghost-face I told of that I saw waunce. 'And who fired it?' I axed. 'Pon this he turned sulky, and said he wasn't going to tell nothing against Then of a suddin he axed if 'twas a far way to the North of England, and how long 'twould take a man to tramp there. 'For I haven't money for coach-fare,' he says, 'though I sha'n't be without it long.' 'Well, I hope you'll get is honest,' l

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" Daniel Harold.

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e I told Pon this g against to the to tramp hough I conest,' I said to him, 'and not for something you are afeard to tell of, as you are to speak the truth about Squire Carbonellis's murder!' 'Murder!' he screeched all of a suddin, as is a hand was on his throat. 'I tell 'ee, ef 'twas my pistol——' And then he dropped down in a fit, pullin' and tearin' like the naked man in the tombs."

"Daniel, why didn't you seize him then and there?" cried

Harold.

"Because I did what you wanted to do just now, Mr. Olver—I went for the constable. And he was a sore man to find, and his wife wouldn't own where he was gone, till I let her know 'twould be for her aun good; then she said he was gone fishing. So I knaw that meant he was down on the beach arter a keg put in his way a-purpose that he mightn't see the others which were a little out of his way. Well, and by the time I had found him, and he had put his constable clothes on and got his staff, our man was gone!"

"But surely he could not have gone far!" exclaimed Harold,

in a tone that betrayed his bitter disappointment.

"He was a good ten miles off atop of the mail-coach, Mr. Olver, which he had met at the cross-road where it passes about eleven every night. When I found that out, I guessed he was gone to London and 'twas a lie 'bout his having no money. And the landlady at the Carbonellis Arms, who hated him like pison—for good reasons too—gave me the scrap of paper with the name of the place writ on it where he was going to. He pulled it out of his pocket with his handkercher when his fit was passing, she said, and she picked it up. When I got thic paper, I made up my mind what to do—I hoisted sail and away with just victual enough not to starve on ef we had a fair wind."

Harold caught Daniel's hand and held it for a moment with-

out speaking.

"Look to your pistol, sir; we start now in waun minute."

"Daniel, what that man Trevel said about his pistol is to my mind conclusive evidence that his hand shot down Tristram Carbonellis." Harold spoke slowly, looking to the priming of his pistol the while. He had grown pale, and the lines of his face had hardened.

"That was my notion too, sir, even when I first spoke to you; but, in thinking of it, I can't see no reason for such a deed."

"What was Trevel's character on the Alert?" asked Harold.

"Bad, I fear. And some say he was a spy for both sides-

Preventive men and smugglers.

"There lies the motive," said Harold, as he placed the pistol in his breast-pocket. "Tristram doubtless knew of his treachery to the service, and the man feared he would divulge it to Captain Armstrong."

That don't account for what he said himself about his Cap-

tain," returned Daniel.

"No, that's true. Daniel, one question before we start. Why

did you write so frankly to Mrs. Armstrong?"

"Frankly?" repeated Daniel. "I did but tell the story of the wreck as we saw it, and the Preventive officer took down my words for the poor lady. I was sorry for her, sir, as any man might be."

"No offence, Daniel; but I thought it a pity you should have mentioned Tristram's death, and my pursuit of the Alert, and—

and all the rest of it."

"You mean your brave swim arter Captain Armstrong? 1 did tell that; but I never said waun word else."

With this Daniel caught up his big watch and beckoned to

Harold to follow bim.

In two minutes more both were on the dark Thames, with Joe and another lad rowing them swiftly to the dimly-seen shore. As they floated onwards, sitting in silence, Harold pondered Daniel's disclaimer and Mary Armstrong's words, and, putting his hand on his pocket-book, in which he had placed the jewelled pen she gave him, he wondered whether his expedition that night would militate against the promise that pen had written.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The tide had arned and was rushing up the river, bringing a cold air with it tasting of the sea, and a mist which covered all things with a dreary and damp pall. The wash of the tide brought the rowers rather suddenly against the steps of the landing place, and the boat struck them with a little thud.

"Steady lads!" said Daniel, as with one strong hand placed against the stairs he thrust the boat several yards back from the alimy steps. "Now hearken, both of 'ee, to what I have to say.

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You, Joe and Michael, are to come down here at four o'clock, and you wait waun hour till five; then, if we don't come back, Michael will do what I tould 'un just now."

"All right!" returned Joe, with a wistful look in his keen eyes. "I wish I was going 'long with 'ee. Simmin to me, three

is a luckier number than two."

"No, no, Joe; it is not a fit place for you where we are going to"

"Then I'd bide outside of it," said Joe, "and whistle to give warning of I seed anything oogly coming; or I'd run for help if needed."

"There something in that," observed Harold, whispering for a moment to Daniel, who, turning now to the other lad, asked him if he could take the boat back alone to the Curlew.

"I should reckon I could," returned the youngster; with im-

mense confidence.

"Then come along, Joe," said Harold, springing ashore as the boat again touched the steps.

At the same moment a dark object emerged from the water

with a splash and shook itself with great energy.

"I'm dashed if it ain't your dog, sir!" exclaimed Josiah. "He've swimmed arter us aal the way. Well, I'm glad; for he'll be rare company for me as I bide outside waiting for 'ee."

"That's true; for Lion is a better protector than a watchman," said Harold, with a feeling of satisfaction that the boy he

was taking into danger should have such a guard.

Once more Daniel gave his orders to the other lad, whose oars now backed water and took the boat away into the silent darkness that brooded over the rushing river. It was like the departure of an ark of safety, and all three stood for an instant on the squalid shore listening to the thud of oars which rose into the night like the beat of a great heart or the tramp of many steps in unison sounding as one.

"We must drop talk now," said Daniel, in a quiet voice. So they turned silently from the dark river and set their faces

towards the city which it filled with wealth and honour.

At the head of the steps Harold gave one glance again to the wonderful picture before him—the richest river in the world rushing up into the heart of the great city it nourishes, bearing on its broad breast the fruits of human toil in every land beneath the sun. To the right a long belt of light crossed the darkness,

defining that old quaint bridge, now among the memories of the past, and above and below it were a thousand faint and twinkling gleams, shadowing to the mind's eye—not distinctly showing—the countless ships from whose dark shapes they sprang. And amid all these lights speaking, voiceless, of earth's cares and riches, sorrows and toil—the life and death of a world—there shone another, purer light, mingling among but not of them—the light of stars, uttering in clear language a faithful message from other worlds beyond men's ken—worlds unknown and far away, but not too far to be unseen, or to be denied even by the scoffer who lives unbelieving and dies without hope.

From the river Harold turned his gaze upwards to the vast jewelled canopy, whose countless lights touched his heart with a sense of the mysterious infinity of life rolling, throbbing, burning through the immeasurable realms of space; and from that one glance, that one half-formed thought, he gathered courage.

How could he die when the great law of the universe was life? To lay down one existence was only a step to a higher and better, and, if his death now—his passing from this world—gave to the woman he loved the peace, the calmness now so cruelly destroyed, surely he should not have died in vain. But it was a time for action, not thought; and, as he walked on by Daniel's side, he strove to quell the feelings within him—the yearning of his heart for one touch of Estrild's hand, one look from her eyes that might assure him of her love and faith.

Through slums and courts, through narrow streets and foul alleys, sometimes finding silence and solitude, but often coming upon sights and sounds that filled the heart with a shuddering pity, they wended their way till they reached a flight of steps leading apparently into some dock or basin by the river-side. All was darkness here; but Harold heard the slush of water as he peered forward into the depth which lay below him.

It was here that Daniel suddenly stopped.

"Joe, my son, I take you no furder. Crouch down here in the shadow of the wall, and hould tight on to the dog. If you both keep still tongues in your heads, there bain't no fear of your being seen."

"You won't be long, uncle Dan?" returned Josiah. I'd liefer

be in a fight than be lonely."

"Keep your courage up, Joe," said Harold; "and don't forget to whistle if needs be. Now, Lion"—and he put his hand on the dog's head-Would it n boat to con

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dog's head—"stand by him and guard him well till I come back. Would it not have been better, Daniel, if you had ordered the boat to come here for us?"

"Impossible, sir; as you'd see it 'twas daylight. There are

docks and gates between us and the river."

"Do we go down these steps?" asked Harold, in an amazed whisper, as he saw Daniel begin the descent.

"Tis the aunly way, sir. Come on as quiet as you can."

Josiah heard the footfall of their steps a short way down the descent. Then all was silence, and no sound smote his ears save the slow slush of the unseen water that beat sluggishly against the steps.

At first the dog had made a bound forward to follow his master; but Joe, with arms round his neck, held him back by main force. Lion too had evidently understood Harold's last injunctions, and was but obeying his natural impulse in this one bound; for now his conscience had reason checking him, he settled down to his duty with watchful eyes and ears alert to every sound.

"Good dog!" whispered Joe, caressing him. "Wag your tail, old fellow, as much as you've got a mind to, but keep your mouth close"—Joe being ignorant of the fact that it is not a mastiff's way to let his whereabouts be known, like a mere cur, by

barking.

So dog and boy, in dead silence, kept within the shadow of the high warehouse wall, and, shrouded in darkness, they saw unseen many ghastly figures of the night flit by—some in hunger and rags, voiceless in their misery, some drunken and raving, bawling coarse songs or quarrelling with statternly women, or with their own reeling shadows. The dog let them all pass by in silence, and seemed to sleep, as with half-closed eyes and massive jaw he lay with his head resting on Josiah's knee. Half fearful, yet half enjoying his strange new position, the boy watched and wearied, and heard the clocks of distant churches chime the quarter to three.

Scarcely had the vibration died away on the dull thick air, when Lion rose, and with head erect stood as though scenting

evil in the wind.

"Lie down, Lion!" whispered Joe.

But the next moment he started himself to his feet; for a man had suddenly emerged from an archway on the opposite side,

and, after looking furtively up and down the street, placed himself with back against the wall at right angles with Joe Here he waited, unconscious of any presence but his own, and after a moment he drew a small box from his pocket, and, putting it on the ground, knelt on one knee, and proceeded with flint and steel to procure himself a light for his pipe. As these two old-world articles were struck together with a sharp click, a shower of sparks sprang from them, and one at last falling among the tinder in the box ignited it. Then the man, bending low, blew into it, and a dull light was spread over his face, and Joe instantly recognized it as the face of the man whom he had seen in the boat that followed them from the Temple stairs.

It was an ill-looking face, of a cunning low type, and Joe was glad that its owner's intentness on the difficult task of lighting a match in slow-burning and apparently damp tinder had so completely absorbed his faculties that he neither perceived him nor the dog. Taking advantage of his having to strike with flint and steel again—which he did with a growling accompaniment of ugly language—Joe rose cautiously, and, followed by Lion, stole down the steps with such silent tread that he was unnoticed and unheard, the sharp clicking sound of the steel in the man's ears doubtless covering the slight rustle of his departure.

"He won't see us down her," thought Joe, as he descended the steps; "and, as they went this way, they must come back this way; so I sha'n't miss Dan'l and Mr. Olver."

But here Joe stood still in dismay, for the steps appeared to lead only into the black and slimy water, whose slush was now reaching his feet. Turning back with a shiver of loathing and horror, he perceived that he had passed a low wooden gate, partly open and partly broken down. In a moment he had reached it, and discovered that it was the entrance to a passage or underground way dark as a dungeon except for a glimmering light at the end, which flung a dull ray or two on the damp wall, showing that the passage turned sharply to the right. And now, in an uneasy way, Lion put his nose to the ground, then raised his head with a low growl, and, bounding off, disappeared like a shadow beneath the dull lamp.

"Well, if he scents danger for his master," said Joe, looking after him wistfully, "I can't say it was mean of him to desart me. But it's lonesome, and I've a good mind to follow un."

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e, looking n to desart But here Joe's meditations were cut short by the sound of voices above him.

"I hope you are quite sure of your man," some one was saying at the top of the steps.

"If I wasn't sure, I shouldn't be here," resp nded the same voice that had growled curse into the tinder-box.

"And how many fellows shall we find in this den?" asked the other, who spoke, Joe thought, much like a gentleman.

"You'll find the deserter I informed against, and most likely

two or three more—good sailors all of them."

"Well, when we get them—and I expect there'll be a fight first—you will have your blood-money—not before. In your dealings with me you'll have to be above-board—no treachery, mind. I know this to be the most infamous crib in all the slums by the river."

"If it wasn't seafaring men wouldn't hide in it."

"'Blood-money—seafaring men!'" Joe repeated the words in bewilderment while his heart beat fast and his face grew hot. Then suddenly the truth struck him with a thrill of fear. The man with the evil face was a base informer, and the other was an officer in charge of a press-gang. And Joe put his whistle to his lips, and blew with all his might.

When Daniel led the way through the damp and ugly passage, he paused at the turning where a dull oil-lamp hung from a bracket in the wall.

"This is an underway used for loading and unloading ships," he said. "You see, it is mighty handy for rolling down casks. It's a handy way too for reaching the place we are going to, or for escaping from it," he added slowly. "We are carrying our lives in our hands, sir. If we betray ourselves, we shall be set upon—and they'd make short work of us. Men in hiding for their own lives don't stand upon ceremony with the lives of others."

"What sort of scamps are we likely to find here?" saked Har-

"Desarters, mutineers, Lascars from East-Indiamen, and scamps like this fellow Trevel."

"Let us hurry on," said Harold, to whom the mention of this man's name brought a fever of haste.

After turning to the right, the passage tended upward, and

brough them once more be eath the sky, though but a narrow strip; for they found themselves now in a sort of court surrounded on every side by tall dark warehouses. At one corner there was an outlet into an alley, along which there an a wall, seemingly a dead-wall without window and without door. Nevertheless on this wall Daniel knocked in a peculiar way; and after a short interval a sort of hatchway opened above him, from which a grimy and hairy face protruded.

"What's there?" aske i a cautious voice.

"Sailors," responded Daniel, "wanting a hiding-place for a few days, cumraa les."

"Men-o'-war's men?" demanded the head.

"Something like it," said Daniel; "and pay in our pockets." The head retreated, the hatchway was shut; the wall was a blank again.

Harold's hopes fell.

"They won't admit us," he said to Daniel, in a tone of dismay.

"Wait a bit, partner," returned Daniel, assuming another voice and manner.

"Now then!" said a sharp voice; and a trap-door was opened almost at their feet.

The rays of a lantern came up through it; but no one was visible, though a ladder was dimly seen.

As Harold descended, he put his hand on his pistol, and felt it was secure; and Daniel touched him on the shoulder with a gesture that meant caution.

At the foot of the ladder stood a woman, handsome and yet repulsive, young, and yet with the hardness of age on every line of her sharp face. She led the way into a low room, in which five or six men sat drinking and smoking. A half-open door gave a peep of another room, more redolent still of evil smells, and in here men lay sleeping.

"New pals!" said the woman shortly to the smokers.

One of them started up and stared at Daniel, while his bronzed face grew gradually as colourless as a tanned skin would permit.

"Halloa, Danie! What are you in this lay for?"
"The old trade, Travel—kegs, ane too many of 'em."

Harold glanced at the man with a great heart-throb which rose even to his throat. There, hidden in that man's evil soul,

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lay the secret of Tristram's death. With a word he could clear up a mystery which, like a canker, was poisoning Estrild's life and ruining his own. Love, happiness—all that man holds dear—lay within the silence of this coarse and audacious ruffian.

"Kegs!" he repeated with a laugh not quite genuine. "Well, I thought sure, Dan'l, you were too old a bird to be cotched by

a blind pup of a Preventive!"

"Ef I was cotched, I shouldn't be here!" said Daniel sententiously.

"Well, they've seized the Curlew, I reckon, ef they haven't got the cap'n in the bilboes!"

"There you are out of your reckoning too," returned Daniel;

"the Curlew is safe and sound."

"Then why are you here—lurking and spying?" demanded Trevel, with a big oath. "Comrades"—and he turned to the other men who had been listening suspiciously to this short dialogue—"here's a fellow who is sailing afore the wind—prosperous, mind you—and no enemy in chase; and I votes we ax him what he's doing among honester men in wuss luck than hisself!"

A babel of tongues rose in answer; furious words and threats were flung around promiscuously, as if addressed to no one in particular, but to all traitors and spies in general.

Daniel stood his ground calmly; but Harold, whose hands were burning to seize Trevel by the throat, grew excited and

angry.

"What is the use of further words?" he whispered in Daniel's ear. "Let us lay hold of this scamp, and drag him away at once."

"We should have a dozen knives in us in a minute if we tried such a hazardous game; and in two minutes more our bodies would be in the Thames," said Daniel, in the same low voice. "You know how handy the river is."

"Speak up," cried Trevel. "We don't want no plots hatched

here in whispers!"

"There's no plot 'cept axing each other what drink we should order for the company all round," said Daniel. "Please to say, gentlemen, what your liquor is, and I'm the man to pay for it."

This speech was received with the modified welcome usually given to the overtures of an enemy; nevertheless, it was by no means scorned or refused. And by the time each man had

chosen the particular drink he affected, a better feeling was established between the old and new comers. Laughs and jokes went around, grim stories were told, in the midst of which one man fell asleep with his head on the table; another stretched himself on a bench and also slumbered.

Harold and Daniel exchanged glances; they had to deal now with three men only; one of these was Trevel. The time was come to carry out the plan on which they had resolved to act.

"We are a small company now," said Daniel, "and all friends; so I reckon I can speak without fear. Now I tell 'ee what it is, soas (companions)—me and my cumraade bain't here to hide nor to spy; we are on a bold ventur' for which we want men."

He made a slight pause, and looked round as if for an answer. To the minds of those to whom he spoke a venture meant some daring deed of smuggling, or even of piracy.

"And what's the pay if your men escape hanging?" demanded a young fellow who seemed an especial friend of Trevel's.

"First-rate pay, and a share of the profits." The man laughed.

"A share of the risk and the booty, and plenty of fun in the fighting line, I expect! Well, it would have suited me once, but not now;" and, putting down his glass with a sigh, he pulled up his sleeve, showing a shrivelled arm like a skeleton's. "Smashed in a door in escaping, after something I'm wanted badly for," he added, as, taking up the glass again, he drank the contents at a gulp. "You must look further, friend; a broken man is only good for—what I shall one day get—hanging."

Harold was silent from pity; but Trevel laughed.

"Hark to him now!" he said. "That's how he goes on in his dismal fits; but when his blood's up he's a devil still."

Here the man who sat near Harold bent forward and whispered to him—

"Was a mate once—jealousy—shot his wife and her lover; and, by——, serve in right too! Are you the boss of this ventur'?"

"Yes," said Harold eagerly; "I've staked my life on it; and I'll pay any money to get my man—or men," he added, mending his speech hastily.

"Well, I'll join if all's fair and above-board. Now cousin Jacky"—and he turned to Trevel—"what do you say? Shall

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"Well, it won't suit me," said Trevel slowly. "I do know the sea too well; I've had enough of salt junk and hard tack; and, moreover, I mistrusts Dan'l. He's a pilot; he edn't the man to go on a ventur'."

"I didn't say it were my ventur'," returned Daniel.
"No; it is mine," said Harold; "and I'll pay well."

"Yours?" sneered Travel. "You don't look like it neither. You've the look of a man-o'-war's man who ought to have swabs on his shoulders, ready to cut a Frencher's throat for pay and glory, but not so ready to hand him honest coin for good brandy. No; I ain't took in by neither one of 'ee, nor by your soft sawder, nor your liquor—there now!"

"Then why should we come here," asked Daniel boldly, "if

not for men we want?"

"How can I say?" retorted Trevel, whose brain was now touched by drink. "Folks often have plans in their heads which they don't tell of. I may have waun myself. I may have a better ventur' on hand than yours, and waun which will bring me a sight deal more money, and no risk," he added, with a drunken laugh. "Aunly let my slipping off without leave from the Alert be forgot a bit, so that I can slip away from here, and that rotten ould bark shall bring me a fortin' yet."

On hearing these words Harold's caution broke down. He started up and seized Trevel by the collar in a firm grip, and called upon Daniel to help him. An indiscribable uproar followed—a mingling of oaths and smashing of glass, the commencement of a battle which had not time to strike a blow, for the very instant the fray began it was quelled. At the first sound of the coming fight the woman appeared among them who had stood by the trapdoor. She was furious, and yet calm; she looked all round her with steely, cold, relentless eyes.

"You know my rule," she said, in her hard thin voice—" no fighting allowed. I pay the watch to keep away from this place, and I pay them to come when I want them. The signal is always ready which calls them. If I hear another sound, I raise it."

She vanished through the low doorway by which she had entered; and the men, after an instance's silence, began to praise her.

"A woman to keep her word, no end of grit in her, and handsome as a pictur'."

"Handsome," said Daniel. "Why, she've got a jaw like a sarpin, and an eye like an alligator, and a thin greedy mouth like a wolf's,"

"So she have," said the drunken sleepy man, raising his head from the table; "and them three things would take in any man."

"And give a woman her own way, though lives went down afore her," said Trevel's friend.

"Well, she's missus here," said a third; "and there's lives in her hand now—and lives on her head too—of men she have given up."

"So she does that sometimes?" said Harold.

"Yes," returned the other, in a whispered frightened voice; "when it's worth more to sell a man than to keep him, she'll do it."

By this time Trevel had reached the whimpering stage of drink; he was a victim, an ill-used man.

"Look here Dan'l," he said, in an aggrieved tone, "I ax 'ee whether or no you reckon it a fair thing to bring a swell in here as a man-o'war's man to lay hold o' me?"

"Fair enough of he wants you badly and pays you well."

"Let 'un keep his money in his purse; I don't want none of it. My ventur' is better nor his any day. And if I hadn't took French leave, I'd go to the Admiralty to-morrow, and tell 'em there that Cap'en Armstrong wrecked his ship a-purpose; so I should get money both sides. But I knowed which'd pay best; my brains were in my head when I slipped out of the ould Alert."

"But your brains bain't in your head now, Trevel, else you'd come along with me and my pal. You'd be safe out of harm's way. You'll be hanged as a desarter if cotched—mind that. And you'll put more money in your pocket, than any ventur' of your aun can ever bring 'ee."

"That's more than you do know," returned Trevel, in a drunken tone of swagger. "Maybe I can get folks hanged 'stead of being hanged myself; and a rich man will pay a deal to get the rope off his neck."

"But what if my friend will pay more to put it on him?" said Daniel slowly.
"Name your sum, Trevel, like a man, and make an end of it."

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"Do you mean," he said, "that your cumrade knaws something bout the matter I've took in hand?"

"Yes, I mean that."

"Well, I'm darned!" And, leaning back against the wall without a word more, Trevel wiped the perspiration which had begun to stream from his forehead.

"Think it over," continued Daniel, in the same low voice—
"money and safety. For, arter making a clean breast of what's
on your mind, I'd run the Curlew out to sea, and put 'ee in a
fregatt I know on flying the stars and stripes; and, with thic flag
over your head, I reckon even a British cap'a would think twice
before axing for 'ee."

For a moment Travel's muddled brain seemed to grasp this

idea with pleasure, for a smile broke over his face.

"I reckon you ain't far wrong," he said, in the slow deliberate voice of a man who feels that drink is fast stealing his senses. "And, if your cumraade had kept his hands off me — Holloa, where is he gone?" he asked, looking round with sudden scared eyes.

Daniel rose from his chair in anxiety. Harold was not in the

room.

"Where's my friend?" he asked uneasily of the pale man with the shrivelled arm.

"In there talking to her," he answered, pointing to the low door in the wall. "She always pleases new-comers," he added, with a laugh.

Daniel glanced at the door with misgiving at his heart; he resolved to enter the inner room, and had made one step forwards, when the woman emerged from it, followed by Harold.

She walked straight up to Trevel, and confronted him with a steadfast face.

"I advise you to accept the offer that has been made you," she said in quiet hard tone.

Trevel was too tipsy now to be afraid even of this human

tigress

"Do you, ma'am?" he said, shaking his head with an attempt at a leer. "But I bain't of the some mind. I mean to bide here long with you till the fog clears, and then I set sail for my own port."

"You are mistaken," she answered—and her thin cruel voice made the man's heart quiver—"you will not stay another instant here. You have always been a troublesome fellow, ready to fight and quarrel at a word. I keep no such scamps in my peaceable house. You know your way out of it. There it lies;" and she pointed to the door. "Take it."

Trevel's face was ghastly with rage and fear. He rose, shaking in every limb; his quivering lips, rising over his teeth, could scarcely form the words he uttered.

"So you've sold me, you she-fiend! But I don't leave this house for nothing."

As he spoke, fumbling secretly in his pocket, he had unclasped a huge knife, and now with this open in his hand, he sprang on Harold, and made a furious lunge at his breast. The next instant, with his hand still in the air, he was pinned to the ground, and the teeth of a huge mastiff were on his throat.

"That's a good dog," remarked the woman cooly. "I thought he belonged to you, when he dashed through the trap when I opened it a minute ago. He has saved your life this time. Take your man away. You three are strong enough to do it."

"You are reckoning without me," said the pale man with the shrivelled arm. "They don't touch him."

The woman's scorn was ineffable.

"You!" she said with withering contempt. "I don't reckon with such as you! Perhaps you'll go with him?"

"I will," he answered, white with fury.

"Then I'll come to see you hanged," said the woman, in her coolest voice. "It will be a pretty sight. Call off your dog," she added, turning to Harold—"he's choking your man, and you want him living—don't you?—not dead."

"Let him go, Lion."

The huge mastiff obeyed his master's voice with the silence of of his race, and Trevel, cowed, livid, and shaken, rose slowly. At this moment a tall old-fashioned clock in the room, after a preliminary gasp and rattle, began to strike three.

"Hold your man," whispered the woman, "and look to your

own lives! I can do no more,"

She had drawn Harold apart to whisper this, and now, approaching the table, she said, in her thin incisive voice—

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o'clock!" and instantly her sudden quick hand darted out from her shawl—and extinguished the oil-lamp standing on the table.

The room was plunged in darkness. But at the very moment that Harold had perceived her intent he and Daniel seized Trevel and held him firmly, standing one on each side of him.

"If you move a muscle," said Harold quietly, "the dog will be on your throat again. I want nothing from you but the truth, and no harm shall befall you,"

"You had best come along paiceably, my son," observed Daniel, in his blandest voice, "or I shall have to knack 'ee down, and drag 'ee along a bit rough maybe."

He and Harold had spoken and acted simultaneously, and now both drew Travel towards the third door in the room, which opened into a short passage in which the ladder stood leading to the trap-door.

Either their intention had not for a moment been divined or the surprise of darkness had bewildered the ruffians around them, for no attempt was made to hinder them in their design till, gasping and struggling, Trevel yelled out—

"Look to yourselves, men; your lives will be sold next! Will you stand by like cowards and see me murdered?"

A volley of oaths answered him; then the sound of uncertain steps mingling with voices cursing the darkness, rushed upon the fugitives as they hurried Trevel to the foot of the ladder.

Daniel mounted first, and hauled the man up after him as if he were a bale of goods, helpless in his strong hands. Harold followed, but had scarcely ascended half-way, when, with a yell of fury, some little creature sprang on him and dragged him backwards with one hand.

It was the man with the shrivelled arm. His one useful hand had a grip of iron; the setting of his teeth could be heard as he built them together in his fury.

"You don't carry off my friend and leave me alive, you miserable spy and traitor!" he said.

"Kill him," cried Trevel—"kill him! Knife him at once!"
But the man had but one hand he could use; to get at any weapon, if he had one, he must let Harold go; so he hesitated, and in that moment lost his chance. Daniel's strong grasp was on him and flung him aside like a reed. Harold rose, bewildered and breathless, and saw that he had lifted the trap-door and

hurled Trevel outside, and then sprung from the ladder to his aid.

Even at this moment of peril, weak and scarce able to breathe through that relentless hold upon his throat, Harold thought but of one terror.

"Trevel will escape!" he gasped forth.

"Come and see!" cried Daniel, dragging him up the ladder

by main force.

"Help, help!" shrieked the man, whose rage had turned him into a manic, as, throwing himself on the ladder, he first strove to shake it from its fastenings, and, failing to do this, he seized Harold by the ankle and held on like grim death.

This did not effect Daniel; he hauled them both up without any apparent effort, as though the second man hanging on the

strength of his hand were a mere fly.

But, as he reached the open trap-door and safety, there was a shout, a rush of many feet, a flash of light, and five or six ruffians were upon them. A dozen hands were stretched out to seize them and drag them down to death, when a piercing whistle rang through the air, and the cursing, raging crowd staggered backwards as if struck powerless by a blow or the fall of a thun-Daniel, knowing that it was Joe's whistle, took instant advantage of the sudden consternation which had turned them into helpless cowards, and, pulling Harold with him, he sprang through the opening on to the firm ground. For an instant ere he closed the trap door he caught a glimpse of scared eyes staring upwards, the dull red light of a single candle flaring in them; he saw the set hard face of the woman coming towards them, and the dead-white face of the man who had clung to Harold falling backwards from the ladder. Then the trap went down and shut it all from his sight.

Trevel was on the ground, and the dog, panting and with eyes of fire, stood with two huge paws on his chest, holding him down, yet not touching him with the bristling teeth over which

his lip was raised.

"Well done, Lion!"—and Harold drew a great breath of relief as, patting the dog on the head, he helped his trembling prisoner to rise.

"Come on sir!" cried Daniel. "There's danger in the wind. Joe haven't whistled for nothing;" and, catching Trevel—now subdued and helpless—by the arm, he hurried him onwards.

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At a running pace he and Harold, holding him on either side, dashed through the court, reached the underground way, and rushed down its dark slope. But near the sharp angle where it turned to the river a breathless figure met them, and flung itself before them with outstretched arms. The light of the lamp in the wall showed them Joe's face white with fear.

"Turn back," he cried, "and run for your lives ! The pressgang be on us! Oh, Lord, they be here—you're too late!"and, clinging to Daniel, the boy fell forward with a sob of terror, as the measured tramp of feet broke upon the stillness with a horror like the closeness of death.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Gradually the great city awoke to life as the dim light from its dim sky proclaimed to the human hive within it that another day had risen on their toil. Down by the river side the waifs and strays who, like a ragged fringe, line its shore, began their daily work of snatching from the tide the unsavoury refuse or the battered broken objects which its wash flung upon the slime.

Michael, sitting in his boat, watched these dim figures as they flitted to and fro in the gray dawn, wandering purposeless—as it seemed to him—on the unsightly shore, or with a sudden rush clutching at some shapeless thing floating towards the mud, rejected by the river.

He wondered at them in his country mind, so full of memories of clear skies, glorious sea, and flowery land; and his thoughts flitted round their hazy figures, not comprehending their hard un-

lovely lives, and yet pitying them.

To him they seemed to rise from the mud itself, as in little groups of two or three they sprang upon his vision, suddenly looming from out the fog or semi-darkness like weird creatures on the borderland beyond humanity, or like lost spirits wandering on the outskirts of a world that refused them a shelter.

"Do'em slaip here, I wonder, 'pon the mud," he said to himself, "or somewheres in the dirt? Have 'em got a plaace they caals home? Well, I'd sooner live down by the sa' on half mait than up here in Lun'on church town among baistliness, and whisht living bones walking round in rags, hungering arter things that pigs wouldn't wrastle for. Bless us, what have 'em catched hould of now? And squabbling over it too, they be!"

Here Michael raised his voice and accosted the group of urchins who were fighting over some object which one of them held tightly clasped.

"What have 'ee got there, my son? I'll give 'ee sixpence for

it, whatever it be."

The mellow coaxing Cornish voice touched their ears with an unwonted sound; for an instant the struggle was suspended, and Michael was answered civilly—

"It's worth more than sixpence, sir. But you shall have it

for a bob!"

Then came a clamour of tongues.

"It isn't 'is; 'tis mine! No, 'tis Jack's; he seed it fust! Don't you pay him nothing, sir!"

"Bring it along." cried Michael, "and I'll see fair among you

all!"

"Ere you are, sir!"—and with a rush four boys were in the water, clutching at the gunwale of the boat, while a fifth, with sharp and anxious eyes upon his enemies, handed him a sailor's hat.

Michael took it in his hand, and his heart, with a bound of fear, struck him with a sudden faintness, and his face grew deathwhite.

The hat was his own—the one he had lent to Harold.

"Was it in the river?" he asked brokenly.

"Yes, sir—floating in; I cotched it, sir. I see'd it fust, sir. It's mine, sir!"

And the babel of tongues began again, mingled with a few cuffs, and curses not a few.

"Hould your noise, all of 'ee," said Michael, "and you shall

have money all round!"

He drew some coppers from his pocket and flung them ashore, and in a moment the urchins were down in the mud struggling and searching for them, except the boy who had drawn the hat to land, and him M chael held in a firm grip while he made him relate minutely how and where he had found his prize.

"Do you often find hats floating about here?" he asked.

"Old ones thrown away, but not good ones like that, 'cept when folks is drowned—we finds 'em then!"

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Michael's heart fell again.

"Where do the Lord Mayor live, my son? Can 'ee tell

"At the Mansion House. Things in the river don't belong to he."

Here a shout arose from the shore, and the boys, who had picked up all the pence, made a rush towards some large object which, now appearing, now disappearing, came rolling onwards with the rising tide.

"I do believe 'tis a man drowned!" cried the boy with eager delight, whom Michael was still holding. "Let go of me—let

go, I say !"

And, tearing his rags from Michael's grasp, he rushed away after his companions. Again and again they dashed into the river knee-deep, regardless of wet or cold or danger, as, with shouts and eager eyes and outstretched hands, they strove to reach the dimly-seen object which ever eluded their grasp.

Meanwhile Michael, with a misgiving heart and thoughts full of black fears, had brought his boat near the helpless drowned creature which floated now on, now under the tide. It was curious to see how the rolling waves gave to its dead helplessness a kind of life as they carried it swiftly away from the many attempts Michael made to seize it. The boys on the shore watched him with angry eagerness and hungry cries for a share in the booty. And then with great a shout, as at last he clutched with his boat-hook and dragged it from the water—

"Why, it's only a dog!" they cried with a laugh of fierce dis-

appointment.

Yes, it was only a dog. It was the noble mastiff Lion, with a bullet through his brain.

"I am sorry I can't help you," said the magistrate to Michael.
"The watchman informs me that a press-gang was out last night, impressing sailors; so perhaps your friends have been carried off to the fleet at Sheerness."

"Is that the law? Can 'em do such things as impress a gentleman and a pilot who's cap'n of his aun boat?" asked Michael.

"If a gentleman chooses to disguise himself as a sailor, he must take the consequences of his folly. He'll prove his identity and free himself in time no doubt. As for the pilot, they'll

keep him. His Majesty's Fleet must be manned, and it is greatly in want of seamen. Most likely a pilot will be useful as they go down Channel, and there's just a chance of their setting him ashore at Portsmouth or Falmouth or somewhere. As a rule, press-gangs leave pilots unmolested—unless they want them," added the magistrate blandly.

Angry to his very soul, Michael turned away, feeling sick at heart, seeing plainly that no help could be given him against cruel laws and worse customs. The uncertainty of his uncle's and Harold's fate had filled him with a great heart-ache. It was almost a relief to think of them as impressed and not drowned, as he had feared. Perhaps the hat had fallen into the river in the fight—for there had been a fight, he felt sure—and doubtless poor Lion had lost his life in the battle defending his master.

"They needn't have killed the gentleman's dog!" he said angrily to the magistrate.

"Ah, a savage animal no doubt!" returned the gentleman.

"A press-gang would be sure to make short work of him. Now, my man, as you are a sailor yourself, I would advise you to go home unless you wish to serve in his Majesty's Fleet. Press-gangs are about every night, and seamen are greatly wanted."

"I'd wrastle the whole lot for a new hat if I had 'em in Cornwall!" said Michael savagely. "Ah, and I'd win too! I reckon they'd understand a Cornish hug afore the wrastling was over!"

There was a laugh, a call for some drunkard, who appeared between two constables with straws in his hair and face streaked with mud and battered with bruises, and Michael found himself set aside as a case that was done with.

Sorrowfully he went back to the Curlew, revolving many schemes in his mind, which fell to pieces as useless even as he built them up. Foremost was the hope that the Fleet, which had sailed that morning from Sheerness, might, after availing itself of Daniel's services, set him ashore at Falmouth.

As for Joe, his was a hopeless case; no admiral on the surface of the sea, having once got hold of such a boy, would let him go again. But there was comfort in the thought that Joe was a youngster who always fell on his feet and made friends wheresoever he went. So finally the darkest thoughts in Michael's mind revolved round Harold's fate, and he examined the hat he had

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"It's a fust-rate hat still," said Michael to himself; "and a man wouldn't lose a good hat like that while he could keep his head above waetur to wear it. A drowned man don't want a hat!"

Giving his thought words doubled the horror of it, and he thrust the hat out of his sight with a sickly sort of forced laugh

which made his lips grow white.

"There—why did I lend him my toggery? A lawyer or barrister, as he caals hisself, didn't ought to play-act to be a sailor. The young lady would never forgive me. I wouldn't look her in the eyes—no, not to be made a lord to-morrow. It's a comfort I don't know where she be, so I can't go to her with bad news. It will travel quick enough to her if it be bad, and it will do an ill work. I'm 'most afeard her wits be shaken a'ready. Well, she sha'n't hear nothing cruel from me. I'll hoist sail and away, as thic white-faced man advised."

So in an hour's time the little Curlew, with her white wings spread, was flying down the river seeking her true home on the sea.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Welcome home, my dear!" said Mr. Vicat, with the playful affection of a bear, as he embraced his frightened wife. "And how has our invalid borne her long journey?" he added, turning to Estrild with a clumsy attempt at solicitude.

"She has borne it wonderfully well," said Mrs. Vicat, answer-

ing for her. "She was quite eager to get to London."

"That flatters me," returned Mr. Vicat, with a smile that made him hateful. "It gratifies me as a parent—an uncle, I mean—to know that a dear niece was anxious to find herself beneath my roof—a hospitable, kindly roof, I may safely say."

"No, you can't say anything of the kind-not with truth,"

said a sudden voice in a snappy manner.

Turning with some slight amazement, Estrild saw a dumpy young woman with a plain countenance, redeemed by large bright eyes and a mass of tow-coloured hair piled on the top of her head.

"I am sure you are very tired," she said, changing her tone to one of kindness; "so I have had a good fire lighted in the backparlour, where you can have your tea all to yourself. I know you'll like that best."

"My dear Carrie," expostulated Mr. Vicat, "why isolate Estrild from the bosom of her family? A social meal taken in the

midst of her relatives-"

"Do be quiet, father!" returned the dutiful Carrie, in her most disrespectful voice. "And go to the bosom of your family yourself; they are all waiting for you in there"—pointing to an aggressive looking door carved all over with knobs—"and shaking in their shoes—with delight of course—at the idea of your coming. Now, Miss Carbonellis, please, let me pilot you this way. Father would keep us in the passage all night if we chose to stay to listen to him."

Astonished at the young lady's queer manners, Estrild nevertheless followed her not unwillingly, the thought of being spared the ordeal of facing all the Vicat family being a relief indeed.

In a small room, not unpleasant, though its single window looked out on a narrow black and ragged bit of ground, supposed to be a garden, Estrild found a bright fire burning and a round table spread with tea and cakes. A little kettle was singing on the hob; there was a sort of kindly welcome in the sound, a touch of home which stirred the heart of the tired girl as she flung herself into a seat and looked up into her new cousin's face with great wistful eyes.

"You must have a cup of tea at once," observed that young lady; and, grasping the kettle, she filled the tea-pot with an adroit hand.

A delicious fragrance rose instantly into the air, soothing the senses and yet bracing the nerves.

Tea was a guinea a pound in those days, but it was worth the money. To what region of the earth that herb of price has now retired no one knows.

"I must say," continued Miss Carrie Vicat, and she plied Estrild with her fragrant tea and delicious cake, "we are about the queerest lot in London. I may as well tell you so at once as let you find it out for yourself. Father is simply odious—there is no other word for him—and poor mother, though she is good, is a simpleton. I dare say it is wicked to say such things;

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"Why not be contented with speaking the truth only to yourself?" asked Estrild, half amused, half repelled by the girl's coarse frankness.

"There—I expected some such slap in the face as that!" exclaimed Carrie, as a bright blush illumined her plain visage. "I know it is uncharitable, or worse—bad taste—to expose the defects of one's family; but you are going to live amongst us—that's why I am outspoken to you. I don't proclaim the truth upon the housetops, mind you; and many a time when we do entertain strangers—which isn't often—I listen to father telling heaps of pompous, arrogant fibs, and I never say a word to contradict him. I own I do fly at him afterwards, because by that time I have got so burning hot that I feel I should blaze up if I didn't speak."

"I am not surprised at that," said Estrild. "I know your

father a little."

"Let me give you one word of warning," resumed Carrie—
"never allow yourself to be afraid of him. Everybody in the house lives in terror of him except myself, and the consequence is that he sets his feet down on every one's countenance but mine. He leaves me in peace, because I have a temper ten times worse than his own"

"I hope that is not true. You strike me as being good and kind," said Estrild.

"No; I am only vulgarly frank. There is no one good in our family except my step-brother—your real cousin, you know—and perhaps he wouldn't be good if he wasn't dying."

She checked herself hastily, and sudden tears filled her bright eyes. Then she went over to the window and looked out upon

the bleak little garden.

"How queer it must seem to you," she said, "to see such a dirty scrap of ground as this, and hear us talk of back-parlours and underground kitchens and all the horrors of a third-rate London house!"

The tremor in her voice showed that she was saying this merely to cover her emotion, and Estrild, with thoughts of Tristram lying heavy on her heart, found it hard to answer carelessly—

"Oh, I fancy this must be rather a comfortable house!"

"Is it?" returned Miss Vicat drily. "You'll soon alter that opinion; and you ought not to be here at all—you who are a

grand heiress, and have a splendid mansion, and-"

But here she stopped suddenly, and bit her lips with vexation at her folly, for Estrild had grown white and was stretching out her hands towards her as if imploring silence.

"You forget," she said, "what makes me an heiress."

"Yes—for a moment I forgot. And I wish I could forget sometimes to be vulgar, but I can't. There is one comfort—I am always ashamed of myself after I have shown my cloven foot."

"I don't perceive any vulgarity in what you said," observed

Estrild kindly.

"Oh don't you? Can you not see that I was a little envious of you, and angry at my own ugliness, and with our hideous home, and, in fact, with eyerything?"

"Envious of me?"—and Estrild spoke with astonishment, for she felt herself forlorn, unhappy, stricken by an abnormal and

gloomy fate.

- "Envious of you?" echoed Carrie. "I should think so—and good cause too. I am ugly and you are beautiful; I am poor and you are rich. I belong to a vulgar, ill-natured family, and you are descended from an ancient high-born race with all sorts of noble traditions."
 - "No-sorrowful ones that do us harm," interrupted Estrild.
- "But you could let them do you good if you liked," resumed this odd girl, "while our vulgar traditions are an unmitigated evil; they knock all poetry out of us, they roll us in the mud and keep us there. If fact, your position is a romantic one and mine is odiously commonplace. And I am dying to be romantic—that's the truth!"

She laughed, and Estrild also laughed a little; and the laugh did them both good. It seemed to give Carrie Vicat more courage; she quitted the window and seated herself on a low

stool at Estrild's feet.

"Tell me the truth," she said. "Do you think me dreadfully ugly?"

"I have not thought about your looks," returned Estrild

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much about yourself and your misfortunes. *Would it not be wiser and happier to think of other things?"

"It certainly would be, both for you and me," said Carrie, with her usual frankness. "But then one is so dreadfully interesting to oneself that it is almost impossible not to feel that one is half the world, and all the house, with the little back-yard and the cobwebs thrown in."

"And who is the other half of the world?" asked Estrild.

"Why, the man one likes, to be sure? There—now I have let the cat out of the bag! And isn't it hard for a girl to be in love and know she is ugly and her hair is the colour of a wornout door-mat, and her relations have turned-up noses, with manners to match? Oh, dear, I am an unfortunate girl!"

"That is only because you think so," said Estrild. "How

can you be unfortunate if you are loved?"

Somehow her own words struck upon her heart, and she blushed vividly. Carrie Vicat looked at her with eyes full of

light and life.

"Well, you are loved too so I have heard; and yet you think yourself very unhappy. That has been told me also, and I have wondered at it. We always wonder at other people's follies, I suppose, and never see our own. Are you really unhappy?"

"I fear I am," said Estrild; and the colour rose high into her face. "I have thoughts and feelings respecting my life and

duty which you cannot understand."

"Well, if I were in your place, I should soon send them packing. Now I would give worlds to change fates with you; but you would not change with me."

"No, I own I would not."

"That's conclusive," resumed Carrie, rising abruptly from her low seat. "That proves the value of beauty, and it answers my

question as to what you thought of my face."

"But you talk away all thoughts of your face," Estrild expostulated. "Moreover, it had nothing to do with my reply to your foolish questions. No one would give up his or her identity, with all memories, family traditions, and the thousand thousand feelings woven round our hearts, which are the very fibre of our being."

"No-not if all those things make us unhappy ?" asked Carrie,

with green lights dancing in her eyes.

"No, certainly not; they make our life."

"And a precious uncomfortable life too they make for some of us," resumed Carrie. "Nevertheless you speak truth, and you have done me good."

Good! Estrild blushed again as the word struck her ears. Who was receiving good? Was it possible that this odd, ugly girl was doing her good, undeniably vulgar though she was?

Here Carrie took up the tea-pot and shook it to and fro

anxiously.

"I think there is another cup in it," she said. "Will you have it?"

"No, thank you."

"Then I'll have it myself. I never throw away good tea; and

I have talked my throat dry too."

She drank her tea to the dregs, and then with a twist of her hand spun the cup round two or three times, and peered into it

with quite serious eyes.

"I am going to tell my fortune," she said. "It always lies close at hand in the cup one brews for oneself. Oh, I see it all here, and I accept it all cheerfully! The turned-up noses, the manners like a penny pocket-handkerchief, with a prize-fighter's countenance on it in blood-red suggestive ink, and the door-mat hair, and the common-place lover, who wears ghastly grand waistcoats, with a good heart, and the odious father, whose creaking boots make tight-ropes of one's nerves for him to dance on, and the ugly little brothers and sisters, who squeak and squeal continually. Poor little mortals, I am very fond of them —they are all here in my cup of tea, which I drink daily!"

"You see a great deal in a few tea-leaves," observed Estrild. "Oh, there's more yet! Here's a flower in the background that's you; there's another flower fading in darkness—that's— Well, you'll see who that is to-morrow. And here's a letter with hasty news."

"How do you know it is hasty !" interposed Estrild.

"The letter has wings," returned Carrie gravely-"that is a sure sign that it is of a most hasty character; and I am afraid it is bad news—there's a black spot in the middle of the letter. And—oh, dear—I am sure Tom has got into trouble! Here's a fight at the bottom of the cup; and after that he goes nearly round the world—such a long, long voyage! Bless me, I don't like my fortune at all; there's something the matter with the tea this evening!" She looked at Estrild with a sort of comical

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vexation, half real, half assumed; then a sudden change came over her face, clearing away the shadow. "I forgot it was your cup," she said; "that accounts for it. There's some friend of yours going to sea, and I inadvertently dressed him in Tom's waistcoat. Our fates have got mixed, you see."

"I see that you are a poor fortune-teller," returned Estrild. "A friend of mine has just come back from a voyage, but he is

certainly not going to sea again."

"And he hasn't been fighting of late?"

"No, decidedly not."

"Then it's Tom; and I shall let him know in strong language what I think of his behaviour."

"Then I shall tell him that you allow your imagination to run

away with your wits."

"You!" exclaimed Carrie, setting down her divining-cup, and staring at Estrild with her bright eyes full of laughing amazement. "Will you presume to say such a thing?"

"Yes; why not?"

"Now there's a question! And your own imagination is the gloomiest and fastest steed that ever ran away with a poor creature into the wilderness My imagination amuses me, but yours tears you to pieces. I beg your pardon—I didn't mean to hurt you;" and, rushing over to Estrild, she took her hands down from her face and kissed her. "I couldn't help it," she said, almost with tears. "I have heard all about you from my brother; he is half a Carbonellis, you know, and your ideas seem so strange to me. Things in London are so real—such decided bricks and mortar and dirt—that one can't comprehend—
There—I am tiring you to death. Come up to your room at once, and I promise you shall not hear another word from me to-night, or meet a single turn-up nose till to-morrow."

"I shall be glad to go to my room; but I want to write a letter, and—and I should like to send it to the post at once if I

could."

"Tom shall take it for you," said Carrie hurriedly. "You may always trust him; but please don't trust any one else. Father would post your letters in his own pocket, and pretend he had forgotten them; and all the others would hand every letter to him if ordered to. There's no one dares be disobedient in the house except me."

"Your father will find that I shall not submit to tyranny or

to interference of any kind," Estrild answered, her face flushing as she spoke.

"That's right; and there's always Tom and me in the back-

ground to help you."

"And not your brother-my cousin?" asked Estrild.

There was no answer. Carrie stooped and picked up a handkerchief which had fallen to the floor, and rose with a little pinkflush on her face. Her ugliness seemed to have worn off—she

looked almost pretty.

"The state of Denmark is very rotten," she said, pulling the handkerchief between her fingers; "and there are things in heaven and earth beyond our philosophy; but the strangest of all, to my mind, is the fact that a Carbonellis was induced to marry a Vicat."

Estrild smiled.

"I cannot tell what the inducement was," she rejoined; "but

my aunt ran away with Mr. Vicat."

"Ran away with father!" exclaimed Carrie breathlessly.

"How she must have repented! Is it possible that any romance could ever shed what poets call 'a halo' round father?"

"People in love are blind," said Estrild.

"What a mercy that we are all such bats when we are young! That is why I never see Tom's waistcoats, though they stare me in the face with the loudest of patterns."

"Please let me write my letter in peace," remonstrated Estrild,

looking up from the paper.

"Mind you make it nice and kind and loving, so that the

other half of your world may be glad to have it"

Estrild wrote rapidly, the colour deepening on her cheeks, her hand trembling slightly. It was not the sort of letter she would have deemed it possible to write when she was at Langarth, for it spoke of no parting, but of the joy of union, the happiness of meeting again, the bitterness of her regret that at Salisbury she had given no sign of her presence, and the anguish of the repentance after she had seen the coach depart and knew she had thrown joy away.

"Come to me at once, Harold," she wrote, in conclusion; "for until I see your face—until I hear your voice again—I shall have no peace. I know I have been hard, gloomy, obstinate; but I have also been very ill, and I think you will forgive me when you see how changed I am. Some feelings of mine have

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changed too. Langarth was full of death and gloom and dark fancies; London is full of life, reality, and labour, and the passionate energy of its ceaseless toil quickens my heart with hope. I feel as though happiness were drawing very near to me—am I not in the same city with you? Come to me, Harold—come quickly, for I weary for you more than I can say, and I tremble with the fear of some new misfortune that will separate us again."

She laid down her pen with a quiver on her lips, and with

piteous eyes looked up at Carrie's beaming face.

"If we fling something precious from us in mistake," she said, "can we have it again for the asking?—can we gather it up

again when we will?"

"Not often," returned Carrie. "Opportunities had always better be laid hold of at the right time, for they are very slippery eels, and when once out of our grasp they ain't easy to catch again. There—that's a vulgar simile; but I always talk like a fish-woman or other creatures of that kind."

"You are not very encouraging," said Estrild, leaning her head on her hand; "and somehow I need a cheerful word, for I

have such odd thoughts."

"But you are used to them," said Carrie, with a gleam in her eyes. "The Carbonellises are romantic, and have not good, useful, healthy, housemaid kind of thoughts as they ought to have."

"Have people of that sort all the sense in the world?" asked Estrild. "Are there no poetry, no prophecy, no mysteries of

science for higher minds?"

"You are walking over me; please don't trample me down," pleaded Carrie laughingly; "and don't ask of me more than I can give. You have seen my father and mother—what can you expect of me but the thoroughly commonplace? Now let us be practical; perhaps there is something in your odd thoughts after all, so let's hear them. Is it about your letter?"

"Yes; I have a strange fancy that it will never reach Har-

old's hands."

"Then I can knock that fancy down at once, for, instead of posting it, Tom shall carry it to him himself."

"Oh, can he do me that kindness?" cried Estrild. "Are you

sure he will go ?"

Carrie looked up in amazement,

"Sure he will go?" she repeated. "Is it likely he will refuse

to do anything I ask him? He comes here every evening at half-past nine, and stays till half-past ten; and to-night he will have to forego his snug little tete-a-tete with me in this back-parlour, and go—where is it?"—taking up the letter—"oh, to the Temple! Well, that is not far, and he will be able to bring you back the answer before you are asleep."

"Oh, will he do that? How glad, how happy I shall be if he can!"

"He will do it, and in quick time too; and, since he will be here in five minutes——"

"I will go to my room instantly," interposed Estrild, gathering up her shawls in haste. "You will tell him to take great care of the answer to my letter?"

In her own room Estrild listened for Tom's knock, then again for his retreating footstep—oh, how long Carrie had kept him!—and with the loud closing of the door her heart trembled, and her fears and hopes fevered every throbbing vein.

To make the slow minutes pass more quickly she forced occupation on herself. She strove to read, but knew not what the book was; its words had no meaning, and she was ever looking up from the page listening for a coming step.

At last it came, and she heard hesitation in Carrie's footfall, heard her pause at the door as though unwilling to enter, and felt a chill of fear rush over her like a cold wind.

"Come in!" she cried, with trembling voice. "I have not tried to sleep."

Carrie came to her bedside. With one swift glance she saw there was no letter in her hand.

"Is he ill?" she said, as her face grew very white.

"No-do not be frightened—it is only that he is not at his chambers. He left them the same evening that he arrived from some journey. That was many days ago and he has not returned yet. There—that's all. Tom gave your letter to the woman who looks after his rooms, and she put it on his table, where he would be sure to see it at once."

"But where is he gone?" cried Estrild passionately. "Has

he left no word to say!"

"Nothing but this;" and Carrie unfolded a scrap of paper that she was hiding in her hand, and laid it before Estrild's eyes. "Tom brought it, thinking it would satisfy your mind a little to the paymad quant I and I world c "He you say you car your m monpla But 6 wall an

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aper eyes. see by Mr. Olver's own words that there is no cause for anxiety in his absense."

"No cause!"—and Estrild looked up with dilating eyes from the paper that shook in her hand. "Oh, he is gone again on a mad quest—he is gone again to risk his life to bring me peace! But I care only for him now. Oh, Harold, come back to me, and I will forget Tristram and father and mother and the whole world only to have your arms around me once again!"

"He can't hear you," said Carrie pitilessly. "Why didn't you say that to him when you had the chance? The wisest thing you can do now is to go to sleep; and when you awake, make up your mind to turn over a new leaf—quite an unromantic, commonplace leaf—and you'll find—"

But Carrie stopped, for Estrild had turned her face to the wall and was weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Carrie had recommended a trial of the commonplace; and certainly in her home there was every chance of Estrild's essaying the lesson in its utmost hardness and bareness.

The daily life to which she awoke on the first bitter morning of her sojourn was a constant repetition of the same dismal dreariness; for the household was Philistine to the core, unredeemed by a single vivifying grace. There was favouritism, there was injustice, there were tale-bearing and tyranny and fear; and the whole made up a seething mass of petty miseries which rasped the nerves and exasperated the smooth temper of the unhappy girl whose life hitherto had been full of beauty, harmony, and love.

One voice, one hand only ever seemed able to draw order out of chaos and peace from confusion. Carrie was sometimes ubiquitous—defending her mether in that clear incisive voice which quenched Mr. Vicat's, or quelling disturbance with a soothing hand, or only commanding obedience where obedience was due.

Fighting brothers and snapping sisters alike held their peace when Carrie showed them she was in earnest. But for her, life

would have been unendurable to Estrild in this household of hideous realities.

Three days passed before she saw the eldest son of the family—the only one who was truly her cousin. He was ill and confined to his room—so Mr. Vicat informed her in the pompous diction peculiar to him—

"Deeply regretting, I assure you, my dear, that he is obliged

to postpone the pleasure of meeting you."

Mrs. Vicat said nothing; she was so completely quenched and subdued in the presence of her husband that at times she might have been taken for a dummy, sitting helplessly in a chair, and ready to fall out of place at a touch. When Carrie propped her up, she would show some small sign of life—quickly departing from her when left again to her own defence.

Estrild looked forward to a meeting with her cousin with some hope. He was one of her own race, and she fancied she could find help and sympathy in his companionship. She was doomed

to a strange disappointment.

"Gilbert is better; he will see you to-day," Mr. Vicat had said in the morning at breakfast, before departing on his daily visit to his office. "Carrie shall take you to him, my dear; he cannot leave his room yet. Carrie, you hear me? You will take your cousin to Gilbert's room at three o'clock."

Oh, I hear you," responded Carrie; "but I decline the office!

I am going out shopping with mother this afternoon."

Mr. Vicat looked at his refractory females with eyes that blazed, while his head and face seemed to swell visibly with rage—yet he kept silent. In another moment however an occasion presented itself for giving vent to the inward fire that consumed him. One of his small boys, in his effort not to feel frightened, nearly choked himself; and Mr. Vicat instantly seized him, and also the child next him, who had uttered a yell of fear, and carried them both off beneath his arms like an ogre. Shrieks and sounds of blows followed that turned Estrild faint with horror. She rose hurriedly as if to fly; but Carrie clutched he dress, and held her in her chair.

"Show no cowardice," she whispered; "it is what he is look-

ing for in you."

Estrild accepted the warning, and held herself calmly. And indeed she was no coward; what she felt was indignation and contempt from the tyrant, and pity for his victims.

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"I beg your pardon, Estrild!" said Mr. Vicat, as he returned flushed and with his face scratched. "But discipline is a necessity; and Mrs. Vicat is quite incapable of keeping her children in order; so I am compelled sometimes to be a little severe."

Estrild made no reply; she only pushed her plate aside with her meagre breakfast untouched, and, rising, she went to the window, and looked out on the dreary garden in the square with a bitter sigh for Langarth, and a cry in her heart for Harold.

"I have locked those lads in the coal-cellar," continued Mr. Vicat, addressing his wife, "and they are to have no dinner."

"Very well, my dear," said Mrs. Vicat, heaving a meek sigh.

"Then you had better see to their supper and your own,

father, when you come back," observed Carrie coolly.

"I am not in the habit of seeing to the children's supper or my own," returned Mr. Vicat, in his most pompous manner.

"Perhaps you'll break through that habit to-night," responded his daughter, with a little malicious laugh. "People can't always be waited upon; they have to look after themselves now and then."

Mr. Vicat coughed, and remarked, in a more subdued tone,

that it was time he should go to the office. .

"And I hope, Estrild, you will not disappoint your cousin of seeing you to-day, although your aunt and Carrie will not be with you."

"I will see him," said Estrild shortly, without turning her

head from the window.

By this means however she did not escape a parting salutation from her host, who raised his hat in passing the house and gave her one of his odious smiles. She drew back with feelings at her heart which had never before tormented it—repulsion, defiance, contempt were new emotions unknown to her in the dear old times when Tristram lived and Langarth was full of love and life and happiness. Now it was desolate, dead, and empty, and her own home was this sordid and dreadful house. Harold too was gone she knew not whither, and no sign, no word from him reached her to bring a gleam of comfort to her sad forlornness. And this was her own fault. In the first cruelty and gloom of her grief she had shrunk from his love, she had fled from his presence; and, even when Fate flung them together unsought by herself, and without the reproach of a broken promise she might have looked into his face and held his hand in hers, she would not.

She had let him go in blank silence, and never from her lips had he heard one word of thanks, although he had risked his life to bring her peace. Truly she was not undeserving of the pain and

suffering laid upon her now.

"Surely," cried Carrie's voice, breaking in upon her reverie with a laugh, "you are not crying for those small urchins? If they did not deserve a whipping to-day, they will to-morrow, when they won't get it. And I have planned a splendid revenge on father. Mother and Tom and I are going to the play to-night. You had better come with us."

"Oh, no, no!" said Estrild, shrinking away with a glance at

her deep mourning.

Carrie did not expostulate.

"At least you will not see Gilbert to-day?" she said. "I advise you to put that visit off till—till a more convenient season."

"No; I should like to see him," Estrild answered.

"'Wilful woman must have her own way,'" quoted Carrie. "There is one comfort—he may change his mind, and refuse to see you."

"I don't perceive why that rudeness on his part should bring you comfort," said Mrs. Vicat. "He is queer enough, certainly; but I hope he is not going to be as queer as usual today. Mr. Vicat said he was better."

"He'll never be better," returned Carrie shortly. Then she turned the subject abruptly. Well, mother, you will allow there is comfort in the fact that Tom came back yesterday, and that he has accomplished the business intrusted to him so satisfactorily that his master has given him a holiday?"

"Say his 'employer' my dear; I don't like like the word 'master.'"

"Say a fiddlestick when the thing is a broom!" retorted Carrie. "All the mischief in the world is done by people not speaking the truth to themselves and to each other. Mr. Singleton employs Tom, pays him, and can discharge him—a man who does that is a master. In another twenty years, I dare say, as the world grows so fond of shams, he will be an employer, and his workmen or clerks will be employes, or some such ridiculous name; but meanwhile I call Tom what he is—a clerk—and a good one too. Estrild, now he is home again, I hope he will

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Estrild flushed painfully, then grew pale; she gave no answer

to Carrie beyond a look of thanks.

"I wish, my dear," observed Mrs. Vicat, "that you would not make use of Tom as a messenger between Estrild and a young man with whom her uncle declines to continue an acquaintance. It will lead to great unpleasantness, and Tom will be forbidden the house."

"Oh, I hope not!" Estrild cried. "Carrie, you must not suf-

fer on my account."

"People suffer just what they choose to suffer," returned Carrie sententiously. "Some like to be martyrs, and some don't. I am among the last. Nobody is going to run needles into my flesh, I assure you—least of all, needles in such a clumsy hand as father's. Now, children, pack, every one of you, and be off to school at once!"

"Must Charlie and Fred come too? Will you let them out of the cellar?" piped two or three voices at once.

"Don't ask questions. They are too black by this time to go to school."

"Father put the key of the cellar in his pocket," said one boy triumphantly; "and I've got Fred's marbles, and shall keep 'em all day now."

"You'll give them up to me," said Carrie, seizing the urchin with a vigorous hand, while she emptied his pockets with the other. "Now here's your hat—tramp at once, and don't cry, or, instead of joining Fred in the cellar, you'll be put down the sink in the back-kitchen."

A clatter of boots, a discordant chorus of voices, a scuffle in the passage, and then a heavy slam of the front door—and after this a lull of silence. Then Carrie returned from the struggle flushed, but with eyes full of fun and glee.

"How we shall enjoy ourselves to-day !" she cried breathless-

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"Shall we?" said her mother, with a great sigh. "The kitchen fire is nearly out by this time for want of coal."

"I am delighted to hear it; things will be so comfortable for

father in the evening when he comes home!"

"We must send for the blacksmith and get the lock off, I sup-

pose," rejoined Mrs. Vicat, ignoring this remark with a scared look in her eyes.

"No, mother; we won't do anything of the kind. We'll dine out with Tom, and give the cook a holiday till ten p.m;" and, turning a deaf ear to all expostulation, Carrie ran off laughing.

Mrs. Vicat, on the verge of tears, turned to Estrild.

"I'm sure I don't know what will happen if he gets nothing to eat till past ten o'clock. And the boys too will be half dead of cold and hunger and darkness by that time."

Here a shout arose from outside the house, and Mrs. Vicat roused herself from her apathy, and drew near the window to ascertain the cause for the shrill hurrahs that pierced the a r.

A crowd of urchins and loafers stood on the pavement, watching with immense glee the drawing up by ropes through the cellar-opening of two very small blackened boys, whose faces, expanded now by laughter, were begrimed with dirt and tears.

"That's just like Carrie," exclaimed Mrs. Vicat—"exposing us to the ridicule of the neighbourhood, and never heeding appearance in the least! There—she is positively kissing those boys before everybody, and they both as black as sweeps! And the dirty crowd cheering her, too! What will Mr. Vicat say? If this scene ever comes to his knowledge, I am sure I shall have cause to wish myself in heaven."

CHAPTER XXX.

Joe had scarcely uttered his words of warning ere the tramp of many feet followed him, in l Daniel and Harold found them selves confronted by that most formidable and cruel tyranny of the times—a press-gang.

The men composing it came forward with a rush, and, with an adroitness that showed they were well used to their vile work, they so surrounded their victims that escape was impossible.

"Resistance is useless, and will be punished severely!" cried the leader of the gang. "As seamen, you know the service well enough to know that; so you had better yield without making a fight of it." "Th

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with an e work, ile, "cried ice well aking a "This gentleman is not a seaman," said Daniel; "he is a barrister."

"He looks like one," retorted the warrant-officer, with a laugh.
"I happen to know he is a deserter from his Majesty's ship the Billy-rough-un"

"You are mistaken," observed Harold, stepping nearer to the lamp, and still holding his prisoner. "I have no objection to give you my name and address."

A burst of laughter followed this proposition, and a man who had hitherto hung back pushed forward now to the light.

"You had better drop that game!" he said to Harold with an oath. "I saw you to-day in a boat by the Temple stairs, and stopped you at once as the man I had been told to look out for."

"Your eyes don't see straight," returned Daniel; "this is not the same man."

"If it isn't him, it's another, who will do as well," retorted the petty-officer, with a short laugh.

"I tell you it's the same?" cried the informer, whom Daniel and Harold had now recognized as the man whose boat had followed theirs from the Temple. "Do you think I don't know his toggery? Where did you buy your hat, Billy Ruffian?"

"It was bought in a civiler place than you came from," said Joe angrily.

"Youngster, if you don't want your head knocked off, you had better keep a civil tongue in it," observed the captain of the gang. Now, men, march with your prisoners!"

"If you please, sir," cried Trevel, struggling fiercely now in Harold's grasp, "I've been laid hold of by these men, who are smugglers, and dragged away from my decent lodging and made to jine 'em by force! I hope, sir, you'll let me go—I'm no sailor."

"So you are a d—d set of smugglers, are you?" said the leader. "Well, you won't make worse seamen for that. Let that fellow go—we don't want him; we'll press the boy instead."

"I don't let the man go," said Harold, "while there's life in me to hold him. It is your duty to take him prisoner. He is a seaman, and deserter from the Alert."

A look passed between Trevel and the ruffian of the river, a touch on the palm suggested the passing of coin, and the informer called out—

"Look here, captain—will you take the word of a smuggler to a lie? That's a decent chap he's holding. I know him well enough—he gets his living on the river as a bargeman; he's exempt by the law."

"Let the man go; it's you who are the deserter!" shouted the

officer hoarsely to Harold. "Lies don't pass with me."

"Take the word of that villain instead of mine at your peril!" exclaimed Harold. "I repeat, he is a deserter from the Alert, and I have seized him because he is worse—he is an assassin! Daniel Pascoe, who is a pilot—a man you have no right to touch, for he commands his own boat, the Curlew—will you give the same account of this man that I do."

"Pilot be d-d!" cried the sea-ruffian in answer. "Take

your hands off the man, or-"

"Hold on to him, Daniel," said Harold quietly.

"Handcuff them both!" cried the officer.

There was a sudden rush and a fierce struggle, in which all were carried forward down the narrow passage towards the river. During the onslaught of the men and the fight that followed, Harold never once relaxed his hold of Trevel; he could therefore defend himself only with one hand; but, in the darkness of that narrow place, friend mistook friend for foe, and blows were so indiscriminately given that he was not directly attacked, but only pushed forward with the rest to the shore. Here the stars and their gleam, which shone on the water, gave light enough to enable him to understand why Trevel had been uttering yell upon yell, and why also he had allowed himself to be borne along without resistance. Lion had fast hold of him by the leg, and it was only by allowing himself to be dragged onwards like a log that he saved his flesh from a fierce grip of those masterful teeth. But now, in the light by the river, he shouted for help.

"Shoot the dog-shoot the dog-he's killing the man!" cried

the crimp, rushing forward pistol in hand.

"Hold the man yourselves," exclaimed Harold to the gang, "and I'll call off my dog! He is not hurting the fellow. You may handcuff me twice over, so you take him prisoner also."

His words were unheeded. Two or three pistols were levelled at Lion's head; but, as it was impossible to shoot him without wounding Trevel, the men who held them hesitated to fire. Meanwhile Harold and Daniel both struggled hotly to save the

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the gang, ow. You also." re levelled a without d to fire. save the dog and yet retain the man for whose seizure they had risked their lives. But their captors were too strong for them; knocked down, brutally belabored with blows, and their expostulations treated with contempt, they could but remain helpless spectators of the fray.

"Shoot the brute!" shouted the leader of the press-gang again, with a tremendous oath; and then, as he was not instantly obeyed, he drew forth his own pistol, and beside himself with rage, fired indiscriminately.

As the report rang through the air, Trevel fell to the ground wounded, uttering a heavy groan; but Lion, unhurt, still held him, and no one dared to drag him away, or attempt to shoot him in the face of Trevel's agonized cries not to fire. At a word from Harold the dog would have let go his hold; but, breathless from his long fight, exasperated, and burning still with the resolve to hold Trevel at all hazards, he would not speak. In another instant he regretted his silence with fresh agony; for the crimp, stealing up silently, kicked Lion with brutal force, and the dog, turning instantly, sprang on him without a sound.

"Lion-let go!" Harold shouted; but his command came too late.

In the shock of the dog's sudden onslaught, the crimp stepped backwards, slipped, and without a cry fell with a heavy splash into the river. At the same instant the crack of pistols sounded through the air, and Harold saw Lion stretched on the ground panting and bleeding. His heart bounded against his side as he beheld this sight, and the rush of anger and grief in his veins brought a smart to his eyes like the touch of fire; he took no heed of the attempts made to rescue the crimp, who had sunk to rise no more; but in the midst of the confusion, the noise of oaths and shouting, he felt the touch of Lion's tongue on his manacled hand.

Wounded and dying, the dog had crept to his master for the reward of a caress, believing he had done his duty. Then Harold stooped over him, and for one instant held him closely against his side; the next moment one of the men who guarded him had put a bullet through Lion's brain, and he fell dead with his master's arm still around him.

"He's out of pain," said the man, with a laugh, as he wiped his pistol.

Another of the press-gang pushed the dog over with his foot, and then with one kick sent the body into the river.

The gallant spirit was out of him—the life lived so well was gone; and it was but the reward of valour, in the beginning of this century, to be wounded, to die, and to be flung into an unknown grave.

Harold had one intense satisfaction as the tender into which he and Daniel and the boy were thrust sailed down the Thames—he knew that the leader of the press gang had taken Trevel with them.

The miseries of the voyaga to Sheerness, and the horrors of the night in the stifling hold of the frigate which awaited them there, need not be told. In darkness and in irons Harold and his companions felt the heavings of the great ship as the wind filled her sails and she swung round like a living leviathan and dashed out to sea.

"Daniel, whither are we bound ?" asked the young man in a low voice.

"The Lord knows, Mr. Olver! But I heard the men saying some ut about convoying a fleet of merchantmen; so I reckon India is the place."

"Dani'l, I am sorry indeed I have led you into this mess."
"There's no need to fret, Mr. Olver. You and I needn't go to

India unless we've a mind to."

"I know well enough they can't make a sailor of me," returned Harold; "and, if I can once get speech with a commissioned officer, I shall doubtless be listened to and set free; but I am not going to leave you in the lurch, Daniel; neither will I leave the ship while the man Trevel has breath in him and there is any hope of wringing the truth out of his black soul."

"You would not be leaving me in the lurch, Mr. Olver. I mean to go ashore at Falmouth—never you mind how I shall manage it. I am sartin sure of it—that's all. So, when they bring us up afore the cap'en, don't you trouble over me, but tell him plain out who you are, and demand to be put ashore at Portsmouth. But, as for you, my sonny boy "—and Daniel turned to poor Joe who was sobbing audibly—"I'm afeard you must take the press-money, and fight the French like a man."

"Don't grieve about him, Daniel; I'll look after him when you

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"You, Mr. Olver! Why, surely you don't mean ____"

"Yes; I mean what I say, Daniel. I don't leave this ship while Trevel is in it."

"Mr. Olver, I reckon you'd better slaip 'pon that saying; and, though planks be a hard bed, the sea is a good rocking-cradle, and the tired head finds a pillow wherever it rests. Good night to 'ee, sir!"

And so Daniel slept, or seemed to sleep; and in the silence that followed Harold's harassed thoughts gradually grew calmer, till a dream of Langarth swept them into slumber with a vision of Estrild's face leaning over him with eyes full of love.

It was a breezy morning; the sun shone brightly down from a blue sky on a blue sea, and the north wind which had cleared the air, and which was sending the gallant ship merrily down Channel had also cleared men's minds of fog; so that never was a man in better temper than was Captain Pierson, of H. M. S. Vigilant, when the pressed men of the night before were brought before him.

There was some twenty-five men, besides Harold and his two companions, and they were disposed of in a summary and sufficently good-humoured way, the seamen themselves yielding to necessity in dogged silence.

They were brave men, and they fought for their country valiantly when called upon to give her their blood, though that country allowed them to be dragged from their homes, seized in the midst of the labour that gave their children bread, and ill-treated, ill-fed, and ill-paid, and discharged when wounded, to die or starve; yet they made England great, and, sweeping the seas with their stout arms, and dying for her with generous hearts, carried her empire round the length and breadth of the wide world.

At last, as these first pressed men retired, Daniel came to the front, and his stalwart frame and bronzed face caught the Captain's eyes.

Daniel stated his case in few words, and claimed exemption from impressment as a pilot, and commander and owner of his own boat. His name being found in the list of pilots, his plea, after some light demur, was allowed.

"Can you pilot us into Falmouth harbour?" asked the Captain. "If so, you may as well stay on board till we get there."

"I can do that, sir."

"Very well then; stand aside—your case is settled."

"I hope you'll let me have my boy, sir; he is part of my crew, and I can't work my little ship without him."

"Put us into Falmouth safely, and we'll talk about it," said the Captain, with the good-humour of the sunshine still in him.

"And the gentleman, sir—my friend, whom the press-gang had no right to seize, because he is a barrister, and has nothing of a sailor about him except his clothes, and they eddn't his—they belong to my nephew Michael."

This speech, spoken quite seriously by Daniel, was received with a shout of laughter; and then, rather roughly, he was told to stand aside, and Harold was ordered to come forward.

Like the Irishman he was, he could not help seeing the ludicrous side of his position, although this did not turn him in the least from the gravity and determination of his purpose. So, though a smile for a moment had glistened in his eyes, no trace of it was on his firm lips as Captain Pierson scanned his hand-some face.

"Do you indorse the story of your friend, the pilot," he asked, in a bantering tone, "or will you take the King's shilling, and do your duty like a man?"

"I will accept the press-money," said Harold; "but I am no sailer. I can offer myself for hospital duty; and I suppose, in

case of need, I can fight."

· His clear enunciation, his cultivated voice, struck Captain Pierson's ear, causing him to scan his prisoner's appearance with a scrutinizing look.

"Call the officer who executed the press-warrant," he said, in-

a sharp voice.

"Now, boatswain," he continued, as the man stood before him,

"who is this person whom you impressed last night?"

"If you please your honour, he is a deserter from the Billy-rough-un; and I had word of his whereabouts from the man you knows on—the crimp sir."

"Never mind him—get on faster! I want to know who the

man is."

"The deserter, sir; and he had a savage dog who has drowned the crimp—as I reported, sir, when I comed aboard; and he attacked the man in hospital as I hurt a bit, sir, when I shot the animal." "Hu

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"Will still abou "Hurt a bit!" returned the Captain. "The man is dying—so the doctor tells me."

Harold felt himself grow pale; he clenched his left hand, and repressed the exclamation that rose to his lips. Oh, for one half-hour's liberty, to stand by Trevel's side, and hear what he had to tell!

"May I speak to you in private for one instant?" he said

eagerly to Captain Pierson.

"Certainly not!" returned that gentleman, inflating himself with haughty amazement at such a request being preferred to him by a common seaman, who was, moreover a deserter. "You have heard my warrant-officer's account of you, and you have not dared to deny the charge. The Bellerophon is at Plymouth; I shall put you aboard of her there, and you will be tried by court-martial, and most likely be hanged at the yard-arm as a deserter."

Hanging was at that time such a popular remedy for all crimes, misdemeanours, and mistakes, and the hanging of a wrong man an occurance so common, that Harold felt he could scarcely afford to laugh at Captain Pierson's suggestion of his probable fate. He took a lawyer's course instead.

"I have a right to demand to see the warrant under which I am impressed," he said cooly. "Be good enough to show it to me," he added in a voice of authority, turning to the boatswain.

That individual, taken aback by his coolness and his bearing, drew the document instantly from a greasy pocket-book, and handed it to him. Harold, amid a momentary silence, examined it carefully, and then turned it over, and saw it had an indorsement on the back.

"'To be executed only by a commissioned officer,' he read aloud. "And it was intrusted to a warrant-officer; my impressment therefore is illegal, and I demand——"

"Confound your impudence!" exclaimed Captain Pierson, interrupting him in a rage. "Will you, a d——d deserter, dare to stand before me quibbling like a lawyer?"

"It is because he is a lawyer, sir," broke in Daniel eagerly.

Captain Pierson glared at Daniel with a quarter-deck eye of command on hearing this, and then sharply ordered him to stand

down and keep his own place in silence.

"Will you permit me," resumed Harold, keeping his cool ease still about him, "to say what my demand is?"

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"The Navy is going to the dogs!" observed Captain Pierson quietly to an officer standing near him. "Fancy a fellow on my own quarter-deck speaking to me like that!"

"Do let us hear, sir, what he has to say," returned the other, whose eyes were full of suppressed laughter. "Perhaps he is

going to ask to join our mess"

Harold overheard this without a smile—his thought was projected beyond this scene, and he felt as though it was a kind of dream which was to lead him into the reality of Trevel's confession of his crime.

"Hand that warrant back, and finish what you had to say?"

cried Captain Pierson, in a peremptory voice.

"I wished to assure you, sir, with perfect truth, that the warrant of impressment has been illegally executed; therefore I demand to be received into his Majesty's service freely, and not as a pressed man. I do not ask to be allowed to leave the

ship."

"You are a cool hand," said Captain Pierson, pressing his lips together in contemptuous anger; "and, if you expect to escape a court-martial and hanging as a deserter by voluntering to serve on board the Vigilant, you are mistaken. Send a couple of marines here!" he added, turning to the officer near him. "I have had about enough of this."

Harold heard the order, but scarcely understood it till he found himself marching as a prisoner between two marine. who, without a word, conducted him to a dismal dark recess on the lower deck used as a prison, and popularly known as the "devil's oven" from its heat and propensitity to stifle or burn men into

fevers and death.

Three days of this den, as the ship plunged her way onwards to Plymouth, sufficed to make Harold rave of green hills and fresh running streams and a high blue sky overhead in which a lark on poised wing sang to welcome him home. From this dream he awoke with the sweat of pain and sickness on his brow, and, opening his dazed eyes in weary wonder, they alighted on the pale death-sharpened face of Trevel, swinging slowly in the hammock next to his in the ship's hospital.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

"Come in!" said a strangely sweet voice in response to Estrild's question as to whether she might enter. "I have been expecting you all the afternoon. I am a sad invalid; do not

be shocked when you see me."

Yet Estrild was shocked when her cousin rose from his armchair and came forward with trembling step to receive her. His large dark eyes sunk within thick overhanging brows, his face pale to ghastliness, his white attenuated hand held out in greeting—all struck her with the painful idea of death in life. In his presence she felt herself to be standing on the threshold between flesh and spirit, as though the touch of death, resting coldly on him, had half drawn aside the veil which wraps the soul and hides the impenetrable world of spirits from the human ken.

"You are ill indeed!" she said pityingly, still holding his hand, and looking into his face with deep compassion in her

eyes.

Then she saw a flush rise vividly to his thin cheeks, and he sank back on his chair with a little quiver on his lips, changing

quickly to a forced smile.

"Please do not pity me!" he said, in a laughing tone. "I am weak enough not to like it—and I am really stronger than you would suppose I can even drive out at times—on sunny days," he added, checking a sigh. "Now let me look at you; I want to see if your face is the same that I remember as a child's. Do you know, it is fifteen years since we last met; and you cannot recollect me?"

"Not in the least," said Estrild, shrinking a little from his

fixed gaze.

"I have a picture of you which my mother drew when you were four years old—you are still like it;" and, rising, he opened an old brass-bound desk, and took from it a small portfolio, which he laid on the table before her. "Here is your portrait," he said—"and here is mine. Would you believe that was ever meant for me? Ah, health is happiness and beauty! But I had love too then—my mother was living."

"How long have you been ill?" asked Estrild hurriedly, repenting of her question as soon as asked; for she saw the flush.

rise again upon his face.

"Ever since I-I found myself alone in the world. My ill-health arose first from a blow."

Estrild raised her eyes and met his—they had changed to living flames; his thin hands, clenched, rested on the table, which trembled beneath the nervous passionate pressure.

"You see, if hatred grows out of such things, one cannot help it," he said, in a voice which vibrated in the ear like a note struck by a soul in agony.

"I am very sorry," Estrild began.

"Oh, don't be sorry for me! I am quite happy, now I know the worst. And, you see, I have made my prison very pretty and comfortable;" and he looked around with a sad smile, on his books and paintings.

"Have you been here long in this room in such terrible lone-

liness ?"

"Oh, no -not long-only about two years."

"Only two years!" repeated Estrild. "When I was ill at Salisbury, two weeks appeared to me a long weary time."

"You were in great danger then," said her cousin, looking at

her strangely as he spoke, "I feared for your life."

"I was not so seriously ill as that, I assure you," she answered, her colour deepening; for her heart with a bound carried her thoughts to Harold, and to that madness of grief in her which had made her cruel.

"Why did you fly away?" said Gilbert, putting his hand on his forehead. "I wanted to tell you something; now it is gone."

"Well, I am come back," returned Estrild, trying to smile, though her wistful eyes were gathering tears. "I fear it is your memory that floats away."

"No, it is not that; I have a terrible power of memory—a vindictive memory; but, when I am talking to people, if their thoughts leave me I follow them; I go where they go."

"My thoughts rushed down to Salisbury just now."

"Oh, I did not know the place, but I felt the sorrow of it; I heard a chord of music floating through darkness, and I saw the face that you saw."

Startled by his words, Estrild drew back slightly flushed and

trembling.

"Carrie has been talking to you about me," she said, in a hurt tone.

"Oh, no; Carrie has her own brothers and sisters to think of

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—she does not often talk to me. I frighten her—she does not like me."

"Then I suppose Mrs. Vicat told you of my illness, and has

given you my history as far as she knows it?"

"Yes; but there are things she cannot tell me—things I know of myself, not existing in her lore. Sickness, loneliness, and fasting bring visions with them."

He leaned back in his chair as if lost in thought; and Estrild, glancing at his death-white face, his pale hands, his attenuated

frame, scarcely deemed him for the moment earthly.

Again the idea struck her that he stood upon the threshold between flesh and spirit, and had stood thus so long that he had gained power to look within the gate and see the unutterable, the formless, for which the tongue had no language, the eye no shape. Once more she shrank farther from him with a coldness creeping over her flesh, and a stronger love of life—this dear human life—bounding at her heart.

He looked up suddenly with a wistful smile on his poor white

face.

"Don't let me frighten you," he sad, with a sort of sad eagerness. "Terror is repelling. I frighten Carrie; so she scarcely ever comes near me. But you and I are akin—we shall be friends, I hope."

"I hope so too," Estrild answered; but the chill was still on

her nerves as she spoke.

"We ought to care a little for each other, being cousins," he continued, sighing as he spoke, and fixing his eyes on her in a searching sorrowful gaze.

"Yes, we ought—we are such near relations," Estrild assented

uneasily.

"And we stand alone in the world," he said, "and save each others' lives."

"What do you mean? I can't see how we do that," she returned.

"Can't you see that, if one dies, the other, being the last of our race, will be attacked fiercely by the enemy? So that one of us two, who dies first, will sign the death-warrant of the other."

"I hope not," she answered, trying to speak playfully. "I think you should not harbour such strange gloomy fancies."

"It is not all fancy—there is a vein of truth in it. And,

though it is not all of this world, neither is it all of the next. The man who kills us is a man; he is not a spirit unclothed by the flesh. The thing is a mystery I have wasted my life in striving to fathom."

Estrild had grown very pale.

"Perhaps it is a mystery best left untouched," she said, with quiet sadness. "I dread to hear it spoken of. It is such a little while ago since Tristram died, as we all die, by a sudden inexplicable accident. A man? Oh, no—no man on earth could haunt us with such vindictive hatred!"

"He may have no hatred—he may simply be compelled to work out another's vengeance. The man may be sorrowful beyond all human sorrow because led by a spirit that possesses

and impels him against his will."

"That is a dreadful theory!" said Estrild, turning hastily away from the pale face with its unearthly glow, the eyes unnaturally bright, shining as though lighted by some lamp from within, which added tenfold strength to the words her cousin uttered.

"It is the only theory which will account for all that has happened," he answered in eager excitement. "I have thought over it for years, and I have come at last to that conclusion."

"It is an impossible conclusion," insisted Estrild. "Does a

man live for hundreds of years?"

"No; but a race does—a family lives and inherits the life and the curse of its progenitor. Even a disease in that ancestor's veins lives on for hundreds of years—why then not his passions? And, if his malady can fasten on the blood of his descendant, why should not his evil spirit fasten on his heart, and impel him to deeds he hates?"

"If you carried out that idea to its full end, we should not be free agents, and it would make one spirit, and one only, answerable for the sins of the whole world. We all descend from one

common ancestor."

"Well, I will not say that one spirit is not answerable for the sins of the world, but I do not call that spirit Adam. I go further back into the immeasurable realms that thought cannot pierce," he answered.

"I will not try to follow you," said Estrild shrinkingly. "The evil of this world saddens me enough; to think of it as rushing on us through unfathomable time, and rushing onwards through

eternity horror."

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eternity to blast other worlds, would fill me with fear and horror."

"Let us come back to ourselves—the two units in the worlds that interest us most," said her cousin, recalling his gaze from its far-away look. "Here, in my loneliness, shut out from all human ties and hopes, I have tried to fling my soul forward into the future beyond the flesh; but it holds me still, and you cannot think how I long at times for the touch of a hand, the sound of a voice, the warmth of some dear human comfort, that would call me back in a moment from all my cold visions of spirits that bring no consolation."

These words touched Estrild with pity; she drew nearer to him, and laid her hand kindly on his shoulder.

"You will not be so lonely now I am here," she said.

"Will you bear with me?" he asked eagerly. "Will you come here sometimes, if only for a minute in the day? You cannot imagine the sadness of solitary confinement, or the solace of speech to one shut up in silence as I am."

"I will come often-until you tell me I trouble you."

"I shall never tell you that. It is not only that I have been lonely through sickness," he continued, "but through difference of race and blood. I am an alien here, and so I have to suffer hatred, and feel that all my efforts to win love only bring fear or contempt."

"But that is not the case now. You and I are of the same

race—we can sympathise with each other."

He looked up, with eagerness and pleasure shining in his dove-

bright eyes; but in a moment his head drooped again.

"It is so strange to hear words of kindness," he murmured. "But it will not last—you will grow afraid of me as the others do."

Estrild's colour changed.

"I hope not," she said softly.

She could say no more, for, even as she spoke, she was conscious of a repulsion, touched with fear, that ran coldly through her pity and that sympathy of race which she undoubtedly felt. Perhaps it was this capability of comprehending him which gave her a kind of terror, as it enabled her to follow him to that borderland on which he dwelt, and from which she shrank in horror.

"You only hope it?" he said wistfully. "West I hope it too

Now let us talk of other things. Tell me how you like it here among my people."

"I like Carrie; and I think your step-mother has a kind

heart."

"Yes, she is kind naturally; but without courage a kind heart is an empty egg-shell. Carrie is strong and good and vulgar, and I like her, though she often makes me feel as Job did when the 'hair of his flesh stood up.' You cannot stay among us long," he added suddenly. "Life would be unendurable to you in our atmosphere."

"I must stay, I suppose, until I am of age—unless I put my-

self in Chancery," she said, smiling.

"Doing that would waste your substance and your life too. You can marry before you are of age, and escape that way."

"I think not," said Estrild, as a bright colour flew to her face, then faded as quick as it came. "There are many hindrances to that. Mr. Vicat is my guardian, and would not consent to my marrying any one but a person of his own choosing."

"And you know, I suppose, that he has made a choice?"

Estrild looked up with quick fear.

"No; he cannot have dared to do such a thing!"

"Oh, yes! He has selected a husband for you, who, as he thinks, would further his own ends by dying and leaving him to inherit your wealth."

Estrild glanced in dismay at her cousin. He was leaning back in his chair, his eyes partly closed, his face expressive of intense bitterness and pain. Suddenly he looked up and caught her gaze, and gave her a sad smile.

"Do not et it make any difference between us—do not let it part us, or take from me a single word of kindness of yours. Why should you play into his cruel hands? You know he is trying to kill me. He is my heir."

Estril listened, but could not speak—a sick fear was clutching at her heart. And it was dreadful to 'ee a son believing so intensely in the greed of his father—the more dreadful to her because of the love and trust which had been the very roots of her own life.

"I ought not to have told you of this mad wicked scheme," continued Gilbert, in a pained voice—"it will make you hate me all the sooner,"

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"Surely I shall never hate you!" she answered hesitatingly. "Why imagine such a sad thing?"

"You don't know me yet—you do not understand all my weakness. To be in the grasp of a tyrant for years does not strengthen the nerves, and he knows his power—he knows what he can make me do. If you saw me act under his influence, you would hate me—you would have cause," he concluded bitterly.

"But you are not lending yourself to his schemes?" exclaimed Estrild hastily. "And you are aware that I am engaged to Mr. Olver?"

"Do not wrong me," he pleaded, with pathetic sadness. "I am thinking of death, not marriage. And I am not ignorant of your love for Mr. Olver, or of your promise to your brother. Pleasance told me. She writes to me sometimes; her letters come to me like little winged messengers from heaven. Do you know I could help you, if you would let me?"

He spoke eagerly, as if anxious to efface from her mind the painful impression made by his confession of Mr. Vicat's plans.

"In what way could you help me?" asked Estrild. "I should not ask you to stand by me in any dispute between me and Mr.

Vicat; you are not strong enough for warfare."

"True, I should make a poor defender in battle against him; but there are other ways, other means-" He hesitated, then stopped, his eyes fixed inquiringly on her, as though seeking to read encouragement in her face.

Something in his expression, she could not define what, made

her answer strangly.

"Lawful means, I hope," she said—"not anything unearthly?"

"On this earth how can anything be unearthly? Whatever power is here in the world it must be lawful to use—if used well," he added. "The very fact of its existence on the earth makes it earthly, though it may be mysterious and not understood. Don't you see that? Let me show you what I mean." He rose eagerly, and took from an inlaid cabinet a crystal, which he held towards her. "The art of divining by crystals, or rather the power of seeing the visions of the mind reflected in a crystal is a very ancient one," he said. "Are you afraid to look? You must let me hold your hand the while."

"I am not afraid; but I think it a folly—one of the delusive tricks of Eastern conjurers."

He paid no heed to this remark. He placed the crystal in her right hand, while he grasped the left tightly in his own right.

"Now concentrate all your power of thought on the person you most wish to see, and a vision of him will rise in the

crystal."

Estrild. half curious, half fearful, and wholly full of love and anxiety for Harold, thought of him with all her strength; but the crystal remained dull, as though a cloud covered it.

"What do you see?" asked her cousin. His voice sounded

strangely, as though floating to her from a distance.

"I see nothing," she aswered faintly; "but I hear the rushing

of water."

And now she was conscious that, without relinquishing her hand, he had placed her in a chair, from which she had no power to move, while, stretching out his arm, he took another crystal from the cabinet, which he put, as he had the first, in her right hand. Leaning forward, he pressed his lips on this hand with full warm strength, and, though she felt her heart beat angrily, she had neither wish nor will to resist him.

The next moment she was standing up, as she thought, in a dark place alone, except for the clasp of a hand whose grasp she felt through all her veins in a thrill of pain which yet was not

pain, but like a little breath of fire which did not burn.

"Where am I?" she tried to say, but found she had no voice. The rush of waves sounded deeper and deeper around her, then a speck of light touched the crystal and spread on it, and with dilated eyes she saw Harold leaning over the hammock of a sick and dying man. Voices fainter than the whisper of summer leaves seemed to issue from the vision, yet the words touched her ear distinctly.

"Speak the truth, as you hope for mercy."

"I have spoken it. As truly as I am a dying man, I swear it was an accident. Just as the unearthly whistle rang through

the air the pistol --- "

The clasp of the hand holding her in the darkness relaxed, the breath of fire changed to a cold wind, the fingers let go the grasp of hers; she was standing again in the dim light of her cousin's room, and he had fallen to the floor in a dead faint.

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CHAPTER XXXII.

ESTRILD stood for a moment dazed and bewildered, incapable of thought, scarcely understanding where she was; then, recovering herself, she sprang to the door and called for help. Her cries brought Carrie to her aid. She knelt down by her brother's side and chafed his hands—not with her usual self-possession, but in a flurrid and scared way, and with her face growing nearly as white as his.

"He always frightens me," she said, in an awed tone. "I hate to come near him! What has he been doing to bring on all this?"

Estrild was silent; her thoughts were too confused for her to give a clear answer to this question—so she let it pass. To her surprise it was Gilbert himself who replied—

"Oh, nothing, Carrie! It was only a little faintness; and I am better now, thank you."

"I am glad to hear it," returned Carrie, in rather a sharp voice; "and I think, knowing how weak you are, you should not try any of those absurd experiments you are so fond of. I can see you have scared Estrild nearly out of her wits."

She looked from one to the other with a suspicious glance full of fear; then she took Estrild's hand, and drew her towards the door.

"Are you going?" asked Gilbert wistfully, his large eyes fixed on them with the gaze of a child who dreaded to be left alone. He had risen during Carrie's speech, and, aided by her arm, had gained his couch, on which he lay back still faint and weak.

"I will stay with you if you wish it," said Estrild.

"He does not wish it," interposed Carrie sharply. "Tell her so, Gilbert—tell her you are best left alone after these attacks."

"Yes, that is true," he answered, with a deep sigh. "You had better leave me, Estrild."

Carrie did not wait for another word; she drew Estrild away and closed the door.

"I would never let you go in there again if I had my way," she said, as she almost dragged Estrild down the stairs. "I was foolish enough once to listen to him, till I got very ill as a warning; then I stopped."

"A warning?" queried Estrild.

"Yes; a warning that one must not meddle with the next world while one lives in this one."

Estrild felt that she could not argue the questiou; she was still too bewildered to think clearly, and the haze resting on her mind seemed to cover also the vision she had seen; so that she had no fear regarding it—no sufficient beli f in it to cause her anxiety or dread. In the same dazed way she listened mechanically to Carrie's words without their having any effect or influence on her.

"It was Tom who saved me," continued Carrie. "Thank goodness, he is the very incarnation of common sense! It is by his wish that I see Gilbert as seldom as possible."

"But that is not kind," said Estrild.

They were in the little back-parlour now, and Carrie turned and stared at her.

"Kind!" she repeated. "There is not a word in the English language so misused as that. Would it be kind to the others to allow myself to be driven out of my senses? A nice mill-stone I should be round mother's neck then, instead of being a help to her. And would it be kind to Tom?"

"I don't know," returned Estrild; "you bewilder me a little."

"That's because you have just had your senses drawn out of you by one of Gilbert's wizard tricks, and so you can't see things in the right light."

"Was it a trick?" asked Estrlld, rousing herself from the

strange torpor into which she had fallen.

"Ah, I was certain he had played the wizard, and taken you in before your own eyes!" exclaimed Carrie. "I know it by your dazed look. The whole thing is a delusion—mind that; so don't be persuaded out of your senses. Oh here's Tom! Now you shall hear his opinion of Gilbert's magic."

The young man, whom Carrie now introduced as Mr. Ashleigh, had a bright honest face, a small neat figure, and a brisk manner which was pleasant, though slightly too free and easy.

The introduction being over, he perched himself astride a music-stool, and scanned Carrie from head to foot with an admiring smile.

"That's a tip-top gown, Carrie and you are looking first-rate!
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Waren't you discussing something like a pair of big-wigs when I came in?"

Estrild was silent; such odd familiarity, such queer manners, were new to her. Carrie's sweetheart appeared to her as an odiously vulgar person with a peculiar phraseology of his own.

"We were talking of Gilbert," said Carrie.

"Oh, poor fellow, he is perfectly cracked, and believes he can peep and pry into the middle of the next year and the business of the next world! In my opinion such things are best left alone; our work in this world is as much as we can man-

"I do not consider my cousin in the least crazed," returned Estrild coldly. "You must remember that we are not all built

on the same plan."

"Quite true, miss. One fellow can go down the crater of Mount Vesuvius and peep at the eternal fires; another fellow, if he tried it, would be scorched up. Now, Carrie, pop on your bonnet, or we shall lose the tuning-up of the fiddles. It is a weakness of mine to be in good time for everything."

Caarie, in prompt obedience, quitted the room; and then her

lover, with quite another manner, turned to Estrild.

"For her sake I always speak of her brother's strange powers in a jesting way," he said. "Pray excuse it, Miss Carbonellis. I assure you it is a necessity to make her think lightly of them. At one time he had great influence over her, with the result to her of ruined health. She was sleepless, and was always seeing ghosts; she is not the sort of person who can descend craters and stand the smell of sulphur."

"But surely my cousin's power—if he possesses occult power, as you suppose—is not an evil one?" expostulated Estrild

anxiously.

"It is evil when it does harm, which it certainly did to Car-

"It would not hurt me," Estrild answered.

He looked at her with a pair of searching light-blue eyes. They were insignificant eyes apparently, with overhanging lids and light brows, but they were eyes that saw clearly and had honest truth in them.

"I think you are mistaken in yourself," he rejoined. "I should imagine that you were peculiarly sensitive to such influences. And is there not some story of tradition in your

family which makes it the more dangerous for you to tread on forbidden ground, because it might strengthen the—the gloomy faith you have in misfortune?"

"You needn't have hesitated over my sad belief in the fate that befalls us," said Estrild. "Our history proves that I have

cause enough for my gloomy faith."

"I have heard the story," resumed Tom, "and I don't pretend to understand it. But, if I were in your place, I would never think of it at all, or allow it to influence my life. I must tell Carrie to introduce you to my little friend Mary Armstrong. She is a perfect antidote against unhealthy thoughts; she did Carrie a world of good."

"Armstrong! Is she related to Captain Armstrong who was

drowed the other day ?".

"She is his daughter and only child, and the queerest, quaintest little creature—one moment a baby, and the next a woman and——"

"I have no wish to make her acquaintance, thank you!" interrupted Estrild. "It would be too painful—my brother met his

de th on the deck of her father's ship."

Yes; I am sorry I had forgotten that. But she would do you good if you could bear to see her—not now, but when she returns to London; she is away at present. Miss Carbonellis, I have something to tell you, and I have tried to talk away my unwillingness to speak because—well, because I fear it is bad news."

"What is it?" asked Estrild, in sharp fear. "You must tell

it now?"

"Perhaps there is no cause for alarm; but at Mr. Olver's chambers they are getting anxious about him. He has not written or sent any news of himself since the night he left so suddenly, when he wrote those few words wich I brought to you."

"He said he should be away a few days. How long ago is it

now?" she said, pressing her hand on her forehead.

"Ten days, I think," said Tom. "And this morning, having a holiday, I think I couldn't do better than gather all the par-

ticulars I could for you."

"Yes—you are very kind;" and Estrild looked at him vaguely, not seeing his frank face, seeing only again, as in the crystal, Harold's figure, white angeworn, stooping over a dying man. "An with a for the —or it Curlew and it t mouth "Go

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"Gone to sea?" repeated Estrild; and again there floated

dimly before her the vision in the crystal.

"Well, the Curlew is gone to sea," said Mr. Ashleigh, as if anxious to speak with the utmost correctness. "Do you know anything of her?"

"Oh, yes!—and I know her owner and captain, Daniel Pas-

coe."

"Then in that case," continued Tom, quite relieved. "I pre-

sume there is no cause for anxiety."

"No_I think not; only I cannot imagine why Harold should go back to Cornwall, or why Daniel should come to London, unless"—and her face flushed as with sudden pain—"they have received information which has sent them again on a wild quest."

"But in that case would not Mr. Olver have written to you?" Estrild clasped her hands tightly together, and strained her eyes if beholding some inward vision before she answered.

"No; I have no right to hope for a letter. My brother's death has parted me from Mr. Olver."

"Do you mean you have broken off your engagement with him?" asked practical Tom Ashleigh, in astonishment.

"Yes—I mean that. I promised my brother that if the old mystery that pursues us was connected with his death I would never marry." She broke down suddenly here, not weeping, but covering her face with her hands, as though to shut from her eyes some dreadful sight.

Tom was silent for a moment, partly in pity, partly in wonder, such thought and feeling being so strange to him, living his life in all the realism of London, whose thronged streets have no place for the ghosts of the dead. Then too gropingly his mind was seizing the truth—that, in the hope to release her from the burden of her promise, Harold had flung himself into some wild adventure.

"Yours is a promise that cannot be kept," said Tom, with

quite firmness. "I hope the letter I left at Mr. Olver's chambers was to recall him."

The slender hands still covering her face could not hide the warm flush that rose to it now as she said "Yes," in a voice scarcely audible. Then, having spoken, her hands fell, and she looked up, with a quick fear springing to her eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Ashleigh, it was a solemn promise—an earnest, dreadful promise; and I have done wrong to break it in spirit! You see, Fate has stepped in to prevent me from breaking it in reality. Harold has not received my recall—will never receive it now. Mr. Ashleigh, you must fetch back that letter."

"I'll be hanged if I do!" said Tom, slapping the top of his hat, which rested on his knee, with a broad hand. "A thing done can't be undone; the letter will stop where it is. And I trust Mr. Olver will read it before the world is a week older. Oh, here you are at last, Carrie; and I hope you are ashamed of yourself for having taken about an hour to put your bonnet on. If it took me as long to ram my hat on my head as it does a woman to fix a flimsy bit of ribbon and gauze on hers, I'd go bareheaded all my life."

"Don't talk, Tom; my bonnet is good substantial straw, and I have not taken a minute to put it on. I have been dressing mother, and mending all her hooks-and-eyes. Somehow she is always like the kings of Israel in grief—she is constantly rending her gramments."

ing her garments."

"You are a little humbug—full of excuses!" retorted Tom, putting his arm around her affectionately, utterly regardles of the bad taste of the proceeding in Estrild's presence. "And now, if there is nobody else to mend, I suppose we may start at once."

A minute or two more of noise, bustle, and laughter, and Estrild was left alone in the dead dusty silence of the London

back-parlour.

Thoughts, feelings, fears, hopes, an indistinguishable throng, crowded in upon her mind, crossing and recrossing the one dominant sense of bewilderment, of painful groping for one clear thread of light amid all the dark clouds of uncertainty that gathered around her.

Was it indeed true that Harold was gone to sea? If so, then Gilbert was no charlatan, deceiving her and perhaps himself, but who had power as he had asserted, to see "things in a glass"

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so, then self, but a glass darkly" which were hid from common sight. But then what did the whisper mean that had touched her ear as from some faraway breath wafted across the surging of the sea? Was it a true voice or a delusion! Joan of Arc heard voices, and the world called her mad to this day. Surely the world was wrong! And in its wrong-headedness it burnt her, because she had gifts it could not comprehend. But such gifts could not be unlawful, since they were given to a woman so noble and so pure. Yet she might not have coveted them; and they brought her sorrow and the stake.

As her thoughts reached this stage, Estrild looked up with a sudden flush of fear. What had she gained by the momentary gaze into things beyond her sense? Only pain, only grief; for the vision showed Harold worn with sickness, and the words of the voice—a dying voice, that would not dare to lie—strengthened the mystery of Tristram's death, and brought her vow again into her mind with a burning sense of shame for having striven to break it.

"Oh, Harold, if you have indeed sailed away—perchance in anger—for some distant land, it is better so—better that you and I should meet no more!"

She wept a little as her thought took shape in these words, but started up and wiped her tears hastily as the sound of an opening door and the creak of an ugly step showed her that in another moment her solitude would be broken in upon by the odious presence of Mr. Vicat.

He came in large and smiling, as with some new triumph

shining on his coarse face.

"So you are quite alone, my dear, and they are all gone off

to their pleasure-seeking?"

"They are gone with Mr. Ashleigh," said Estrild, not looking up from the book she had seized under the pretence of reading.

"Ah, so much the better! I wanted to have a quiet talk with

you. And you have seen your cousin-my dear son?"

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"Well, of course you like him—you feel interested in him?"
Estrild began to tremble. What did he mean by these
questions? They roused her indignation, she knew not why.

"I perceive that Gilbert is very ill," she answered, "and I feel

sorry for him."

"He is not so ill as he appears," said Mr. Vicat. "It is astonishing how his strength lasts, in spite of his extraordinary abstinence at times from food and sleep. In fact he is a mystery to us all; but I am in hopes, my dear, that you will understend him, and will eventually restore him to himself and to us. You guess perhaps that the earnest desire of my heart is to see you both happy—with each other."

A flush of scornful indignation rose to Estrild's face as she looked up at the coarse man who uttered this; but for the pitiful sake of his dying son she held back her disgust and

anger.

"I will thank you, uncle, never again to speak such words as those to me. I warn you that if you do so I will quit your house."

"That is an impossible threat," said Mr. Vicat, with quiet satisfaction. "Your father's will, and my power through it, cannot be set aside by the caprice of a girl."

Vexed tears rose to Estrild's eyes, but she kept silent.

"You remain under my guardianship till you are of age, or till your marriage—with my consent," resumed Mr. Vicat. "And I trust you will soon see that your best chance of happiness lies in the choice I have indicated."

"Can you not see," exclaimed Estrild, with intense indignation, "that by the utterance of such a horrible idea you separate me from my unfortunate cousin—you prevent me from being friendly and helpful to him—you shut me out altogether from his presence? I shall never go to see him again."

She rose to leave the room; but Mr. Vicat stood between her and the door, and his big hot hand seized her by the arm.

"Sit down, girl," he said sternly, "and listen to what I have to say. I have something to tell you. I know that you are nursing a delusion. You fancy you will one day marry that fortune-hunting penniless barrister, Harold Olver; but the sooner you clear your mind of that fancy the better. The young man is dead."

"Why tell me such a falsehood?" asked Estrild, as her heart quaked within her and the blood flew from her face, leaving it white as snow.

"I am not in the habit of telling falsehoods," said Mr. Vicat, with a sort of pompous indignation. "Sit down, my dear; you

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Ir. Vicat, lear; you are a little overcome. Now, if you can bear the details, I will give them."

Unable to speak, Estrild signed to him to go on; she kept her eyes fixed on him in dread, not believing him, and yet listening to his hard voice in terror that his words might be true.

"Knowing Olver was missing, I have been making inquiries lately; and I find that in company with a sailor he went on board——"

"The Curlew. Yes, yes—I know all that," interrupted Estrild, in impatient pain; "and he is gone to sea with Daniel."

"Pardon me! The Curlew sailed without her owner, and without Mr. Olver. He left that barque in disguise, and, in company with Daniel Pascoe, went to one of the lowest and vilest dens at the East-end of London. On leaving this place, dragging brutally with them some man whom they had seized, they were set upon by a press-gang A fight ensued in which Mr. Olver was flung into the river and drowned."

"Mr. Vicat, this is a hideous and cruel lie! How could you

khow all this?"

Estrild was standing now, and her blanched face, her eyes dilated by fear, seemed to cow Mr. Vicat. He paused in his narrative, and once more implored her to sit down.

"No," she answered; "and I want none of your pity or help.

Speak out all you have to say quickly."

"I had these details," continued Mr. Vicat, in a hardar tone, "from an official at the Mansion House. Daniel's nephew had applied for help, and gave the history of the night's proceedings as I have told you—except the fight with the press-gang; of that he knew nothing. He added that in the river he had found Mr. Olver's dog, shot through the head, and also his own hat, which that gentleman had worn as part of his disguise. Hence he feared foul play, and asked what he should do. He was then told a press-gang was out, and his friend had doubtless been seized; and he was advised to go home. He took that advice; he hoisted sail and away."

"Yes, it was a large ship," said Estrild dreamily, with her hand upon her forehead. "There is no such place in the Curlew as the one I saw. Oh, Harold is safe!" she added, as her hand

dropped and a smile broke on her face.

"Safe in heaven you mean?" resumed Mr. Vicat, with a quick sharp look.

"No; he is on board one of the King's ships," she answered firmly.

"May I ask from whom you received that remarkable piece of

information?' demanded Mr. Vicat.

Estrild gazed at him in the same dreamy way; she put out her hands gropingly, and grasped the back of a chair; a haze was over her eyes, through which Mr. Vicat's figure loomed out large and threatening, but indistinct.

Seeing her silent, he went on in quick sharp triumph-

"I ask that question because I am sorry any one should attempt to deceive you. I trust you will not allow yourself to be cheated by any deception, no matter of what kind. I have had ocular demonstration of the fact of Mr. Olver's death. I am just come away from identifying his body, which has been drawn from the Thames."

There was still not a word from the pale figure who clung trembling to her support and listened with that far-away look in her eyes as if she heard another and clearer voice than his.

"I went to the river-side," continued Mr. Vicat, inflating himself with a pompous sense of his own shrewdness, "when I quitted the Mansion House, in the certainty that I should gain fresh intelligence. And I did. I laid hold of a fishy kind of urchin who had seen the dead dog and had got his collar, which I bought of him. In reward for my liberality, he informed me with great glee that the drowned gentleman was at the waterhouse, 'drawed out of the water this mornin' and nobody knows 'im,' he said. Upon this, my dear, I made my way to that place saw the poor corpse, and identified it as being Mr. Olver's. Tomorrow I shall have to attend the inquest and give evidence to this effect. I hope you believe now what I have told you. And pray do not grieve for a man whom only a disgraceful errand could have drawn to the vile place he vis ted that night."

He came near and put out his big hand to touch hers; and Estrild awoke from her strange stupor, and drawing back, she

looked him in the face with steadfast eyes.

"I do not believe a word you have uttered!"

"Good heavens," broke in Mr. Vicat—"this is mere mad obstinacy! Why, the history and the inquest will be in the papers to-morrow!"

"Will that prove it true?" asked Estrild, in the same cold

calm voice.

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In answer Mr. Vicat only shrugged his shoulders, as if her words were not worthy of reply.

"But, true or untrue," she continued, "it can make no difference to my fate, for, whether Harold be dead or living, I shall never be wife to any man."

She let go her hold of the chair to which she had clung, and walked with quick firm step to the door. Mr. Vicat sprang forward and opened it for her, and the look on her white face, as she passed out, haunted him for an hour afterwards, till, with greedy haste, he had eaten a good dinner at the hotel to which Carrie's domestic tactics had driven him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The inquest was over, and the drowned man dragged from the river, whom no one claimed, whom no one recognized, was positively identified by Mr. Vicat as the missing Harold Olver. In vain the old laundress from his chambers protested her doubt, and declared that never in his life had he worn aaything but the finest of linen in his shirts, and that such garments as those found on the dead man were not his, and never could be his. This ob jection was met by the acknowledged fact that he had quitted the Curlew in disguise; and this, added to the other and stronger fact that he was still missing and that Mr. Vicat swore this poor disfigured corpse was his, decided the verdict of the jury, and Mr. Harold Olver was declared to be found drowned, but how, and by what means, there was no evidence to show. The pressgang was left out of the question; no one liked to animadvert on the doings of a body so powerful, who acted within their legal rights in seizing seamen; but each juryman in his own mind came to the conclusion that Harold had defended himself and been drowned in the struggle. His companion, who was an undoubted sailor, had certainly been carried off; but the fleet had sailed, and neither his evidence nor that of any other sailor within its wooded walls could be procured. The Curlew also was at sea-hence Michael was no more within reach of the Coroner's summons than the others.

And meanwhile the drowned man had to be buried, and it was not until a fortnight had elapsed after his funeral that a cousin of his arrived from Ireland, who paid for it honourably, though at the same time protesting that he did not in the least believe that he ought to do so, as he had a shrewd notion that his relative was still alive somewhere on the face of the sea or the land, and would turn up one day and repudiate the debt.

In this belief he sealed up Harold's papers, including Estrild's

letter, which for a moment he looked at curiously.

"A lady's hand," he said, the gleam of a smile in his eyes, which vanished in the quick pang which touched his heart as he thought of the hopeless waiting of the writer for an answer that would never come.

"Shall I open this, find her name, and return it to her?" he asked himself. But, after balancing the letter irresolutely for a moment in his hand, he laid it with the others. "She'll read of the inquest," he said, as he sealed the packet; "that will be enough. I'll not pry into any man's affairs, dead or living."

And with this he took his departure, and Harold's chambers were left to silence and dusty desolation.

Yes; Estrild read the account of the inquest; and more—she heard it daily discussed in Mr. Vicat's hardest tones, his voice like a hammer driving conviction into heart and brain that Harold was dead, and the world for her was empty of love—a melancholy waste through which her life wandered meaningless and alone. Yet there rested within her soul a latent disbelief in this bitter sorrow; she was too young—earth could not show her its deserts so soon. So day by day she drooped in expectation of she knew not what—in sick hope of things dreamt of that never came. And through all she was in a maze of doubt, and a fever of longing was in her to seize upon the truth even if it brought despair.

In this mood, with thoughts heavy as death, she sought her cousin one weary evening, and implored his help.

"If you have the power," she said, looking piteously into his wild eyes, "show me the truth. Let me see Harold, dead or living."

"Are you come to me at last?" he asked reproachfully.

'He was whiter, thinner, more unearthly than on the day she last saw him, and for a moment her own sorrow was chased away by the sight of this greater sorrow of youth and life lying beneath a deadly blight.

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ully. he day she nased away ng beneath "Carrie has kept me away," Estrild said eagerly; "she told me you were too ill to see me, or I would have come sooner."

He looked up with a strangely sad smile.

"And you are come now to the soothsayer—not the cousin. But what if I cannnot help you? A gift not used perishes. For the last fortnight I have striven to numb my powers. I have fought them down, and even denied them."

Estrild had come to him in a faith that was half-mistrust, scarcely realising the strength of her sick yearning for his help

till he spoke thus hopelessly.

"Why have you done that?" she cried, in bitter disappointment.

"I thought you were like Carrie—afraid of what you could not understand. I was anxious not to shock you—for I want a friend, not a convert. So I have left books unopened and half-tried experiments untouched. To-night I am but a poor helpless invalid. You can comfort me; but I can call upon no occult power to comfort you."

"And would it be useless to look in your crystal?" she asked

wistfully.

"Try it, and see," he answered, as he took it from the cabinet and gave it to her. "Now let me hold your other hand."

But there was no power in the grasp to-night; the crystal remained dim, silent, dead, and E-trild's longing eyes gazed down into it in vain. At times she fancied she saw within it a faint quiver like the trembling of a shadow in water, but all was vapoury and uncertain; and with faith fast vanishing she laid it down with a sigh.

But her cousin did not relinquish her hand; and as he held it in his tightened clasp she was dimly conscious of a subtle change in the touch of his fevered palm. It was a hand now all human, speaking, as it were, through her veins a piteous, inarticulate, human cry for companionship, and for something greater, stronger than friendliness—it was a touch that pleaded in dumb agony for love.

As a flush rose slowly in Estrild's face, so did he slowly relinquish his hold of her white hand, till it fell by her side as though for a moment rendered powerless by the mingled flame of pain, longing, and fear that had passed from his passionate veins to

For just an instant he kept silent, the shadow of some great

emotion quivering over his pale face; then it passed, and he spoke as though no fire had risen between him and her in the silence of that thrilling touch.

"You see, as I told you, my power is gone. I have beaten it down, and it is numb and dumb; there is no magic in the

crystal to-night."

"But will it not come again?" Estrild asked in eager anxiety.

"Do you wish for it?" he said. "Are you not afraid of such things, and is it not fear and repugnance that made you hold aloof from me?"

"I heard you were ill, and I did not like to trouble you with

my grief," she answered, as her eyes filled with tears.

"And now you come to me as to a poor magician, hoping to quell your grief. I wish I had the power," he added quickly. If it would bring you comfort, I would make myself a veritable soccerer if I could. But there is no sorcery in these things—they are all natural; only so few strive to know them—fear holds them back; and I thought you were, like Carrie, shaken with dread, and filled with a sort of compassionate hatred for the sorry wizard who dared to drag from earth and air and trembling flesh a few of the secrets they hold."

"I am not afraid for myself; I only feared for you when I saw you faint and ill. If it was by some natural power that that vision came into the crystal, then was what I saw and heard

true? Does Harold live?"

Her voice rang through his heart like the agonised cry of a creature in deadly peril imploring help and succour. Involuntarily he stretched out his hand as one does to one who is falling or drowning; but he drew it back quickly, clenching it and resting on it as though he needed the support himself that he dared not offer to her.

"If I were to say it was all a delusion, and her lover was dead,

it would be better for her, better for me."

This was his thought, coming upon him in a breath of fire; but he quenched it, and looked at her steadily and gravely.

"The crystal could not reflect what is non-existent; the vision

in it was true."

Her eyes were on his face—she saw he believed what he said; but her own belief was shaken.

"Oh, I cannot think it true," she said, "unless you will show it to me again!"

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"She does not count the cost to me," he thought painfully; but he smiled at her as he spoke. "Give me a week, and you shall have your wish."

He saw the quick breath of relief she drew—he saw the flash of hope in her eyes, and his own drooped over his inward pain.

"For news of her lover she will come to me, and still think of me with shrinking repugnance, half deeming me a wizard."

"A week is a long while; could it not be sooner?" Estrild said.

"A fortnight was longer," he answered; "yet you did not deem it so."

"Oh, how could I think of you in such a time of agony?" she

"No, you could not; and I am used to being forgotten. Now let us talk of other things. Are you happier here than you were?"

"How can I be happier in the anguish of this suspense? I am dying of it daily. Oh, you cannot dream of what I am suffering!"

"I know something of suffering too," he said quietly. "But I want you not to talk of pain. It will lengthen the week," he added, half smiling.

She flushed a little, and turned away her eyes from the sight of his pale face.

"I will talk of what you please—of anything that will do you good."

"It will please me to hear that you do not find this place so ugly and wretched as you first thought it."

"Well, I do think better of it." Estrild said; "for Carrie is always kind and helpful, and aunt is good, and the children are not always fighting. But Mr. Vicat is hateful, and ugly as ever. You do not expect me to change my opinion of him? I beg your pardon—I always forget he is your father."

"I wish I could forget it," he answered. "I suppose he is kind to you? He would be that for his own sake, to further his own plans; but do not let any simulated kindness on his part deceive you. Be on your guard always against him. Now I must show you the portrait of my mother as a sort of antidote," he added, with his melancholy smile. "I cannot let you hate both my parents."

He unlocked a drawer in his cabinet and took out a case, which

he opened; and Estrild saw that it contained four minatures; but he covered one hastily with his thin hand, holding it in such a way that she saw only the three others.

"This is my mother," he said a little eagerly, and with natural pride in the loveliness of the portrait. "And this is your father—her brother. Both those portraits were taken at Langarth

before her marriage."

Estrild gazed at the pictures with a pang at the heart. She had never seen a likeness of her father in early youth. Was it possible he ever had a face as joyous as this—so young—so like Tristram's? It gave her a little shock of safeprise akin to remorse to have him brought before her eyes in his youth. She had never thought of him as young—it is the lot of parents always to be old to their children; and now she saw that he too had had youth and love and sorrow like herself.

But she did not speak of him or of Tristram; her heart was

too full to utter their names.

"Your mother has a lovely face," she said to her cousin. "But who is this beautiful child with the golden hair and the happy blue eyes?"

Gilbert looked at her curiously.

"Surely you can guess whose likeness it was, and is not now?" he said, in a low voice. "Is it so very different from the one I showed you on your first visit?"

"Is it possible? Can it be yours?" she exclaimed; and then, ashamed of her own surprise, she checked herself and said no

more.

"It was painted long before the blow that made me a cripple," he answered. "Do not look at it. I shall put it away now."

He rose on saying this, and in doing so moved his hand from the picture it hid; and then Estrild saw that it was a copy of

the old portrait at Langarth.

"I am sorry you have seen this," he said. "I was afraid it would startle you. My mother painted it from the ancient portrait before she left home. She copied too the Arabic words at the back. Shall I show them to you?"

"Of what use will it be since I cannot read them?" returned

Estrild.

"But I have a translation of them," he answered; and, lifting the minature from the case, he drew forth a thin slip of paper, on whic

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nd, lifting of paper, on which, in a woman's hand, were written these doggrel lines—

"When Cumberland and Cornwall meet,
When bane is bliss and bitter sweet,
When man than horse shall prove more fleet,
And the rider lose, yet the race be won;
When hate by love shall be outdone,
This curse I leave shall be outrun,
And it and I

Together die,
The doom of Carbonellis cease.
My unblest spirit rest in peace."

"What nonsense are you reading there?" cried an unexpected voice.

And there was Carrie standing before them with an angry flush on her cheeks, though laughter was in her eyes.

"It is the translation Mary Armstrong made of the Arabic writing in the old Langarth picture of the Black Rider—the man who brings death to the house," said Gilbert.

"I should have thought Mary Armstrong had more sense than to write such contradictory rubbish," returned Carrie contemptuously. "There is not a single assertion in that prophecy that can come to pass."

"It was not intended to come to pass by the writer. He engraved it on the wall of the dungeon in bitter irony, that his brother might know his hatred would never cease, and his avenging spirit would haunt his descendants to their death through all time."

As Gilbert spoke, Carrie glanced at Estrild; her eyes were bright and dilated, her face was flushed, her lips were a little apart and trembling. The girl's own face flushed slightly with that sort of fear which is half-anger.

"So you two amuse yourselves with such stories as that, do you?" she said—"Black Riders who carry death-warrants, ghosts who have stalked out of dungeons, prophecies of impossibilities, and——"

"Oh, Carrie, don't!" cried Estrild, interrupting her in trembling accents, with a hot hand upon her arm. "Your laughter only fills me with horror; for we all die through that man's hate. My, father, my brother—are they not both gone? It is true, Carrie, he rides to Langarth and kills us with his presence."

Carrie shook off her hand angrily.

"If you are not mad," she said, "to believe such things is the way to get crazed; and, as for that man, he is no ghost—he is alive and in the flesh."

"My dear Carrie," expostulated Estrild, "that is impossible; this portrait is copied from a very ancient one at Langarth."

"Nonsense!" persisted Carrie. "It is the likenes of the man who came here and advised mother to go to Cornwall. I recognised him at once, though his portrait is taken in some queer old fancy dress."

She leaned over to look at it, and then Gilbert seized her arm.
"Oh, Carrie, what have you done? Why did you tell her

that?"

Then Carrie turned, and saw that Estrild was white as snow, and had clasped both her hands upon her forehead as if striving to shut out some dreadful sight.

"There is no dealing with you two!" exclaimed Carrie passionately. "You, with your wizard tricks, Gilbert, have nearly frightened me to death; and now, I suppose, Estrild——"

"No, Carrie, I will not frighten you," Estrild said. "For a moment I was startled, because your mother said at Langarth that this man had come to her, and I thought some chance likeness had deceived her; but now that you make the same assertion, I am obliged to believe it."

"Well, and can't you believe it without being scared out of your wits?" exclaimed practical Carrie. "There's no need to think the man a ghost because of his likeness to a ghastly old

picture that ought to be burnt and forgotten."

"If I were you, Carrie, and had lived your life, I should perhaps think and talk as you do; but my experience gives me other feelings. Let the matter rest now; I will not discuss it with you."

In saying this Estrild closed the case, and Carrie, seeing she was in earnest, shrugged her shoulders in silence. Neither she nor Gilbert, as he replaced the miniature in the cabinet, perceived that Estrild had retained the slip of paper bearing Mary Armstrong's writing.

Carrie went to the door, bidding him an abrupt good-night,

and waited there impatiently for Estrild to follow.

"Remember your promise," she whispered, holding his pale thin hand between both hers, forgetting he had a man's heart, and this occult p lover.

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and thinking of him only as the poor medium through whose occult power she might again see some vapoury vision of her lost lover.

He smiled into her beautiful face sadly.

"In a week," he whispered back; "but this must be a secret between you and me."

By his glance towards his sister, Estrild understood she must be silent to Carrie, and, with a pressure of her hand as she let his go, she gave him a promise of secrecy.

Left alone, he leaned his face forward on his hand, pressing his lips on the one she had touched, and all his frame quivered with a mad joy, which in an instant changed into a bitterness like unto death.

The week of waiting was nearly over, when one morning Carrie burst into the dingy back-parlor with her face brighter than usual.

"I am a better prophet than Gilbert!" she cried. "Here is the letter I predicted in your tea cup. It is black enough outside; I hope it is white within."

"It is from my cousin Pleasance!" said Estrild, seizing it eagerly.

"Is she a wholesome cousin, with a sound heart in her?" asked Carrie dubiously. "For my part, I should like to abolish cousins—they do a world of mischief. I am glad you have not been near Gilbert for nearly a week. I am very fond of him; but, for all that, I don't like a man to have dealings with the devil; and Tom is quite right in ordering me to keep away from him."

Estrild looked up for an instant from her letter.

"Superstition makes you cruel, Carrie."

"Superstition!" exclaimed Carrie. "Come, now, I admire that word from you, of all people."

"You believe in tea-leaves and omens, and you have a dream-

"Good healthy beliefs," said Carrie, blushing a little. "And have not the tea-leaves spoken truly? You have got your letter."

Estrild had turned the page of the second sheet of the large letter-paper; her face wore a deeper look of pain and grief than even these last weeks of anxiety and suspense had settled on it.

"Oh, Carrie, Harold must indeed be dead! There is no news of him or of Daniel at Langarth. The Curlew has returned, and Michael came to Pleasance as she was finishing her letter, and entreated her to ask me if I had heard from either of them. Carrie, how shall I live through this anguish of suspense? What shall I do—what can I do to solve this mystery?"

"Come with me and see Mary Armstrong," said Carrie." She returned to London yesterday. There's a strong armful of help

in that queer girl."

"See the daughter of the man who shielded an assassin! No,

Carrie-I cannot do that."

"You would rather go to Gilbert and peep into the devil's looking-glass!" said Carrie, in anger. "Well, go if you like; you'll get no good by it. I told you there was a black spot in your letter; you ought to believe me more than you do him."

Carrie's superstition was all of the vulgar and commonplace order, and it never caused her discomfort, whereas the mysteries

on which Gilbert touched filled her with horror.

"It is only a black spot," she continued, "and it will pass away. It's just mourning—that's all. My goodness, if Tom were dead, poor fellow, I should cry my eyes out; but I should wipe them at last and comfort myself. And that is what you

ought to do."

Estrild was not listening, With dry eager eyes she was reading the details Pleasance gave—that Michael had given to her of Harold's last evening on board the Curlew. So now she knew it was for her sake he had risked his life, and perhaps lost it—for her sake he had ventured into some dreadful den in search of the assassin who had shot Tristram, and it was here maybe he had met his death. Or was it—could it be possible—that he had found that murderer, and that he and Daniel were now held in some secret place in bondage by him and his companions?

Tormented by fear, doubt, and all the anguish of her great love, is it strange that, when a tiny messenger brought her a slip of paper on which was written, "Come to-night, when all is still—I shall be ready at one o'clock," her heart leaped thankfully, and she resolved to keep the appointment thus made? No thought of its imprudence struck her. She never thought of Gilbert or of herself; all her soul was fixed on Harold—she craved only for news of him, even from the occult and unknown

world with which her soothsayer cousin dealt.

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The household was asleep, silence reigned everywhere, save for the distant rumble of late wheels, when with beating heart and quiet step she sought her cousin's sitting-room. A low fire was burning in the grate, a pung nt odour filled the room, mingled with a light smoke like a faint cloud of incense. Through this, as it appeared to her, Gilbert held out his hand to welcome her; but he did not speak. On the contrary, he put his finger on his lip for silence and motioned her to a seat beside him. Then she looked into his face and saw it attenuated and pale except for a hectic spot, as though a burning finger had touched him on either cheek. It was on her lips to say, "You have fasted horribly;" but she refrained, because of his continued gesture of sileuce. On a small table before her stood a lamp, with its light lowered to dimness, and beside it lay the two crystals, and a slip of paper on which was written, "We must not speak until the experiment is over. Keep your nerve."

Estrild read this and bowed her head in grave acquiescence. She was conscious of no fear, but only of an eager longing to see,

to hear, to know.

Her right hand was still held fast in Gilbert's; his left hand passed over her face once, twice, thrice, and she fell into a dream—another phase of existence came upon her. She was no longer in the close room with clouds of incense rising round and about her; she was on the deck of a ship in the midst of a calm sea, the blue of which seemed to glow in the blaze of a terrible sun. Round about the gangway stood a small crowd with heads uncovered, and amidst them a shrouded figure lying prone and helpless, its every line dumbly, awfully proclaiming death.

Then, amid the stillness, to Estrild's ear a slight murmur arose, which gradually resolved itself into the sound of a single voice, faint and low, as though afar off, although she seemed to be standing among them close by the speaker, striving eagerly to

look at the shrouded face of the dead man.

"We therefore commit his body to the deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body, when the sea shall give up her dead."

Estrild saw the falling of the corpse into the waves; but she heard no more. A sound like the crash of thunder awoke her from her trance; she shrieked aloud. Gilbert had let go her hand, and was standing confronting his father in speechless terror. Mr. Vicat stood at the door, which he had flung open

violently; his face was bloodless, and his eyes shone out of it bright with the fire of a vindictive triumph.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Far away at sea this great ship lay becalmed, her mainsails for it was idle to set them when not a breath stirred the air. not a cloud crossed the sky, It was blue as sapphire, and the sea bluer still, upon whose unchanged surface there ran no ripple longer than a lady's finger; though a long, wide, heaving swell moved the mass of waters, as though some great storm, dying leagues away, spent here its last majestic strength.

Round about in the clear distance lay a little fleet of ships standing motionless as on a glassy ocean, and silent as though all life within them had fainted into death in the cruel sun. These were merchant-ships bound for India, which the great frigate and the sloop of war a mile ahead were convoying safely on their way—a hateful task to men thirsting for battle, who deemed that every day's sail bore them farther from the enemy whose cannon they longed to face.

In the quiet stifling monotony of the present calm even a funeral had some excitement in it for weary men; and, as a silent procession moved to the gangway, those who took no part in it looked on with interest, and stood uncovered, and listened reverently to the solemn words that rang out into the clear still air; then for an instant the voice ceased, and on the silence there broke a sound that quivered on the heart; and all men knew the dead had gone down to his grave in the sea.

Below, on the middle deck, a sick man, sleeping, moved uneasily in his hammock; and with eyes still closed he clutched at a kind hand touching his, as though seized with a spasm of terror or of pain. Then, awakening suddenly with a start, he gazed wildly into the face bending over him.

"Who shrieked?" he cried. "What lady is come aboard? Daniel, as I live, I swear I heard Estrild's voice!"

"Dear lad, you are wandering still," said Daniel, soothingly.

"The sound you heard was the body of that whisht creetur
Trevel dropping into the sea. I am glad he is gone: he did but

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torment you with his half-told confessions, which I reckon were mostly lies."

"Ah, Daniel and his secret is gone down into the sea with

him !"

"No, no—not all of it. You remember, as we leaned over him, and caught his last breath, he lifted his hand feebly and said, 'An accident—as I hope for mercy, only an accident.' There, dear lad—those were his dying words; you must be content with them—you must seek to know no more."

"Then Daniel, I may as well give up life. The woman I love has forsaken me because of this maddening mystery, and unless

I clear it up I shall see her face no more."

"What's a maiden's word?" returned Daniel. "By this time, now her grief is spent a bit, she is repenting, and her heart is calling out for you every hour of the day."

"Do you think so?" Harold asked, with a feeble hope. "I fear there is no relenting in a resolve so fixed as hers; she is

bound by a promise, Daniel, to the dead."

"And by a promise to the living too," said Daniel cheerfully.

"Bless my heart, my son, are you nobody, that you think she can send you away out of her life like a straw floating on the wind?"

"Not so lightly as that, Daniel; I have faith in her love still. Now why did she come to Trevel's funeral?" he asked, and his

voice shook with sudden fear again.

"You are roadling [wandering] a bit, my son;" and Daniel passed his cool hand soothingly over the sick man's brow. I reckon it ain't possible in natur' for a lady to walk over a thousand miles of sea, and then vanish like a breath; not but what I'm ready enough to awn there's things in the airth that we can't measure with a six-fathom line o' rope. So may-be she have come to 'ee in a dream like, just to bring 'ee a croomb of comfort."

"A dream!" repeated Harold. "Well, it might be; but it was vivid as reality. I saw her, plainly, Daniel, except her right hand—that was hidden as in a cloud; on her left she still

wore my ring."

Daniel was silent; his face was grave, and he strove to hide it from his friend.

"I know what you are thinking of," Harold said presently.
"But she is not dead Daniel—it was no ghost I saw."

"Well, sonny boy that's cheering," resumed Daniel, treating

Harold in his weakness as if he were a child. "Now you can

sleep and dream of her again if you will."

"No; I want to talk. I must tell you of something I have on my mind. Daniel, when I saw her in my dream, I knew she thought I was dead, and it was my body she saw launched into the deep. I struggled, I fought as against a legion to tell her I was living; but at the instant Trevel's corpse struck the water she shrieked, and darkness fell between me and her, and she was gone."

"Well, I don't say as the dream edn't queer; but in faiver dreams are uncommon cur'ous at times. And you know you fell asleep with whisht thoughts of Trevel in your mind, having

heerd he was to be buried this mornin'."

Harold did not contradict this, but the painful look of anxiety on his face did not pass away through Daniel's arguments.

"I cannot understand the conviction I have," he said uneasily; but I know and feel she believes me dead. Who can tell what will happen if her belief is strengthened in some strange way unknown to us? She is in bad hands Daniel."

"Well, yes," said Daniel unwillingly; Mr. Vicat is a poor Christian, I do fear; but his wife is a good lady."

"There is no help in her, Daniel; my poor darling would appeal to her in vain."

Daniel was silent; he searched about his big heart for words of consolation, but could find none. It was filled with an infinite pity for the poor brave boy, as he called Harold, who had been so ruthlessly seized and driven into fever, and was now dragged across the ocean, leaving his love ignorant of his fate. Daniel's compassion rose often in his throat chocking back speech, so Harold was used to his silence. It was enough for him that he was there by his side, ready to help and cheer when needful.

A little time went by, and then a slight rustle broke the stillness—it was as though the ship had quivered as an aspen-tree

does when its pale leaves feel the coming wind.

"Here's the breeze at last!" cried Daniel joyously. "Now
this will drive away dreams and faiver, and you'll be on your legs
again soon, like a man."

"Shall we touch anywhere soon? Will there be a chance to

write?" asked Harold anxiously.

Before Daniel could answer, Joe thrust the sail aside which

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shielded the hospital from the rest of the deck, and displayed a face alight with excitement.

"The sloop is signalling to us to crowd all sail. The French fleet is ahead, and we shall have a fight. Lor, Mr. Olver, how I do wish you was well enough to be in it! But, there, you shall have my share of the prize-money—I promise 'ee that."

The men did not laugh; to win a battle was a foregone conclusion always with a British sailor. To be beaten by Frenchmen was one of the impossibilities of the sea which never entered into his calculation.

The prospect of a fight sets even sick veins tingling, and Harold started up in his hammock with a new strength in him.

"Daniel, if there is a battle, I'll not lie here to be shot like a dog in his kennel. I'll stand to a gun while there's life in me to hold up."

"Steady now!" said Daniel. "I reckon we are more likely to run than to tight. They merchantmen haven't no stomach for a battle; they're stuffed full of riches, which they're bound to save if they can. 'Tis poor men love the smell of powder, not rich wauns."

"I shall be shaamed to show my faace to hoam if we run afore Frenchees," said Joe, in indignation; "it ain't likely sich a thing will happen to we."

The great ship creaked and quivered as sail after sail was crowded on her masts, and now, as they caught the freshening breeze, she sprang forward like a thing of life; and the rush of her course through the waves was as the sound of a thousand horses dashing into battle.

Harold flung himself back on his pillow with his new strength gone, while a blank look of dismay settled itself on Joe's young face, and Daniel's looked grave and white.

"We be showing 'em a clean pair of heels, sure 'nough," he said. "I reckon we're outnumbered—ten to waun perhaps."

"Go on deck, Daniel, I entreat you, and bring me back word," said Harold feverishly.

Daniel went, while Joe, looking after him, dashed his hand across his eyes to hide the tears of rage that had risen in them.

"Ten to waun!" he exclaimed. "Well, what if we be? "Tis fair odds enough, considerin' we be English agin' French."

"You must count guns, Joe, not men," said Harold, with a faint smile. "French guns are as good as English ones."

"No, I'm darned if they be!" returned Joe sturdily. "There's flesh and blood and grit behind our guns; and there's only skin and bone and fright behind theirs. Lor, what's that? Is it lightning?"

The heavy boom of a gun whose flash he had seen answered

him; and now the boy flung up his hands in delight.

"I knowed we shouldn't run! Whoever heerd of a British ship running afore a French fleet? Now they'll cotch it hot, I reckon, and we shall have frogs for breakfis'."

"Clear decks for action!" cried a stentorian voice.

The order rang through all ears like a trumpet, and was

obeyed with a swiftness past words to tell.

The low fever that had settled on Harold's veins left him as by some magic touch of healing. He sprang from his hammock, and dressed himself with hurried hands, and, in that superhuman strength that excitement lends, he stood by a gun, and worked like a giant.

Joe kept by him, handing powder till he was black, and even through the thunder of the guns his shouts of delight and his

quaint remarks brought a smile on the men's faces.

The French frigate that had fired the first gun now came to close action. Right between her and the fleet of merchantmen she and her sister-ships had hoped to capture dashed the gallant little sloop. Swinging round in the wind like a bird with wide white wings, she brought her guns to bear, and poured a raking fire upon her enemy. The great French ship seemed to stagger beneath the blow, and her cannon answered wildly, their shots falling wide of the mark and dropping harmlessly into the sea. In vain the four great French liners near by strove in the light wind to come to her aid. Their huge unwieldy hulls showed bristling lines of fire which were but wasted on the waves, as the sails flapped on their tall masts or brought them slowly onwards, while the brisk sloop tacked and turned, and sent forth flame upon flame, followed by shots that fell with telling certainty.

The English frigate had dropped firing on her first enemy, leaving her to the sloop, while, slowly tacking, she sent a broad-side against the ponderous ships bearing down upon her amid smoke and flame and the deafening roar of their great guns.

Suddenly in the midst of the din a cheer rose which shook the troubled air. The French frigate had lowered her flag to the sloop! Was it true, or was it a good British shot that had

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While eyes peered anxiously through the smoke, and this question passed voiceless from heart to heart, a strange thing happened. The four French line-of-battle ships, drawing ever nearer, ceased their fire suddenly, then tacked, turned, and fled. The disabled frigate hastened to follow, and the sloop, as though bewildered by what she saw, let her go silently away.

Gradually the smoke cleared and the sun shone down upon the battle-field of waters. Then was seen the reason for the French flight. In the offing, standing out majestic against the sky, rode the English fleet, the great admiral's pennant streaming out from the foremast like a defiance to the world.

"It is Nelson's ship, the Victory!"—and men shook hands with each other, and eyes blazed and shone between laughter and tears, and every heart beat high with the hope and joy of coming battle.

How calm, how quiet, how fearless the gallant ships looked, as with wide silent wings they bore down upon the retreating defences of France! But from the first the pursuit was hopeless; the French ships had the wind with them now, and they flew like birds into the dim clouds.

Then a certain ship separated herself from the English fleet, and drew near to ask for details of the short sharp battle whose din and roar had drawn them thither. On her deck was drawn up a red line of British soldiers, from whose ranks there burst a cheer as the two ships came within hailing distance.

Harold heard the cheer, but scarcely heeded it. He was in the cockpit, bending over poor Joe, who was badly wounded. All around lay the victims of war; pain was lord of this hour, blood was everywhere, and, amid cries and groans, the surgeon and assistant were doing roughly a gory work.

"Save me" whispered Joe, clutching at Harold's arm. "They want to cut off my leg; but I'd sooner die than let'em chop me to pieces as they are them other poor chaps."

"The Army doctor from the ship that has troops aboard is coming over to help us," said Daniel, in a low voice. "We'll keep those rough fellows from you, Joe, if we can, till he is here."

"This is not a pressing case," said Harold to the assistantsurgeon, who was but an apprentice. "It can wait." "Very well," returned that incompetent young man, turning away gladly.

And so it happened that Joe's leg was saved; and the pale quiet surgeon who now dressed the wound looked up after the last bandage was on, and stared earnestly into Harold's face.

"Good heavens, Olver, what are you doing here?" he cried.
"Is it you, Pemberton?" exclaimed Harold, leaning against a
bunk in utter exhaustion. "I am thankful to see some one who
recognizes me. I am supposed here to be a deserter from his
Majesty's service; and, if I had not been struck down by fever,

I should at this minute be in irons."

"Surely you are romancing!" returned the other in amazement.

"We was all seized by a press-gang—me and uncle and Mr. Olver," broke in Joe; "and we was took aboard ship like thieves in handcuffs, and a scamp who's drowned now swore Mr. Olver wasn't hisself, but a fellow caaled Bill Rough'un or some outlandish name. That's how it was, sir, and I don't mind now, because I've seen a fight. Only uncle ought to have been put ashore at Falmouth; but the Captain he had sealed orders, and when he opened 'em he said he couldn't do it."

"And no harm done, my son, since I was glad to bide with

Mr. Olver when he was so bad with the faiver."

"I believe I should have gone overboard with Trevel but for

you, Daniel," said Harold.

"You are fit only for hospital now," observed his friend Pemberton. "Come with me; I shall speak to the Captain at once."

When Harold, thin, pale, and ghastly from fatigue and wasting fever, appeared on the quarter-deck, attired still in Martin's sailor-clothes, there was a slight commotion; but his old friend Pemberton was by his side, and beside the first lieutenant of the ship stood his still older friend Colonel Pemberton And, when this gentleman, with a cry of recognition and surprise, rushed forward and grasped his hand, the drama was complete, and there was nothing further to be done but to treat the affair as a sort of blundering joke, and with somewhat awkward apologies restore the supposed deserter to his rightful position. But this did not smooth down the annoyance felt on both sides, so that, when Colonel Pemberton proposed that Harold should come on board the troop-ship, it was hailed as a relief from a disagreeable dilemua.

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The fleet of merchantmen was to be convoyed safely to the Cape, and here Daniel was assured of a free passage in some ship bound for England. Joe the Captain of the frigate would not part with, so Harold had to say good-bye to both his staunch friends.

"I would not leave you, Daniel," he said, "but for my resolve to accept the cadetship offered me, and go on to India."

"You are chasing a ghost, Mr. Olver," returned Daniel. "It

would be wiser to come home from the Cape with me."

"To what end, Daniel—still to find a fixed horror on Estrild's mind, destroying her happiness and my own—again to make myself a wanderer, with less chance of success than I have now?"

"Where's your chance, Mr. Olver? Trevel's dead—you can't fish his secret up from the sea or hunt it down on the land."

"On Indian ground I hope to find it Daniel. Reflect on what

Trevel said when you were watching him?"

"The man was raving, sir; and mad words wouldn't, hang a rat!"

"But he spoke of India," persisted Harold. "He kept crying out, 'I never touched the pistol! The hand that fired it is safe in India. Wrecked? No, no; water won't drown him nor fire burn him. He shall hang unless I get the money I want. Let me go, I say, that I may travel on to him that thinks he's dead, and let him know he's living! Now, Daniel, have I correctly stated his words or not?" concluded Harold pleadingly.

"They are true as print," said Paniel, shaking his head sor-

rowfully; "but they don't prove nothing."

and I go there in find him!"

"They prove this," cried Harold eagerly—"that by some means unknown to us—all the crew of the *Alert* being dead, now Trevel is gone—Captain Armstrong succeeded in saving the assassin of Tristram Carbonellis. And that man is now in India,

"Well, Mr. Olver, I can't stop you," said Daniel gravely; "but I want you to bear waun thing in mind. When Trevel brain was clear, and his soul was leaving him—which I hope is saved—he unsaid all his mad words in that waun clear speech—'An accident, as I hope for mercy!' Mr. Olver, you must put that down in your note-book 'long with the rest, and remember it when you lay your hand on that unfort'nate man, and forgive him!"

Harold's face flushed a little.

"That is impossible, Daniel. How can I forgive what ruins my life and blights a better and fairer life than mine? Let me place one point more before you—I was desperately ill, and you can answer it better than I can. Through all his ravings was not this fact clear—that Trevel was on his way to some near and rich relative of the fugitive assassin to sell to him his secret when you and I seized him."

"It was clear, Mr. Olver; I won't deny it. But a man like Trevel would as lief sell a lie for money as the truth. Now, Mr. Olver, 'tis time to part; and may God bless you in your sarch, though 'tis wilder than chasing the Flying Dutchman !"

"Own one thing more, Daniel," cried Harold, grasping his hand nervously—"Captain Armstrong saved that man before his ship was wrecked?"

"Yes, sir; I reckon he did; and all our risks and dangers were run in vain. Well, we are here alive, and Michael have goet the *Curlew* hoam safe by now, so there's much to be thankful for. You'll send me news, sir, the first chance you have ?"

"And let me hear from you too, Daniel, and tell me how poor little Joe gets on," said Harold, as he scratched an Indian address in his good friend's huge pocket-book.

A few more last words, a tender look on Joe's sleeping face, and these two parted who had stood by each other through storm and danger and battle. Leaning over the bulwarks, Daniel watched the gig row away with Harold and his friends, and saw the big troop-ship receive them and cover them from his sight.

He waved his brown hand towards the filling sails, and went below with a shadow on his bronzed face and an unwonted tremor of his stout heart.

"It's a long cry to Inc.... His eyes may never shine into my eyes again. And he's gone on the whishtest errand a man can take upon himself. Whoever heerd of a ghost being hunted dewn, and laid hould of, and shook to pieces in the broad daylight—and in India too, among the blacks, where no Christian ghost would ever walk? No, no; the Langarth spirit will be laid at Langarth, or haunt the place for ever. Mr. Tristram died—as all his family die—in mystery. And what it means Mr. Olver won't find out among heathens!"

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CHAPTER XXXV.

It was well perhaps for Harold that he was among friends now who knew all the history of his earliest, freshest years, and nothing of the circumstances of these later ones which had connected him with Langarth. So he had perforce to be silent over the mystery that tormented him, and give his speech and his thoughts to other topics. This was good for him; and better still was the fact that he was no longer galled by the miseries and cruelties under which he had suffered through the brutalities of a press-gang, and no longer had his fevered nerves heated by an insulting disbelief in all his statements as to his own identity.

"It is a curious experience for a man to be told he is not himself; and to be told it with an addition of jeers and insults and irons is more than sufficient to put him in a fever, without starvation and bad air being thrown in as helps," said his friend Doctor Pemberton. "But now, old fellow, you have got to

spend your energies in getting well."

And this Harold did, regaining his health so rapidly that in a week or two all the time of fever and depression would have seemed to him like a dream—mixed as it was with delirium—but for the memory of Trevel's words and Trevel's death. This was with him always, and these recollections were the dark wings which were bearing him to India.

On board the ship as passenger was Colonel Pemberton's brother, an East India director, and a man so high in office that he was able at once to bestow on Harold a commission in the Company's service. He was glad to accept this for many reasons. It would give him position, profession, and money, and all three would aid him in his plans. It would be months before he could draw means from his own modest resources; and meanwhile he would be dependent on his friends—a position he could not brook. So he accepted the career of a soldier as a necessity thrust upon him by the strange set of circumstances that had followed on his attempt to wring from Trevel the secret he had carried down with him into his fathomless grave.

Yet on the whole he felt he had acted wisely when, on shore for a day or two at the Cape, he posted his first long letter to Estrild, filled with a recital of much that had passed, and with entreaties not to be forgotten or forsaken in his enforced absence. His own love was like a rock unshaken, and he would return to claim her and to release her from that sorrowful promise to her

brother which had separated them for a time.

No letter is satisfactory, for hearts do not live and beat in ink, and all a lover's yearning, rushing with passion through his veins, could not warm the dead paper. So Harold thought his letter dumb and cold, and he posted it with a painful foreboding of sorrow.

At the Cape, too, Harold saw Daniel again for a few hours, and charged him with messages for Pleasance and presents for Estrild.

"Look here," said Daniel—"you don't mean this for Michael, do 'ee? I found it in the pocket of that unlucky jacket of his which have brought 'ee into this queer part of the world. They was a good suit of clothes, or, I wouldn't have axed for 'em back; but this here gould pen eddn't his."

It was Mary Armstrong's pen, and Harold took it eagerly.

"I would not have lost it for treble its worth," he said. "This sets me wondering, Daniel, if Miss Armstrong had news in the letter I brought her of that person's safety. Although she knew her father was dead, there was some strange elation about her which I could not understand. Find out if you can from the Coastguard if any relative of Captain Armstrong's was on board the *Alert*."

"There was no one of his name," returned Daniel—"I know that for sartain; but I can get a list of the crew that will tell

who is missing and who is drowned."

"Daniel, you are my right hand!" exclaimed Harold: "It will be the best clue I have had yet. How is it I never thought of it before?"

"For the matter of that, neither did I. It is one of them simple things a man forgets while he is running after the hard ones."

. This from Daniel as he wrung Harold's hand and hurried away to his waiting boat and the ship just spreading sails for

England.

In India it was a time of war—a time of "battle, confusion, and garments rolled in blood;" and Harold's regiment being sent at once to the front, he found himself carried on by the red tide of glory into scenes of danger and excitement that for a while quenched the fevered desires of his heart, for "Nature is subdued to what it works in, like the dyer's hand." Thus it hap-

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confusion, ent being y the red hat for a Nature is hus it happened that the strong chains of duty, of circumstance, and of cruel war held him fast through many a terrible month after his first arrival, till there fell down upon his haze a dreaminess, a fear that he was hunting a phantom, and that life for him held nothing beyond the day's bloodshed, the night's march, the dull dreariness of camp and sickness, and the shouts and cries of battle. He seemed to have hoisted sail to all the winds which should transport him farthest from Estrild and that home of the which had been his youth's best dream.

And she was silent. No letter from far-off England reached him through these sultry months, when death was busy all around him in the "mingled war's battle" or in the close silent

tent where men, with searce a groan lay down to die.

Once in a desperate engagement Harold saved the life of a young officer at the risk of his own and at the cost of a slight wound. He was a young fellow whose reckless bravery had once or twice startled him—not with admiration, but with the strange suspicion that there was a touch of despair in it, and he was longing to rid himself of life.

Hitherto there had been little friendship or companionship between them, for they were not in the same regiment; but during the night after the sharp battle Harold sought him out in his tent, and found him with his head between his hands in black melancholy! No welcome, no word of thanks greeted him; he

simply looked up, and in silence pointed to a seat.

"I half fretted you might be anxious about that scratch I got," Harold said, "so I have come to tell you it is no more than a scratch."

"I am glad it is no worse," returned the other, "though I dare say you are making too light of it. Olver, you had no right to risk your existence for me; and, if you think I shall thank you for my life, you are mistaken."

"My dear fellow, do you suppose I came here for thanks? And I imagine I have as great a right as you to throw my life

to those black dogs if I choose."

"I doubt that. With some it is a duty to live, with others a duty to die."

"Come, now-don't talk like the Sphinx of Egypt," said Har-

old, "unless you interpret at the same time."

"I mean that no doubt you have people to live for, while perhaps I may have people I wish to die for." "Do you call that an interpretation?" asked Harold laughing. "I expect, old fellow, you have more to live for than I have. Except a cousin who would bury me cheerfully"—Harold little knew how true his jesting words were—"I have not a relative in the world. And in India one's friends forget one," he added, with a slight change in his voice; yet I think I still have one I would willingly die for!"—and as he spoke his blood ran warmly to his heart with thoughts of Estrild.

"Would you? Well, if I die, it will be for an enemy."

"That's more magnanimous," said Harold, in a jesting tone.
"I confess I am not so generous as to throw away my life——"

He stopped suddenly, for his companion had risen in a hurried way, and, lifting the curtain of the tent, he stood now looking out upon the stilled and silent camp. In a moment he turned and held out his hand, as if in a changed mood.

"I beg your pardon, Olver, but I am sure you know how to make allowances for my gloomy temperament. You have seen that 'there is something rotten in the state of Denmark.'"

"I have not observed it. But can I help you?"—and Harold laid his hand kindly on the young man's shoulder.

"No one can help me. Olver, we have not been thrown together much, but I feel there is a link between us, and you have often been lenient to my gloomy temper. I shall tell you the truth. I came out to India to die; I am resolved this shall finish!" He spoke fiercely, and dashed his hand across his forehead as though sweeping away some painful vision.

"What are you talking of? What shall finish?" asked Har-

old, hiding his amazement in a soothing tone.

"My life, and all the misery of it. It is a horrible inherit-

ance, and I have a right to fling it away."

"Cumberland, you are talking wildly! You are fevered by the horrors of the day. Go to rest, lad, and you will feel better."

"Rest?" he returned excitedly." How can a man haunted as

I am sleep."

"Why should you be haunted?" returned Harold. "You have a clear conscience, and are neither brigand, pirate, nor assassin. I don't see why you should not sleep better than many of the old sinners in camp, whose slumbers might well be haunted by the ghosts of their many slain!"

"You may jest at my words," said Cumberland gravely; "but

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have you never heard that it is possible to be haunted with the idea of murder—with the conviction that you are doomed one day to commit some ghastly crime?"

"Cumberland, I shall send Doctor Pemberton to see you. Your wits are wandering through excitement; that happens at

times to men after a battle."

"I answer, like Hamlet, 'My blood discourses as healthy music as yours.' I am not mad, and yet I tell you I will not escape my fate unless I die. And, Olver, I mean to die. I will not live to carry a felon's conscience with me to my grave. There—leave me—I am not myself to-night! But for you I should be at rest!"

"So much for gratitude!" said Harold, striving to speak gaily. "Well, Cumberland, the next time I see you down, with a black villain ready to stick a knife into you, I promise you I will leave you alone."

"Keep your word," returned Cumberland gloomily, "and I'll

thank you with my last breath."

Harold looked at the young fellow with a tender and anxious glance. He was so young and slight, and there was a look upon his face that bespoke pity; it was a kind of shadow, a flitting expression of pain, that made many believe he was doomed to an early death.

"Cumberland, you have the battle still in your ears and brain. I shall send Pemberton to have a chat with you—not to doctor

you, mind."

"He had better do neither," returned Cumberland, as they

shook hands and said good night.

Doctors however were too busy to attend to unwounded men, so Harold had to forego his intentions till the morning, when he spoke of Cumberland's unnerved state.

"Unnerved!" repeated Doctor Pemberton, in amazement.
"My dear fellow, Cumberland has nerves of iron! Why, he spent most of the night in the hospital tent, assisting me in some of the worst operations I have had since the war! Most gentle—and untiring he was too in his attention to the wounded."

"I know he is as tender-hearted as a child," said Harold; "but he was very odd last night;" and Harold walked off to his duty, pondering the strange incongruity of Cumberland's character. "Apparently his nerves shattered to pieces, and angry that I had saved his life, and yet able to help coolly in—in that kind

of work!" he said to himself, with a glance at the long white tent hiding ghastly things.

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The next time he and Cumberland met there was a momentary awkwardness on the part of the latter, and his face flushed hotly; but he grasped Harold's hand, saying, with a nervous laugh—

"'Richard is himself again!' Upon my word, Olver, I am ashamed of myself when I remember what a surly cur I was the other night! I woke up as soon as you were gone, and called myself over the coals in good strong language. Then, as a penance for my sins, I went to the hospital and saw—well, I saw how men cling to life through agony and horror, and so I came to the conclusion that life must be worth living. I am bad at a speech, and I can't fall on your neck or at your feet in Eastern fashion and offer you all my goods, and declare that all my relatives, dead and living, are your slaves eternally; but I am thankful, and you know it."

"My dear fellow, it appears to me you are making a tremendous speech. Come and cool your throat with a 'peg.' Ice has just arrived."

This last battle was the decisive one that finished the war and the campaign; the regiment went to Calcutta, and winter festivities began. Young Cumberland rushed into them with the same odour with which he had sought danger in battle. A fevered restlessness seemed to run through his veins, impelling him to constant excitement. Harold expostulated in vain, and warned him of all the hazards of sickness in a climate to which he was not accustomed. But he only laughed; he was as mad for pleasure as he had been for battle, and reckless nights followed reckless days in his mad career.

"I believe you are trying to kill yourself!" remarked Harold one day angrily.

"Well, if I succeed," he returned, with his old gay laugh, "I will make you my heir—that is if I outlive my father," he added; while suddenly there fell on his young face that shadow or look of pain which had first attracted Harold to him, since somehow it always brought Estrild to his mind as she looked on the terrible night of her mother's death.

It was not that there was any kindness between them; it was a mere flitting expression; and Harold had never spoken of it, being unwilling, in fact, to enter into details respecting his own

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life in his present state of mental uncertainty and pain, for not a line had reached him from Estrild since his landing in India. To him therefore she seemed to have kept her vow of separation with implacable firmness.

"We all hope to outlive our fathers," he said, speaking, as he fancied, carelessly; but his thoughts gave to his tone an involun-

tary touch of sadness.

"Not all," rejoined Cumberland. "There are men who would

welcome any death rather than outlive a father."

Harold began an answer with a jest on his exaggerated filial respect, but something in his friend's aspect stopped him. He

changed the subject abruptly.

"Cumberland, I am in a bewildering state of uncertainty about affairs of my own. I am thinking of going home. I mean to ask for leave. There is no particular butchery going on at present, and, if there were, I feel that I should not much care to be in it—in fact, I should rather like not to kill anybody for a year or two. I am a peaceful man naturally."

"I don't believe you, 'said Cumberland lazily. "You enjoyed slaughtering the snaky individual who was just about to save me the trouble of getting rid of my life through brandy-pawnee and

balls—and a deuced slow way it is too!"

His tone was gay, his laugh rang out into the still air, and yet Harold felt that his words had a bitter taste in them and his young soul was sad even unto death.

"There is many a truth uttered in jest," he said to himself, as he wrung his friend's hand and left him.

For some days after this talk Harold was busy with his own affairs, and he saw little of Cumberland. His heart was sore with thoughts of Estrild; her long silence, their estrangement, all appeared to him bitter and incomprehensible. Ignorant of the letter she had sent to him recalling him to her side, ignorant also of the events in London which had caused a belief in his death, he could but wonder painfully at her leaving his letter from the Cape unanswered; he could but argue from this fact that her resolve to make their parting final was unchanged, and a sort of bitterness took possession of his mind, mingled with jealousy and this pride of poverty, which whispered that he had no right to press his claim on the heiress of Langarth. There was a vague uneasiness too in all his thoughts—a fear that he

had taken a wrong path in pursuing a myth and leaving Estrild

so entirely in the power of an unscrupulous guardian.

In this breathing-space between war and war, when the heat of the battle no longer ran hurriedly through his veins, such thoughts crowded swiftly on him, and the burning desire to return home grew on him like a fever. He resolved even to resign his commission rather than be thwarted. He thirsted for a sight of Estrild's face; a painful haste to see her pervaded every nerve; he felt like a man hurrying forward on an errand of life and death. The quest which had brought him to India was left far behind in his thoughts-in the excitement and dim of war it had faded and grown dim, and he had not advanced a single step nearer a solution of the mystery since Trevel's body was dropped into the sea and the waves had covered his secret in their dark depths. So, when his request for leave was granted, his mind reverted to his search and all its adventures, risks, and disappointments with less bitterness than he would once have deemed possible. Thus he prepared for his departure without wasting mang regrets on his futile endeavours to discover the undiscoverable. On the contrary, he felt new hope bounding through his blood, and he was counting the days before his ship sailed, when Pemberton came to him with a message from Cumberland.

"The young fellow is dangerously ill; he wants to see you."
Harold went to his room, and found him in bed, haggard and changed with fever. He raised his eyes to his friend's face with a faint smile.

"Thanks for coming to me, dear old man! You see, I am

going home."

"I see you have been going the pace too fast; but you'll pull through, lad—don't fear!" said Harold encouragingly. "And you must get leave and return home indeed. You can sail with me."

Cumberland closed his eyes with a slight smile, as if the thought for a moment pleased him; but, when he opened them again and looked up, Harold saw that the hope that had lighted them for an instant had fled.

"There is no home for me, Olver, but my long home. I want you to—to promise me that you will see my father, and tell him not to grieve; tell him it is best so, and I was glad—you hear the word?—glad! Say it to him twice; he will understand."

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e. I want d tell him —you hear rstand." "My dear boy, I'll promise to do anything you wish," returned Harold; and his voice broke as he grasped his friend's thin burning hand. "But you have much to live for, Cumberland; try to rally, dear lad."

But Cumberland shook his head slightly and closed his eyes again, this time to hide the anguish in them, while the fever-flush

upon his face faded into ghastly paleness.

"What is it?" said Harold, bending over him in sharp anxiety.

"I am afraid to live," he answered, in a low voice—"more afraid than I am to die."

"My dear Cumberland, you are feverish, and wandering a lit-

"No, no; I cannot talk much, but I know what I am saying. See here, Olver—you have been kind to me—kind as a brother; and I am sure you know how much I care for you—how much I wish I could express all——"

He stopped, feeling evidently far more than his words told, and yet feeling, as Englishmen do, that to say anything, was to say too much. Equally reticent, Harold sat dumb, grasping his hand, and inwardly wondering how one so young should care so little to live, and, more, should speak of life as a thing more to be feared than death.

In the momentary silence between them Cumberland seemed to regain courage, and was able to master his emotion.

"I have your promise, Olver; you will go to my father and repeat exactly what I have said?"

"My dear fellow, if necessary I will; but you will get well—there will be no need;" and Harold thrust down the choking feeling in his throat with a supreme effort.

"Over there," continued Cumberland, pointing to his desk, "you will find a letter addressed to my father; that will tell you where to find him. Do not be startled that his name is not the same as mine, Olver;" and he grasped Harold's hands feverishly. "I am like the prodigal son; I have left home, father, name, and heritage—all to escape from—— Hark—he is calling me now 1 Hold me down, Olver! Do you know that if I once give way I shall be compelled—forced against my blood—to return home and do his bidding?"

The wildness with which he spoke and his haggard look made Harold think he raved, as, obeying his behest, he held him firmly with both arms. But in a moment the paroxysm passed, and Cumberland lay back on his pillow pale and quiet.

"It is that diabolical tune the band is playing that unnerved

me," he said feebly, wiping the moisture from his brow.

Harold listened, and faintly in the distance he caught the echo of military music, while in the air played there floated by mystic memories of far-off battles, of things distant and dead, of the pain of souls long departed, the grief of hearts long cold.

"Who gave them that accursed music?" asked Cumberland

sharply.

"I cannot tell you. But it reminds me of an air I heard once in circumstances that—have altered all my life," concluded

Harold abruptly.

"Yes," said Cumberland, as if not heeding his words. "Yet it is not the same," he continued dreamily, as if to himself; "it is only the spirit of pain in it that gives it the likeness."

The music had passed out of hearing, but the tramp of menfollowed it, and Cumberland listened to the steady march of

many feet with a smile lighting up his wan face.

"There is life in that sound, Olver. I like it. The concentrated energy of so many hearts beating as one, bent on one purpose, conquers all before it. Oh, if only one human soul was bound to mine, to fight my battle with me, I think I could live!"

Harold pressed his hand in silence; he regarded his words as outpourings from a fevered brain, and knew not how to answer him.

"There is one other person I should like you to see, Olver, if

you would," said Cumberland in a moment.

His voice and manner were more composed, but his strength was ebbing; in a little while Harold saw he would be past speech.

"My dear lad, I will see any one you wish."

"And you will give her a last message from me," continued Cumberland, in fainter tones. "Tell her I was glad to go—glad to be rid of the burden she knows of that I had not strength to bear—glad to give up the battle I could not fight. If she could have stood by my side always, I might have had strength to resist, but without her I had no power, no will." He stopped and put his hand upon his brow, then looked up at Harold a little wildly. "It is herrible such things are allowed," he said—"a

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human being in the hands of another, and that other perchance a fiend—compelled to obey his will while the soul shudders at him and the spirit faints with fear and loathing. Yes, yes; I am glad it is nearly over. And you will thank her Olver, for all her goodness to me, and tell her my last thoughts were of her. That is all. I fear I cannot talk any more."

"My dear Cumberland, give me her name if you can, and I will do your bidding, even if I have to go from one end of Eng-

land to the other."

"Her name is Armstrong—Mary Armstrong—the best, kind-est——"

His words panted on his lips, and his fainting eyes gazed up into Harold's bloodless face in terror, for his clenched hand was resting on the bed, and over all his aspect there was a strange dazed look, like that of a man suddenly finding himself face to

face with some unexpected horror.

In a moment Harold had recovered himself; the colour slowly returned to his blanched face, and he looked down wistfully on the faint and dying figure before him. He saw a weak slight lad, whose delicate features were worn to a shadow, whose thin hand was searching gropingly for the kindly clasp of his, and his heart turne I faint within him. A sob rose in his throat; he touched the poor wan hand and turned away.

"Good-bye, Cumberland. I will do you bidding. I know

where Mary Armstrong lives."

A smile rose to Cumberland's lips, a slight pressure came from his thin fingers, and he and Harold had parted.

In his own room Harold sat down to think, with brain still

bewildered.

Was it possible—could it be possible? Was this poor fragile dying lad the slayer of Tristram Carbonellis? And, because he had not seized him by the throat and cried in his fainting ears, "You are an assassin!" he had lost Ertrild and love and happiness for ever?

The question rose again and again in his racked mind without answer—without hope and answer; but he felt that even to win Estrild he could not torture the dying, he could not go to the magistrate or colonel and denounce Cumberland as a criminal flying from justice. And was he this? Under what cloud of mystery and misery had he become guilty? The words which he had taken for the wanderings of fever bore a new meaning

now to his mind, and he fancied that Cumberland might be as much the victim of a strange fate as Tristram Carbonellis. He had never thought to recall Trevel's dying declaration with the hope of finding comfort in it, but he did so now—"An accident—as I hope for mercy, an accident."

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Yes, it was surely that, no matter how mysterious the circumstances in which it had occurred; and he would let Cumberland die in peace.

With this thought he took Mary Armstrong's gift from his desk and laid it before him on the table.

"I have kept my word—I have not hurt him," he said; "and the hardest moment was when I looked on his dying face and recognised it as the face I had seen on board the East-Indiaman. Yes, that was how Captain Armstrong saved him; he was put on board the ship, before the storm overtook the Alert. And Mary Armstrong knew he was safe when she gave me this—the letter I brought told her."

All this was surmise, but Harold felt it was the truth, as, resting his head upon his hands, he reflected that even now it was not too late to wrench the proof from Cumberland's dying lips.

What! Could he bring the sweat of agony on that poor wan face? Could he see that wasted frame writhe beneath the burden of his broken heart? If he had sinned, he was dying for his sin; it was enough.

"I saved his life once. I will not drag away with cruel hand the last feeble remnant of life in him now. No, I will not hurt him. Estrild will forgive me. I will go on board to-night, lest I should be tempted to steal once more to his bedside and stand over him as the avenger of blood."

Harold kept his word, and the ship sailed for England without his hearing or knowing whether Cumberland was living or dead.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"There is only one thing to be done now," said Mr. Vicat to his wife—"these young people must marry, and at once too."

"That's what you have been driving at!" exclaimed Mrs. Vicat. "It is a vile plot—a shameful plot! I'll have no hand in it."

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Vicat to e too." ned Mrs. "That is quite true—I shall certainly not ask you for your valuable aid; I prefer to manage the affair myself. I shall procure a special license for the ceremony."

Mrs. Vicat stared at him with round eyes of amazement.

"You may take a horse to a pond, but you can't make him drink," she said. "If you have fifty licenses, it won't make a marriage; Estrild will never be Gilbert's wife."

"We shall see," returned her husband. "Tho girl is alone in the world—her lover is dead; she has nothing to hope for, nothing to live for. Her spirits are broken; she will obey me. And after the marriage, in my opinion, she will not live long."

Mrs. Vicat grew a little pale.

"Don't tell me any of your diabolical plans," she said, gathering up her work hurriedly and running to the door. "I can't and won't hear them."

"You are a simpleton," returned Mr. Vicat politely. "I make a quiet remark on Estrild's state of health, and you immediately

imagine-"

"No, no; I imagine nothing—I only know you have left no means untried to torture that poor girl to death. You have ordered Gilbert to terrify her with his wizard tricks; and you forced him to make an appointment with her at an improper time—a time that would cast a slur on her good name."

"Just so; she herself has make her marriage a necessity."

"It is nothing of the kind—you only want to secure her wealth for yourself; your son is not long for this world—you will be his heir. Mr. Vicat, I shall pray for the destruction of your schemes."

Mrs. Vicat fled with these words; she had passed the line which her husband allowed in these recriminations. He permitted no reference to prayer or to religion—she might do all things except pray against him; there was a curious vein of superstition in the man which made him fear prayer much in the same way as the savage fears the medicine-man. He glared after his wife now with fury in his eyes, but he guessed that she had taken refuge with Carrie, and he did not care to follow her to his daughter's presence.

"Time and opportunity come to the man who waits for them," he said sententiously, as he banged his front-door on the dornestic din that rang through staircase and hall, and hurried on to

his office.

Of all the victims he had made through his cruel life, his unhappy son was the most miserable; wrecked in health and nerve. he had sought refuge in strange studies for a relief to his pain and solitude. He had learned secrets of which in his weakness he could make no use; he had fathomed depths into which he dared not look. But neither occult mysteries nor transient glimpses into the miracles of science could relieve the dull ache of loneliness or feed the heart-hunger he felt; one other thing they could not do-they never lifted from his mind the load of terror laid on it through childish years. He hated and feared his father still. Estrild had come to him like a beam of light in a dark place, and he had learned to hunger and thirst for her presence as a prisoner in his dungeon pines for the sun; to see her, to hear her voice, to hold her hand, had been temptations he had not strength to resist—hence he had fallen into the net spread for him, and he had dragged Estrild into the toils also. In the first agony of his remorse he had broken his crystals and destroyed manuscripts that had cost him years of toil. The great solace of his life was gone; but he could never again be tempted to wile Estrild to his room with promises of revealing to her the distant and the unknown.

In the anguish of his soul and the weariness of his flesh his power deserted him. Human love crept into his heart and filled up every avenue of thought; and the occult, the mysterious, the spiritual dwellers of his mind found no place of rest. They fled before the tide of his passion, and left him room to perish in its flood.

A month passed by, each day filled with a gloomier despair. He knew that Estrild was ill—almost unto death; but he never saw her or asked to see her. He heard of her from Carrie, who, sometimes contemptuous, sometimes kind, and at all times afraid of him with that sort of fear which repelled all confidence, came to his room with a book or a newspaper, or to talk of Tom. This was his only glimpse of the outside world; to the rest of the household he was as a forgotten piece of lumber that had been thrust out of sight years before, to pass utterly from memory.

One day his door was opened gently, and, looking up with the unexpectant gaze of one who was hopeless of pleasure or change, he saw Estrild standing on the threshold. The dull book he was striving to read dropped from his hand, a flush rose to his brow, and his quivering lips refused to give him speech.

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Estrild was like the shadow of herself; her once bright colour was gone, her cheeks were pale and sunken, her hands hung by her side pale and lifeless.

"Are you shocked to see me so changed ?" she asked, coming

towards him. "But I am getting well now."

"You look very ill," he answered, gazing into her face hungrily. "Estrild, can you forgive me? It is my fault that you have suffered so deeply."

"How can it be your fault? You did but show me the truth."

"Can we be sure it was the truth?" he said hesitatingly.

"Do not shake my belief now," she answered. "I am calmer, more resigned, since I have ceased to doubt—since I can no longer hope and wonder, and pray for the surety that he is either dead or living. If he were living, would he leave me in anguish through these long months of silence? Oh, no; it was a true vision! And I recognised the ship—it was the same in which I saw him the first time I looked into that strange crystal."

She glanced round her as if searching for it, and for a moment Gilbert regretted its destruction. He gazed into her face with sad wistful eyes, longing passionately at any cost to hold her

hand, to press his lips upon it once more.

"I have broken the crystal," he said, with a great sigh—"I can never call a vision into it again; and, Estrild, remember this—it was you who saw what was shadowed forth in it; I saw only you!"

She answered but the first part of his speech, as if not hearing

the last words.

"I am sorry you have broken it, though not for my own sake. I would not look into it again, for, though you tell me these wonders are all of the world—nature's secrets drawn from her great laboratory—yet it is wise for some not to peer into them."

"You were frightened," Gilbert said anxiously; "and I am to blame. The temptation to be near you was too strong for me. Oh, Estrild, let me confess——"

"No, no; I will hear no confessions," she cried hurriedly; "and I ask you as a kindness to speak of the matter no more."

He drew a breath of relief—he was spared the humiliating task he had set himself. His confession would have startled Estrild, though it was not an avowal of the love she had never guessed which he hid. And now, seeing him pale and troubled, she felt sorry for him.

"Do not distress or blame yourself on my account," she said; "It was no foolish horror of the supernatural that caused my illness; you must remember what the vision was that I beheld. It was a funeral—in that lay the shock for me."

She paused a moment, clasping her hands together nervously. Gilbert lowered his eyes, not daring to look into her face. What did their coverings hide? Was it jealousy or compunction?

"And you had told me," she continued, "that the crystal could but mirror an actual fact—a living thing passing on the earth, and painted by some curious means yet unknown by the light. And it was possible to convey a reflection of the sunpicture into the crystal, by the light also, through a power which you have learned to use. For this dominion over every secret of nature is given to man, you have said, if he would but seek for this instead of grovelling in the earth for gold."

"I have spoken truly—the perfect man shall have dominion over earth and air and sky, and death shall be trampled down beneath his feet."

A momentary exaltation raised his lowered eyes and filled them

with the great triumph of life.

"And you have told me that sound also can be conveyed from unknown distance. I do not understand what you have said, but I have believed, and so I saw and heard what was passing perchance a thousand miles away, and I know that Harold is dead."

Again there was a moment's silence, and Gilbert leaned forward and hid his face on his hands.

She came and stood before him, white as a lily, and as lovely her breath fell on him as though a honeysuckle had touched his brow, her low sweet voice melted his very heart within him.

"Harold is dead," she repeated, "and I have come, Gilbert, to say that I will be your wife."

His hands dropped down, and he looked up with eyes that blazed and cheeks covered with a hectic fire.

"Not for the infamous words my father has said!" he cried. "Estrild, do you think me a demon that I should take advantage of your innocence to accept such a sacrifice at your hands?"

"Stop! You don't know what I am offering," she said. "It is no sacrifice; except Pleasance, I have no relative in the world but you; to devote myself to you two will give me something to live for. Your life is valuable—you have fathomed secrets that

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might change the destiny of nations; mine is worthless, and I think, as Mr. Vicat says, that I hall not live long."

"Estrild!" he exclaimed, holding out his hand to her wild-

She set them gently aside, and went on in the same low sad voice.

"Let me save your life, Gilbert, for the world. Here in this lonely room of sickness you have toiled and suffered through the nights and days of many weary years. Shall I stand by in the selfishness of my own pain to see all that labour lost? No, I cannot do that; in happier circumstances, in a sunnier clime, you will regain health, and your researches, your great discoveries, will bless the world. What am I compared with the welfare of a world? Shall I, a mere girl, dare to weigh myself in the balance against the happiness of millions? Gilbert, it is not of me you must think, but of the secrets of science that you possess, the power you hold to lessen human misery. It is for this you must live, and your name will go down with blessings to nations unborn."

She raised her great gray eyes upwards, filled with the light of enthusiasm, not seeing that the man trembling before her had lost his philosophy and his lore, and felt his universe only in her.

"Estrild, you do but dream!" he said sadly, hiding as best he

could the heavings of his mighty sorrow.

"Listen, then, and I will tell you what my dream is. I will use my riches to restore you to health. I will have a ship fitted like a palace, and you and I and Pleasance will sail in it to the sunniest seas that run round the world. We will land here and there on the isles, and gather flowers like children, and sail away again. Oh, I know that will give you strength and health! Your father, you see, has told me, and the physician he brought to me said the same—a long sea-voyage is the great remedy—the true remedy, he said. And he left me, Gilbert, feeling glad of heart that I could yet do some good with my poor life. He spoke too of your wonderful discoveries, and the marvels you might bring to success if you had but hope and energy."

"Do you mean that my father spoke of them?" Gilbert asked, with a flash in his eyes, interrupting her unwillingly, for her words poured over him like music, though he knew they were

but a dream.

"Yes, your father?"

"Then, Estrild, I must speak the truth, even if I die for it by lingering on here in my prison-house. My father spoke only for his own purpose to rouse within your soul a high motive of self-sacrifice. He has no belief in his own words; his contempt for me would be boundless if it were not mingled with a little fear, for he half thinks me a sorcerer."

"All the more reason," she answered, "that I should rescue

you from his sneers and help you to prove him wrong."

"Oh, Estrild, Estrild, you madden me! I cannot—I dare not take you at your word! Look at me, and see whether it be possible that I could link such a life as mine with yours."

He spoke bitterly, and with a passion so intense that his lips grew white as his words passed through them; yet she could not

see that this meant love.

"Is it not because you and I are alike—both withered?" she said, still with that quiet compassion in her voice that moved her all through. "Is it not because of the bitterness in our two lives that I am able to offer you what I could offer no other—my help, my companionship, and the aid of my wealth? I am not offering love, Gilbert. I have none to give—you know that"—and a faint colour touched her cheeks and fled—"neither am I asking for it. I ask only that you will give me the power to help you through a right all men acknowledge—the right bestowed by the marriage ceremony."

"Oh, I have understood you!" he answered bitterly. "How could such as I misunderstand?"

There was a world of meaning in his mournful words; they showed that he knew himself outside the pale of human love.

Estrild stood by his side silent; she felt dimly the shadow of some terrible truth which her mind could not grasp, could not even guess at. How could she comprehend that she was giving him gall to drink as she hung him on the cross of her great pity!

"You have not answered me," she said in a moment, in her sweet pitiful voice.

"Estrild, you are offering me money—nothing but money; and, to induce me to accept it, you propose to chain your young life to——"

She interrupted him hurriedly.

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name and fame and power to do good beyond your dreams." For an instant, as through a long vista, he beheld glorious pos-

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sibilities; he saw the face of a changed world, he saw health and happiness in the old dwellings of misery, he saw his name written in light, and heard blessings called down upon his memory. But the vision faded, and the temptation that, like a mighty wind, had swayed his longing soul, passed away, leaving him only the still small voice of conscience.

He rose, and turned away his eyes resolutely from the sweet pale face of the woman who had pleaded with him for his own

fame.

"Estrild, I cannot do this thing. You weigh down the world, you weigh down the millions that live and the millions yet to live. There is no good I could do to them that would counterbalance the evil done to you.'

"There would be no evil done to me," she interposed eagerly. "Yes, there will be evil past remedy. You will live to know that grief does not last for ever. You will love again; you will marry and be happy."

A deep and sudden flush rose from chin to brow as she turned

to the door to leave him.

"You wrong me; all the love I had is gone down into the sea. And, even if Harold lived, I could not be his wife. My promise to my brother forbids it. My wealth and the companionship of my wrecked life are all my dead brother and my dead love leave me to bestow; and it is only to you I could offer these, because you have no need of love. You care for a whole world, not for a solitary woman; and I thought you would accept my poor gifts, and give me in return the joy of knowing that I had saved you to bless the world that now wrongs and scorns you."

There were tears in her eyes, but she went away without an-

other word, closing the door on his solitude and his pain.

"Is there any scorn equal to her scorn, which calls itself pity?" he said, as his head drooped upon his hands and tears fell between his thin fingers—fell upon his broken dreams, his shattered hopes—fell fast like bitter rain, and yet could not quench the fiery longing of his heart for one word, one touch of love.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Mr. Vicat was triumphant.

"Six months ago," he said to his wife, "you declared the marriage I proposed to bring about was impossible. Well, it is all settled now, and will take place to-morrow. Gilbert has given in at last. As I always foretold, Estrild was easily managed; he was the difficult one."

"I will never pray against your schemes again, Mr. Vicat, if

that wedding is carried out to-morrow."

"Thank you, my dear. I must inform you also that the ship is ready in which the romantic couple are to sail round the world. She is fitted up splendidly, and is a perfect show on the Thames."

Mrs. Vicat gathered herself together with a slight shudder.
"Then I presume all the deeds are signed which settle things

to your satisfaction?" she observed, with shaking lips.

"What do you mean by that question?" asked Mr. Vicat savagely. "Before a marriage, settlements are necessary, and, being of age, Estrild has done as she pleased—she has made a fair settlement."

"Is your name in it, Mr. Vicat?"

"Naturally it is," he answered in the same tone. "I am her uncle and nearest relative, so, with the exception of a handsome sum given to Miss Glendorgal, the property devolves on me when the young couple——"

"Are dead or-or, let us say, drowned."

"You shall say nothing of the kind," said Mr. Vicat fiercely. "You impugn the soundness of the ship, which is as fine a clipper as ever sailed."

"Then God give her a prosperous voyage!" said Mrs. Vicat.

"You are an infernal woman!" responded her husband, as a slight whiteness gathered about his lips. "You always succeed in planting a sting in my most successful plans. And you have again passed the line forbidden to you. I'll have no such talk as that in my hearing."

He stalked away in anger, and Mrs. Vicat burst into tears.

"Thank goodness Carrie is coming home to-day!" she said, as her sobs subsided.

For nearly three months Carrie had been in this country, staying with Tom's father and mother; but for this fact, Mr. Vicat perhaps had not been quite so successful. Yet the war-

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fare between him and his son had been long and desperate. It was a battle of the strong against the weak, waged unscrupulously, in which no expedient was left untried which could bring him victory.

Ofttimes in the darkness of the night the children who slept near Gilbert's rooms would start up in their beds and listen, trembling, to the loud sound of their father's voice. Then they heard words and menaces that made their young spirits quail, and, holding each other's hand, they would ask in whispers what their strange wizard-brother had done to cause such anger.

All this was unguessed at and unheard by Estrild, for her rooms were far away on the other side of the large house; and, when she paid her visits of compassion to her cousin, feelings that may be imagined held him silent. To her he only appeared weaker, paler, more exhausted every day, thus increasing her pity till she grew feverish and impatient in her longing to rescue and help him. To her also it did but seem that his resistance weakened with his own weakness, and that at last he yielded even gladly to her generous wish to take upon herseif a legal right to use her wealth to the saving of his life."

When he had once yielded, a fevered light shone again in his eyes, a colour touched his cheeks, a mad hope breathed within him. It was the hope of a quiet death, far from these scenes of misery, these sounds of threats—a quiet death rocked on a sunny sea, with Estrild's hand in his, and Estrild's eyes, divinely kind, guessing his secret at last, and looking into his with the pity the angels feel for genius wasted and love given in vain.

"Well," exclaimed Carrie, "so this is the gunpowder-plot father has been concocting in my absence! Did I not warn you, Estrild, that when he was most smooth and kind and insinuating he was at his worst tricks? Why have you allowed yourself to be taken in?"

"I am not taken in that I am aware of, Carrie. It is in my power to save your brother's life—a life of infinite value; and your father has shown me that I can do it only by calling myself his wife."

"And by legally endowing him and father with your money," said Carrie, in breathless indignation. "But of what use is it to talk to you? You are one person, and I am another. I am commonplace, and you are romantic. And in your romance you

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are doing a thing that I suppose tom-fools would call generous, but which I call idiotic, if not wicked!"

"Carrie, you are going too far!" Estrild cried angrily.

"Well, it is wicked to give in to father's plots, not knowing the meaning and end of them. However, I shall set to work to fathom them. And what does Miss Glendorgal say to this scheme? Does she go with you?"

"No; I did not think it right to ask her, as she disapproved so much of it. She cannot judge truly, not knowing Gilbert."

"Ah, but she knows you!" returned Carrie snappishly. "And she ought to have come to town, and stopped this plot."

Later on that evening Carrie went out alone, leaving Tom and Tom's father, who had escorted her back to London, to be entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Vicat.

"So your son is going to be married?" observed the old gentleman in an astonished voice. "I thought he was a hopeless invalid."

"Oh, there are chances of life for him with a sea-voyage and a warm climate; and my niece is resolved to devote her fortune to his restoration, and proposed to accompany him! But I could not permit her to compromise herself in that way, so I have consented to her idea of a romantic marriage. She is to be a sort of sister of mercy to him."

"Oh, indeed!" returned Tom's father. "Let us hope then

that he will get well."

"And, if he does," resumed Mr. Vicat, with an odd smile, "we shall hear great things of him. Through his wife's large fortune he will have a chance now to carry out his experiments and prove himself a wizard indeed."

"Ah, I have heard he can do queer things!"

"He frightens us all at times," said Mrs. Vicat uneasily.

"But what he does now is nothing to what he will do when he gets time, health, and money," continued her husband, with the same smile and inward enjoyment of his own words. "Bless you, he is going to send messages round the world upon wires, and make boats that will sail under water; he is going to hold conversation with folk a hundred miles off, and carry food in a bottle in his pocket which will last thirty days. It will be convenient—all that—won't it?"

Tom's father, who was a pious old gentleman, looked grave.
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he said. "Surely your son does not set himself up above the apostles—he can't mean he'll work greater miracles than they did!"

"But Gilbert declares they are not miracles—they are all natural things," said Mrs. Vicat, always with the same uneasiness in her tone, the same anxious glances at her husband.

"Natural! Oh, no! A man in his senses can't believe that. But perhaps the poor fellow is a little queer in his head, ma'am."

"You have hit the mark," returned Mr. Vicat, with a coarse

laugh. "Gilbert is a little mad upon his inventions."

"But some of them are pretty remarkable," observed Tom; "and, if he is right in his theories, I believe they could be worked with success."

"'If' is a mighty big word," said Mr. Vicat. "At all events, his philosophy, whether mad or sane, has got him an heiress, and

there's an end for the present. Let us wish him joy!"

Mr. Vicat had introduced the conversation for his own purposes, and his wife knew it. In her secret soul she felt he was acting a part which he would require to have remembered in his favour one day.

Carrie's entrance was a relief to her, and also to Tom, whose mental discomfort had been nearly as visible as her own.

The girl was joyous, and carried a laugh in either eye which was pretty to see.

"Well, Carrie, is it all right?" whispered Tom.

"Right as a thread and true as gold."

It was the wedding morning, and Estrild sat in her room dressed and calm. There was a slight misgiving at her heart—planted there by Carrie—and she shrank from analysing it, as she felt such a misgiving was selfish. In her intense girlish ignorance, she deemed that her life could not be better spent than in devoting it as nurse and sister to the unhappy cousin whose genius now was crippled by sickness and poverty. Still she wished she could have carried out her generous design without marriage; but Mr. Vicat had not only declared this a necessity, but had refused his consent to any other scheme she had proposed.

"I am your guardian, and I won't let you waste money on a cousin, though you may on a husband. That would be justifiable, and the world would not blame me for allowing it. As

it is, my duty is clear. I will not permit you to lavish money or lose your character for a cousin. I don't permit you to leave the house with him except as his wife."

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Shut away from the outside world, weakened by illness, and filled with despair by the deaths of those she loved, and looking forward to the longliness and uselessness of her own life with mute hopelessness, it was no wonder she yielded to Mr. Vicat's specious arguments without understanding their iniquity. Unable to consult with any one, lonely and friendless in dreary London, and completely in his power, she was like a young girl in the hands of a subtle priest who avails himself maybe of some youthful bitterness to persuade her to give her dowry to a convent and immure herself within its walls, a prisoner for life. In this case it was through the utter weariness of a broken heart that a cruel scheme succeeded.

The door opened and Estrild started up, expecting to see Mr. Vicat's smooth face; but it was Carrie who entered, followed by a young girl so light that she seemed a child, and yet with the earnest face of a steadfast woman.

"This is my friend Mary Armstrong," said Carrie.

Estrild looked at her with patient meek eyes. Once she would have been angry at the sound of her name; now it mattered little whether they were friends or enemies. So she let Mary take her cold lifeless hand and kneel down by her side and look up into her face pleadingly.

"Carrie tells me you are in sorrow and great trouble," she said; "and I know something of sorrow too. I have lost a father and you a brother."

"Is it right you should mention him to me?" Estrild asked, striving to release her hand from Mary's clasp.

"Yes, it is right, for your brother's death led to my father's —so we are sisters in sorrow."

"Your father lost his life in screening an assassin."

"No!" Mary exclaimed eagerly. "Why do you blind yourself to the truth? Your brother died as all your family died by an accident brought about by mysterious means beyond our ken."

"So let it be then," Estrild answered hopelessly. "I have ceased to fight against the inevitable. I am the last of my race—the only one left now to be the victim of a fiend!"

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I have my race Mary shuddered at these words; through her clasping arms Estrild felt the shiver that passed through her frame.

"You know not what you say—you know not what you do. I am come to entreat you to save yourself from misery. This cruel marriage must not take place."

"Why not?" asked Estrild. "Will you tell me what better thing I can do with my life than save a better and nobler life—

a thousand times nobler—than my own?"

"You would not save it. Your cousin cannot live; and your marriage would be a ghastly slavery for you if he did, and a mockery for him."

Estrild's bosom heaved, but she did not answer.

"I would have brought Mary here sooner," said Carrie, who stood by the door, as if listening for steps she feared, "but she has been in Cumberland for many months. All this has happened since I went away, Mary, and I know Estrild has never had a letter since I left home. I am sure father steals her letters."

"Who is there to write to me but Pleasance?" Estrild asked, in the same sad way. "You see, if you take from me the hope of saving my cousin, you steal my last glimmer of joy."

"Have you no one else to live for? Where is your lover?" asked Mary.

"Dead." And, except that Estrild's face grew paler, there was no change in voice or manner as she spoke. "He died in striving to solve the mystery of my brother's death—he died for my sake!"

"Did you not see the inquest in the papers?" asked Carrie. "He was found drowned in the Thames. But through some glamour of Gilbert's—one of his wizard tricks, I think—Estrild will not believe it; she persists in imagining he was on board some great ship——"

"And is still living?" interrupted Mary eagerly.

"No; for, even if he were on board some ship—through Gilbert again—Estrild imagined she received proof of his death."

"Is that true?" asked Mary.

Estrild turned her sad eyes on her without reply—she spoke without words.

"Carrie, I should like to see Gilbert," said Mary.

"Then you must go alone," returned Carrie, "for I am too angry to speak to him."

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Mary went, and returned in a short time flushed and pitiful. Then she wished Estrild good-bye hurriedly, and, went away with Carrie, not having said another word against the strange marriage.

In the little dark parlour which Carrie called her own room these two conferred earnestly together, and Mary gave a letter into her hands.

"If things happen that we fear, let her have it to comfort and help her," she said. "Carrie we must hurry now—the time is short."

Carrie, apparently without reason, burst into tears, and sobbed pitifully.

"Do you repent your promise?" asked Mary, laying her small hand on her shoulder.

"Repent? No; I am saving mother from misery and shame; I am saving the little ones—and I hope I am saving father from the gallows," concluded Carrie, with a flash of anger lighting up her tears.

"Do not say that, Carrie. Our fears and suspicions may be all groundless. You will be glad to prove them so."

"I believe what Tom says—that the captain of that ship is a desperate man, ready for any deed of crime; and his wife is worse than himself."

"We have both believed Tom; Carrie, there is no more time to talk."

Carrie hurried away to her mother's room, and astonished the tribe of children she met on the stairs by catching each one in her arms and giving him a good hug before setting him down again on his noisy feet. She found her mother in bed, knitting vigorously with fast and shaking fingers.

"I can't get up, Carrie, my dear, for if I did I should fall on my knees and pray, and your father would be dreadfully angry. Hush—he is in his room dressing, and the door is not quite shut!"

"Never mind him, mother. Pray always with heart and soul—pray night and day, mother, and put my name in your prayers too. Now give me a good kiss, for I am going—going out for a little while."

"Are you, my dear? Well, I don't wonder at that."

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"I always know that, Carrie."

And so they kissed each other, and, with a long last look at her mother, Carrie was gone; and in another minute she and Mary Armstrong were walking rapidly down a side-street where a carriage awaited them.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Mr. Vicat opened the door of his son's sitting-room, and called out sharply—

"Gilbert, are you ready?"

There was no answer; then he entered the room and saw it was empty. The bed-room within, communicating through an ante-chamber, was also empty. Beyond this was a small room which had been fitted up as a laboratory. The door of this was closed, but there issued from it a sweet and pungent odour which drove Mr. Vicat back from it with a look of fear and disgust on his face.

"At his experiments again," he said contemptuously, "and thinking more of them than of love or money. A queer fellow indeed, only fit to be a wizard as he is! I wonder what ghost he is raising now. Well, I'll wait five minutes."

So, watch in hand, Mr. Vicat waited.

The five minutes appeared to him an hour, yet he kept his word with himself, and did not go to the door again till they had passed away into the great eternity of vanished time. And now he struck a sharp blow upon the panel, and cried angrily on his son's name.

A dead silence answered him. His face paled, partly with anger and partly with fear, and with strong hand and knee he forced open the door with sudden wrench. But he paused upon the threshold for one ghastly moment in the uncertainty of a horrible dread.

Stretched upon a couch near the window, with the pale London sunshine streaming on his face, Gilbert lay dead.

After that single instant of doubt, Mr. Vicat recognized the

terrible truth, and, striding forward with panting breath and shaking lips, he laid his hard hand upon his son's breast.

There was no answering heart-beat to that cold touch, there

was no breath issuing from the poor pale lips.

Mr. Vicat raised his livid face from the vain search for life, and gazed around him with eyes from which for a moment all meaning had fled. The atmosphere was filled with a pure white smoke, which wreathed and curled all around and about him, and from the midst of it he saw—or seemed to see—the pale phantom of a battle, and amid the shadowy swords, amid the confusion that waved and rolled about him, stood Harold Olver unscathed.

Mr. Vicat fell upon his knees, and his hair rustled on his head. He crawled to the door, passed through and closed it. In the outer room, away from that strange cloud, he recovered himself, and wiped his clammy forehead with a shaking hand.

"The man Olver is dead and buried; Gilbert has killed himself in raising his ghost. No, it is all fancy! That stuff in there which he has been burning crazes the brain. I believe I lost my senses through it. And now what is to be done? Must all my

schemes perish through this?"

He glanced at the closed door with a look of fear, then, rising, he stole away quietly, shutting every door behind him with noiseless hand. In the same cautious way he crept down-stairs to the dining-room, where he took brandy from the sideboard and drank a glassful quickly. Then he went to Estrild, who was still waiting for his summons. By this time he was calm and resolved.

"My dear, we must go to the ship without Gilbert. He is not well this morning; he will follow us later. The clergyman will wait till he comes. You do not mind your wedding being delay-

ed an hour or two?"

Mind? Why did the tightness at her heart suddenly cease? Why did the cold apathy which had overpowered her change now to a glow of life? Was it because she was glad of such a slight reprieve as this? In another instant she reproached herself with selfishness. Oh, she was happy—certainly she was happy—in the thought of saving Gilbert! It was the only happiness left for her; it was a duty, and she would never think of it with regret.

"I am ready to go," she said, "if you think it best."

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place on board the *Venture*, the special license permitting it; this had been done from fear of Mrs. Vicat's and Carrie's interference, Mr. Vicat feeling that their presence might lead to results inimical to his interests. So all arrangements had been finished, and luggage sent to the ship before Carrie's return.

Mr. Vicat stood up at the farewell between Mrs. Vicat and Estrild. The poor frightened woman strained the girl in her arms and whispered a blessing over her. More she dared not

say; but her heart was big with fear.

"Carrie shall come on board and wish you good-bye," said Mr. Vicat, when Estrild, looking round, asked for her eagerly. "She seems to be out now."

Estrild descended the stairs, and then Mr. Vicat hurried back to his wife.

"Anne, when I am gone, send at once for a doctor; I have just seen Gilbert, and he is very ill."

"And he is not going with—with you?" exclaimed his wife.

"No; he will follow us if better. But he is very ill—I have not told Estrild how ill."

"Then perhaps there will be no wedding?" said Mrs. Vicat hopefully.

"It is possible. I hope that will comfort you."

She stared, not understanding him; but he had closed the

door, and was gone.

He placed Estrild in the carriage waiting for them; and then followed a long silent drive, for the girl wept quietly, and the man gazed from the window with hard set face, or at times gnawed his fingers as though tormented by fiendish thoughts.

Down by the river, through narrow streets, past busy wharves and forests of tall masts, towards broader and broader reaches

of the Thames, till the ship at last was in view.

"There is the Venture!" cried Mr. Vicat, rising himself as if from deep thought. "You will find your money is well spent, Estrild—she is a floating palace."

"I am glad for Gilbert's sake," she answered; and she looked with interest at the ship—the dream-ship—that was to bring

him health and fame.

A boat awaited them, whose crew rowed them swiftly to the Venture, and on the deck the Captain came forward to greet them. Everything was strange to Estrild, but this man was strangest of all. He was unlike a seaman, and his face wore

the furtive aspect of a creature who had long lived in tear—who had looked behind him in trembling, and had peered and peeped and quivered at shadows.

"Where is the invalid young gentleman?" he asked, looking

down into the boat as if to search for him.

"He was not able to come with us," said Mr. Vicat, paling a little.

"Ah, I remember you told me he must have a carriage expressly arranged for him! Not able to sit up long! Poor fellow, I hope the voyage will restore him. He will join the young lady soon, I suppose, sir?"

"Yes," said Mr. Vicat, with a smile that flitted across his lips

in an ugly way. "My niece and son will soon be united."

Estrild walked to the side and leaned over the bulwarks, looking down into the water. The misgiving at her heart was filling her with fear; her enthusiasm had faded; she longed for a sight of Gilbert's face, that, in seeing it, she might feel again that she was right to sacrifice herself to save him.

"Come down, my dear, and see the cabins," said Mr. Vicat. "And I want to introduce you to the Captain's wife. It will be pleasant for you to have a lady with you, so I was glad to give him leave to take her. There is a stewardess too—a very clever woman, they tell me—engaged about an hour ago. They had a difficulty in finding one for such a long voyage."

The cabins were beautiful, and Estrild admired them, her mind dwelling constantly by an effort on the result to be attained for Gilbert through this ship—this long voyage which stretched before her in darkness.

"Isn't the ship lovely, miss?"

And Estrild turned at the sudden voice, and saw the Captain's wife, a pale-haired woman, with pale eyes also, but so full of light that they seemed to hide a fire behind them. Determination sat upon her strong jaw and firm lips, and her light hair waved about her head like flames.

Estrild shrank from her for a moment, but she had a pleasant smile and a sweet voice, and these overcame the repugnance.

"Yes; and the ship has cost a lovely price," said Mr. Vicat, with a sort of ghastly gaiety.

"Then I hope she is insured," laughed the Captain's wife.

No one answered; and Mr. Vicat now held out both hands to

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Estrild in an awkward way, a little laugh on his lips, but his face drawn and pale.

"My dear, I had better leave you now. I am a little anxious about Gilbert. The clergyman will be here in a moment; and

-and, you see, he is not arrived."

Estrild uttered not a word; her hands lay in his lifeless—something was heavy at her heart. Gilbert's coming seemed to her now a terror; he was right in rejecting this marriage; perhaps he meant never to come. The faint hope was a relief to her pent-up heart, and her tears fell. One touched Mr. Vicat's hand, and he started back as though it burnt his flesh.

In another moment he was gone, and Estrild was left alone

with the Captain's wife.

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Evening was fast falling into night before Mr. Vicat re-entered his home. He found his wife with face swollen with weeping, her aspect full of terror and grief.

"Gilbert is dead," she said, without looking up at him.

"I knew it before I left," he answered.

"And yet you took Estrild to that ship! Oh, Mr. Vicat,

what have you done ?"

"What have I done?" he echoed fiercely. "I have saved you from the workhouse and your children from the streets. Don't you know I am on the verge of bankruptcy and ruin? But for Estrild's money, the smash would have come long ago. Gilbert's little fortune went last year. I told him so—perhaps that killed him."

"No," answered his frightened wife, "it was the smoke—the drugs he was burning; the doctor said they were dangerous."

"Well, well," said Mr. Vicat soothingly, "I am sorry; but the poor fellow's life was not worth much to him—it would be foolish to grieve."

"Estrild fancied his life was worth millions to others, or she would never have consented to your schemes. Mr. Vicat, I implore you to tell me the truth. Is she safe? Is the ship safe?"

"Safe?" he repeated with a laugh. "Of course she is! At all events, there'll be no accident in the river or the Channel, for the Captain has engaged a skilled pilot, who was to come on board when I left and take them safely to the Land's End."

"Thank God!" said Mrs. Vicat, drawing a great breath of

relief. "I—I don't know what I have been fearing or thinking Now I can let you read this!"

She pushed a letter towards him which had been hidden by her work; he took it in his hand, saw Carrie's writing and read this—

"Dearest Mother—I am on board the Venture with Estrild. I offered myself as stewardess, and was accepted by the Captain's wife. Do not grieve; remember what I said this morning—that I was doing right. Tell father I am here!"

Mr. Vicat laid the letter down with a shaking hand. His face was utterly colourless to the lips, which stood over his teeth quivering, not covering them. For an instant he stood dazed, his distended eyeballs glaring at his wife, yet not seeing her. She rose in terror, and seized him by the arm; but he burst from her, rushed to the door, and fled out into the street.

It was a stormy night, but he bent his livid face against the rain, not feeling it, not staying his hurried steps till he reached the nearest posting-house. Here he ordered a chaise and four horses.

"Five guineas," he cried to the post-boys, "if you can reach Gravesend in time to catch my ship the Venture!"

On through the sullen night, the darkness, the splashing rain they dashed with headlong speed, yet to him the pace seemed never fast. He looked out upon the diminishing lamps, and to keep back his rushing thoughts he counted them till the last was gone. But, when the country road was spread before him, dimly lighted by a clouded moon, he saw a ship in every shadow—a ship foundering at sea, and the boats stealing away with the traitor crew.

Carrie—the one human being who had a grasp upon his cold heart—Carrie! Could he—might he save her yet? It was infernal, this breaking up of his well-laid plans—the loss of fortune—this ruin now staring him in the face—yet it was all nothing if he could save Carrie, if he could countermand those secret orders whispered in a fiend's ear.

Could it be his wife's prayers that had ruined his great scheme? Strangely enough, as he asked himself this question, he felt a touch of comfort in thinking she had said, "God prosper the good ship!" Then he too they lost all m back from the and he wrench daughter. Bu sinking ever l flash of the can dead son's face after – the son no tear had din of his life he a gaunt hands w ual face, and w

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his great question, God prosThen he took to saying these words over and over again, till they lost all meaning, and he laughed aloud, and caught himself back from the idiocy with a sudden shock. This sobered him, and he wrenched his mind away from the ship and from his daughter. But now, instead of the surging sea and sails sinking, sinking ever lower, another vision tormented him. In every flash of the carriage-lamps upon rain-glistening hedge he saw his dead son's face—the son whom he had crippled and hated ever after—the son at whom he had scoffed and jeered, and for whom no tear had dimmed his hard eyes. Yet at this dread moment of his life he almost called aloud to him for help; he stretched gaunt hands widly towards the fleeting vision of the pale spiritual face, and whispered with white lips—

"Oh, that your dream was true, and I could flash a message through the lightning, or, like a sorcerer, fling my words upon

the air to reach her ear!"

Then he checked himself again, feeling his brain was quivering between reason and unreason.

"Poor boy!" he said, giving his son a pitiful thought at last.
"He was doubtless a little mad—a dreadful thing to stand upon the balance and know not if the sound or unsound shall weigh you down; yet if he were living I should go to him for help. He could do strange things."

The light of a lamp gleamed upon the carriage window. Gravesend was reached, and brain and heart were beating again with the agony of his impatience and fear.

Down by the river, with fevered questions and answers from-

slow bargemen or lazy lookers-on.

A ship gone past—the Venture? Oh, yes, she sailed down hours ago—went with a fair wind—must be well out at sea by now!

Sick at heart as Jephthah was when his daughter came to meet her death with dance and song, the miserable man turned away from the dark river, and went back to his inn, believing, disbelieving, stopping to question again and again, then going on with ever heavier and heavier thoughts.

There was still one hope left—Portsmouth. The pilot might be landed there, and he would go out to the *Venture* in the boat signalled for, and drag his daughter away to safety and to land. A sort of rage possessed him in the fever of his hope, and he felt that he could and would save Carrie only; the other—the girl

who had caused this agony—should go on in the doomed ship in spite of clinging arms or wild cries for pity.

He ordered out fresh horses, and meanwhile wrote a lying letter

to his wife.

Urgent business called him away. He might be absent two or three days. If an inquest was demanded on his son, she must keep secret the fact that he was aware of his death when he left the house that morning. He would bring Carrie home with him—this was certain—quite certain—he would bring her home. And she had better see Tom, and ask him if he knew—

Here he dashed down his pen, for his eyes were bloodshot with rage, and he longed to have his hands on the throat of the man

who had helped his daughter to her death.

"The horses are put to, sir."

He addressed his unfinished letter, sent it to the post, paid for the discharged chase, and once more journeyed on through the storm-driven night.

At Portsmouth, at Lloyd's—where they telegraphed to Southampton in the old way, forgotten now—he could learn no tidings

of the ship, except that she had passed in full sail.

He lingered, he waited, he asked countless questions on pier and strand, till he was pointed out as the madman who had lost his ship. Then he turned homewards, singing and talking to himself as the chaise rattled on through the long miles to London.

A haggard man with white hair appeared like a spectre before a sad woman sewing at her mourning-dress; and, looking round eagerly, he said—

"Is Carrie come home?"

"Oh, Mr. Vicat, you know she is on board the Venture ?"

"Yes—gone to her death unless she tells them she is my child. But you said, 'God prosper the ship!' Anne, it would be well to pray for her."

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

Mr. Vicat's departure struck a chill upon Estrild's heart, for she had clung even to him of late; and now that he was gone she felt utterly forsaken and her mind was full of a dull aching dread.

"You look tired, miss," said the Captain's wife. "Let me get

you a cup of tea."

The woman's light eyes were fixed on her in a scrutinising way, and Estrild shrank from their gaze instinctively; yet her voice rang so sweetly in her ear that in a moment it overcame this dim repugnance, and she answered readily that she would be glad of the tea.

It was soon fetched, and while Estrild was drinking it the Captain's wife talked rapidly, expatiating on the loveliness of

the land to which they were bound.

"And the sea is as blue as sapphire, the sky is bluer still, the shore is fringed with flowers, and on the heights above are groves of olive and of palm, and the sweet bright air is laden with the scent of orange and citron, mingled with the perfume of rose and lily. Oh, it is a country to live and die in, miss!"

"Not to die in, I hope," said Estrild, putting down her cup. The woman refilled it, and talked on of Italy, of India, and the sunny isles of the Pacific; and Estrild leaning back on the velvet couch on which she sat, listened dreamily, for her sweet voice seemed to blend with the sounds in the ship and the soft plash of waves against her sides.

Voices were hailing a boat—how far off they sounded! Then a voice answered, and Estrild started up with a sudden glow upon her face.

"Who is that?" she cried, falling back upon the sofa as she

spoke, feeling strangely giddy.

"It is only the pilot come on board," said the woman with a scrutinising look into her very eyes; and apparently satisfied, she moved the tea-tray a little aside to give room for her rounded elbow to rest upon the table. "I have been a seaman's wife ever since I was fifteen," she continued, "but I should not like to go down Channel without a pilot, especially with my present husband."

She laughed a little, and her light eyes were fixed on Estrild's

face again. Somehow her voice seemed changed—it had grown coarse.

"Having got our pilot, I don't think we shall let him go

again in a hurry. He believes he'll be put ashore-"

She stopped, for Estrild's eyes were closed, but the cessation of that continuous voice caused a sort of wonder, and, opening them, she saw the Captain's wife in a haze, her light eyes fixed on her strangely, and her light hair hanging loosely and glittering like limp snakes sleeping.

Estrild half rose with an effort, and putting out her hands

gropingly, she said, or tried to say-

"I-I want air. I will go on deck and-and see the pilot."

"Not yet, my pretty," said the woman, with her cruel little laugh; and, bending over her unconscious victim, she laid strong hands upon her slender arms, and so pressed her down upon the couch—in a dead sleep now; and, covering her with a shawl, she gave her one look, as if to reassure herself, and then hurried away.

On the deck she found her husband, and whispered to him-

"Hoist sail, and away! She's safe for four hours."

The pilot, standing near the mainmast, gave her one glance as she passed him swiftly; then he turned his back on her, and when she retraced her steps he was leaning on the bulwarks watching the raising of the anchor.

It was night when Estrild awoke. She was in her cabin, a lamp was swinging slowly to and fro with the niction of the ship, the tramp of feet was overhead, the creaking of cordage was in her ears, mingling with the surging of waves and the dash of spray upon the deck.

She listened for a moment, and then started up in her berth with a sense of loneliness and fear that seized upon her with a

sudden horror.

"We are at sea!" she said to herself. "What can it mean?"
But no answer came to her mind; the thought of treachery
was still unshaped; a vague fear alone possessed her, and the
heaviness and bewilderment caused by the drugged tea had not
yet passed away. Overcome by the stupor of the opium she had
taken, she fell back on her pillow and slept again.

On her next awaking it was bright morning; the wind was fresh, a keen air blew in through the half-opened window of the

cabin, and so a home-like l fell upon her and, though of the truth in the power

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cabin, and some neat hand had made all things around her take a home-like look. But this could not remove the terror which fell upon her with the morning light; her mind was clear now, and, though she could not grasp the whole situation, enough of the truth was visible to show her she was alone on the sea and in the power of the captain and his cruel wife.

She wrung her hands tightly together and burst into bitter tears.

Who were they? Did they mean to kill her? Had they taken advantage of her uncle's absence to set sail; or was it—could it be possible that she was the victim of a plot on his part? An instant conviction that this was the true fact seized upon her; and the tears dried suddenly with the appalling thought, and the blood rushed to her heart, leaving her deadly pale. Utterly forlorn, powerless, alone, how was she to defend her life? What could her weak hands do to save it? Nothing! She must try to be content to die, if this ship meant death for her; and better die here than to be set ashore of some desolate rock or island to die a thousand deaths in one.

The fear of this fate was worse than the fear of a quick death; she covered her face with her hands, and with white lips uttered a prayer softly, mingling Harold's name and Tristram's with her words, saying they could help her if they lived; but God had taken them, so God must be her friend now.

Some one came and stood by her as she prayed—she had not heard the door unclosed gently—but she did not look up; she thought it was the Captain's wife, and the instincts of her heart told her the woman was a fiend.

But a kind soft hand took her hands down from her eyes, and then she saw Carrie—Carrie, with a smile on her lips, but her cheeks wet with tears.

Estrild gazed at her for one second as in the amazement of a dream, then she flung her arms about her, and, holding her tightly, cried for joy. To have Carrie here, to see her good, happy, beaming face was like the lifting of a stone from her sepulchre and calling her forth again to light and life,

"Oh, Carrie, how thankful I am! I feel safe now."

"Do you?" said Carrie, half smiling, half tearful. "I wish I did."

"But is there anything to fear?" asked Estrild, paling again.
"I cannot tell you," returned Carrie. "Remember, it is my

father who has brought you here." She held Estrild's hand tightly and turned away her face. "I have joined you," she continued, "partly to show father that I trust him; but, remember, I am here as stewardess and you must not betray that you know me. That might cost us our lives. Estrild, I do not deny that our situation is perilous—whether by my father's fault or his misfortune I cannot say. I hope the last. I felt sure he would not hurt his son, so I believe—I hoped—he meant no harm to you, and with Mary's help I am here. In the ship where he placed the lives of his son and niece I thought he could trust the life of his daughter also. If no harm befall me, then he will know that I flung my fate into the balance, hoping -hoping "-for a moment Carrie broke down, but recovered herself quickly—"hoping," she said, "that his better nature would prevail; for, Estrild, he is not all bad—he is not indeed; and he loves me dearly, and all the more because he fears me a little. I am trying to believe - yes, I do believe—that he has been deceived by this villain whom he has made Captain of the ship, and that he set sail contrary to his orders as soon as he had left you."

"Then he never came back!" Estrild cried. "And Gilbert is

not here?"

"No, he is not here;" and Carrie spoke in a low grave voice.
"I am thankful," Estrild answered, "that he is spared the

pain of sharing our fear. Carrie, what is it you think we have to dread?"

"I think, my dear, the Captain—aided by his wife—means to seize the ship and cargo and dispose of them in some South American port; but before he could do this safely, he would have to rid himself of you—and of me," she added, "if he once suspected me."

Estrild's eyes, large with terror, were fixed and dilated, as,

holding her hand with both hers, she whispered—

"Carrie, last evening the woman gave me something that took away my senses. Do you think she will poison me?"

A footstep sounded outside, and Carrie instantly changed her voice and attitude.

"It is a fine morning, miss; I think you will feel better if you et up."

The door was softly opened, and the white shining face of the Captain's wife looked within. She nodded to Estrild with her

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sweetest smile, and made some remark upon the weather, and hoped she was better than she seemed on the previous night—

"When you fainted, miss, quite suddenly, and the stewardess and I had to carry you to bed. I hope you are bright and fresh this morning, Miss Hyde?" she added, turning to Carrie.

Carrie dropped her a curtsey, and assured her she was well.
"I am never sea sick," she said; "neither is Miss Carbonellis."

—so she tells me."

"I am so used to the sea," said Estrild, steadying her voice.

"I dare say you have wondered, miss, that your uncle did not return before we sailed; but we only obeyed orders in starting at once. Doubtless he will explain his reasons by and by. Perhaps you will see him at Portsmouth when we land the pilot."

In saying this the Captain's wife kept her light hazel eyes fixed on Estrild's face with a defiant and watchful look, as if daring her to disbelieve her word or distrust her in any way. And, although very pale, Estrild bore this scrutiny so well that the woman, reassured, closed the door and walked away, saying to herself—

"Ah, it is the opium has given her that white dazed look! She suspects nothing; and the young woman Hyde is a fool."

For a moment after she was gone the two girls uttered not a word; they only looked into each other's eyes and felt their hearts tremble.

"Carrie, who is the pilot?" whispered Estrild.

"I don't know, but he looks like an honest man. And he must be that, for Mary Armstrong found him and sent him here. Es trild, if on board her father's ship your brother lost his life, then on board the *Venture* she will save yours. I cannot tell you now all that she has done. I must wait till a happier time."

"Did Miss Armstrong send the pilot? Then last night I was dreaming, for I thought I knew his voice. Carrie, what is my

life to her? Why does she care for me?"

Carrie shook her head in answer.

"Mary has her secrets, and this is one of them. Estrild, she gave me a letter for you; have you courage to read it now? It is from Gilbert. My dear, I am sure he never meant to come on board this ship except as a brother; he never meant to take you at your too generous word."

Estrild was dressed now, and she sat near the little window of the cabin with the letter in her hand. The sight of Gilbert's

writing brought with it a pang of mingled pain and pity; she had hoped to save his life for a world that would one day honour him, but now she felt that even for a whole world she could not have saved him at such a cost. Carrie stole a look at her, saw the colour mount into her pale cheeks, and guessed she had not courage to read the letter in her presence.

Left alone, Estrild broke the seal with a trembling hand and

read this-

"Estrild—You have not guessed the truth—that I love you, and, loving you, I have in a passionate moment of temptation deceived you. On that memorable night when I held your hand I willed—in my jealousy—with all my soul that you should not see Harold, whom you loved, but that a vision of the man by whose hand your brother died should come before you. I could not guess that you would see his funeral; for worlds I would not have brought its reflection before you had I known it. During your illness I suffered agonies of remorse, and I longed to confess the truth when I saw you, but you checked the words on my lips. And I am weak; I yielded again to the tempestuous joy of my own heart in being with you, in hearing your dear voice, and in deceiving myself with the hope that one day you might learn to love me a little. Then you tempted me, Estrild, in your great pity, by offering to share your life with me; and, although I refused the sacrifice, it was only a half-hearted 'No' I uttered. I longed to hear you plead again with me; you pleaded for leave to save my life for the world, not knowing that you were my whole world to me. At that hour, though I would have died for you, I could not have told you that the man who has your love may, for aught I know, still be living. But now, when I must share this long voyage with you in the hope of life, I dare be silent no longer; I feel you would hate me if you heard the truth from another, and knew I had deceived you. Estrild, when you read thus far I know you will say in your heart that, if any doubt exists of Harold's death, then you cannot put your hand in mine—you cannot be even the shadow of a wife to me. So be it then. I accept your decision, and own it right. But I cannot help the human weakness that would fain have you understand that I make my confession in the full knowledge of all it means for me—the pangs of jealousy, the bitterness of being fersaken, the desolation, the loneliness, and—oh, Estrild,

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ess of strild, do not call me a coward !—the cruelty of one to whom the sight of my misery is always a reproach. Estrild, my dearest, you will be very sad when you read this. I will speak of myself no more.

"I had written thus far when Mary came to me with help and comfort in her words, as she ever has. She rejoices at my decision to refuse all sacrifice at your hands except the one already made in the purchase of the Venture. She does not advise me to give up the voyage which you undertake for my sake—to do this would be grief to you -- and she feels that Carrie's presence and mine will be a guarantee for your safety. She has fears which she will not explain. I have none; I feel I am going on a happy voyage to a lovelier land than any I have seen in a vision or dreamed of in hope.

"When we meet I trust to bring you a joyful message from a far-off country, for I have resolved to discover in what land your lover lives. Then we will spread the sails of the Venture towards that distant shore; and, whether its breezes bring me death or

life, I shall be happy in seeing your joy."

The letter lay on Estrild's lap, and she looked forth upon the sea with shining eyes. A thousand feelings possessed her as she read, but they were all thrust aside by the one great hope that Her instinct was right—he lived, and she should Harold lived. see him again. The peril of her present position passed from her sight, Harold filled every vision of her soul, and joy like sunshine ran through every vein. If in this first flood of joy and hope she gave a thought to Gilbert, it was mingled with a regret that he had not joined her; because then, through that strange lore he held, he would tell her where Harold was. This was selfish, but at the moment love was her other self, and all thoughts and feelings were but ministers of love. She could not pity Gilbert yet, or wonder at his absence except in that it touched Harold and herself. But, when Carrie entered the cabin again, then she felt ashamed, remorseful, and she tried to hide from her the radiance of her face.

"Carrie," she said, "Gilbert meant to join us. How is it he did not come?"

"Perhaps father stopped him," said Carrie, growing white, "or, as I have said, the villain who calls himself Captain here set sail purposely without him."

Then, to Estrild's dismay, Carrie burst suddenly into tears, and, falling upon her knees, clasped both hands around her, sob-

bing forth—

"Estrild, I have heard from Tom that father is on the verge of ruin! Men so situated are tempted more terribly than we women can dream of. If—if any thought has entered father's mind that he would gain wealth and safety through—through the loss of the ship, will you try for my sake and Gilbert's to think of him with pity?"

"Carrie, I would forgive him with all my heart. I am full of happiness and hope; I will not believe in evil. Why do you

suspect anything so terrible?"

"My dear, it is because part of Mary's and my plan has failed. Before the ship set sail father was to know I was here, resolved to share with you the perils of the sea. He would receive my letter on returning home; after that he would come back to the ship with Gilbert, and, knowing enough of me to be aware that nothing would change my determination, there would remain only the alternative to take us all ashore—for I would not go without you—or let us sail in safety. Now you know what happened. Neither Gilbert nor my father came, and the ship sailed while he was still ignorant that his daughter's life was in the hands of the villain whom he had made master of our fate. Now the agonising doubt is my mind "—and Carrie pressed her hand upon her forehead—"is whether he gave orders to this man to sail or whether he has himself done this in fulfilment of some vile scheme of his own."

"Oh, your father meant to return, Carrie!" Estrild said soothingly. "Remember, he did not know the marriage he had

planned was given up in both Gilbert's mind and mine."

"So you had come to your senses," Carrie said; and a smile rested for a moment on her lips. "It was a wild romantic notion on your part, born of your dreariness and despair, and it was a wickedness of fath r's. What it was on Gilbert's I fear I cannot guess. I am sorry for him. Oh, Estrild, I am afraid something dreadful has happened; otherwise he would have come!"

"Rut doubtless he and your father came and found the ship

gone."

"No, no," Carrie answered; "for after the pilot came on board there was still a delay of two hours before we sailed. You were

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board were sleeping, and I sat upon the deck watching for a boat till my heart seemed to stand still with fear. You see there was time—plenty of time—for father to return to the ship. And—and I did not give up hope till the sails were set."

"And during those two hours, Carrie, you might have gone

ashore in safety."

"I might, and have branded myself for a coward ever afterwards. And I would not break my promise to Mary Armstrong to stand by you while I had a breath of life left; I trust in her, and I care for you. Could I leave you, knowing that you were lying here senseless through that terrible woman's wickedness?"

Estrild stooped and kissed her; words could not speak the gratitude she felt towards the brave girl who had risked all for her sake. Mutually they now agreed to cease discussion on the point of Mr. Vicat's guilt, and to watch warily the course of

events

Estrild breakfasted with the Captain's wife, and with natural suspicion partook only of those dishes of which she ate herself. Carrie waited on them, and, like the clever woman she was, she acted her part to perfection, and with a careless ease that was, in fact, admirable courage.

"Would you like to go on deck?" said the Captain's wife, with her sweet voice tuned to its first civility. "We are out of sight of land now, and there's nothing to be seen but sea and sky

-and that's rather dull for you."

"Not for me," Estrild answered. "I have lived all my life within sound of the sea."

She was soon on deck, and standing at the wheel she saw the stalwart form and met the steady brave eyes of Daniel Pascoe.

CHAPTER XL

THE ship in which Harold sailed from the Cape met with rough weather, and was driven from her course; and at length, when she reached Maderia, some slight repairs were needed, which detained her there a fortnight. One day, at nearly the end of the second week, a fast merchantman, schooner-rigged, put into the bay and anchored for a few hours. Harold, having nothing to do, rowed out to take a look at her, meaning to board

and get English news if he could; but, to his surprise, he and his boat's crew were hailed before they reached her side, and told peremptorily that no strangers were permitted on board.

Upon this Harold stood up in his boat and tendered his card, saying he would be glad to speak to the Captain for a moment.

The man on watch, on receiving this request, remarked surlily that he had nothing to do with people's cards or messages—he had only to obey orders, and the boat must sheer off at once. And, touching his forelock grimly, he retired from the bulwarks and was lost to view.

Wishing him all the plagues of Egypt, Harold was about to order his boatmen to row away, when there flitted before his

sight at a cabin window the face of Estrild.

For an instant his heart stood still, for he felt as though a spirit had passed before him; then he asked if he was mad or dreaming, and a minute had gone by before speech came to his white lips. He looked up at the cabin window, but a curtain was drawn before it now, presenting to his eyes a blank of dull yellow. Then he ordered his men to row round the ship, vaguely hoping for some sign of Estrild's presence as a proof that he had not been deceived by fancy or some unaccountable likeness or mirage. But there was no fluttering robe visible on deck, no beckoning hand from cabin window, no sign on the ship's blank sides to assure his bewildered mind that a deceptive vision had not touched his eyes and vanished. Then a man came to the gangway, and, leaning over, called out, in a high but quavering voice—

"I hear you wish to speak to me-I am Captain Sinclair."

Startled by some echo in the voice that touched his memory, Harold looked in the Captain's face and recognized him instantly. It was Trevel's friend—the man with the scared pale aspect of a hunted creature—the man who had shot his wife, and was hiding with a herd of other outcasts in the den Harold had such reason to remember.

A breathless instant passed, in which he saw the recognition was not mutual, owing perhaps to his being bronzed and changed by the sun of India.

"I only wished to ask for English news," he said carelessly.

"I know of none," returned the Captain, his voice still curiously wavering and changing in its key.

"Can't I come on board?" asked Harold.

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we have two or three men down with fever. I only put in here for fruit and green stuff for them."

"And you have a lady on board," said Harold, hiding the

anxious tone of his voice by a laugh.

The strange Captain, who had no look of a sailor about him, retreated a step at this, and looked over his shoulder towards the cabin on the poop. Perhaps some sign reached him from the curtained window, for, coming back, he answered—

"Yes; I have my wife with me."

As he spoke the cabin door was opened, a woman walked a step or two from it, then returned and closed it. Harold saw her plainly, for the sunshine poured broadly over her strong lithe figure, her powerful jaw, and her cruel light eyes of fire. She was not changed; mentally he saw her instantly again as he had last seen her, with a lamp flaring in her white face, throwing a ruddy hue on her curiously lighted half, as she held back with one strong hand the man who was now leaning with crossed arms upon the bulwarks, looking down upon him with furtive shrinking eyes.

"So he has married that woman!" Harold said to himself. "A she-fiend, if ever one walked in human form! How could I have

mistaken her face for Estrild's? It is impossible!"

Bewildered and full of angry doubt, he looked keenly in the man's face, longing to cry out, "Is there no one on my side who will fling him down?"

"So that's your wife?" he said. "Can't I do anything for her

or for you on shore, Captain Sinclair?"

"I shall get away from this hot place, I hope, to-morrow. I would never have put in here, but my best hand, whom I took on board as pilot, is down with fever, and my wife fancies there isn't a man aboard but him fit to work this ship; so I had to put in for fruit and wine—curse him!—whether I would or no."

"So there is the old jealousy in the man still," thought Harold; and, baffled, angry, and full of heart-ache, he returned to the shore, doubting the evidence of his own eyesight in that flitting vision of Estrild's face, and wondering whether it was his duty to tell the English Consul what he knew of the man who called himself Captain Sinclair and had the command of the good ship the *Venture*.

He decided to see the Consul, and toiled up the steep ascent to his house through dust and glare, only to gain a rebuff.

It was clearly no business of his Brittanic Majesty's Consul to interfere between owners and any captain they might choose to appoint to command their merchant-vessels. If the man was a scamp, that was their look-out, not his; so Harold was politely dismissed, and returned to his inn to chew the cud of many bitter thoughts.

Estrild's long and cruel silence—what could it mean? Had she never received his letters, or was she faithless? No; he would not believe that possible; hers was no light nature that could love and love again. Then, like an unbent bow, his mind bounded back to old times and to the mystery and sorrow that had separated them and had brought into his life such strange risks and changes. Battles and griefs, sickness and danger—all had come to him through his wild quest for Tristram's slayer.

The long, hot, dull day had worn to its close when he came down from the hill, and the gall and smart within him drove him again to the shore in a sort of angry longing for a sight of the ship which had shown him a false vision of his love.

The Venture was gone; there was a vacant spot on the sea where in the morning the big merchant ship had loomed large and dark against the blue sky.

Harold turned away in a spiritless and angry mood. Earth, sea, and sky were a blank to him—he felt at enmity with the world. That ship——

"Beg pardon, sir, but are you the Inglis Captain Olver?"

The question came from a little yellow man with a black beard
and big gold rings in his ears, who plied a shore-boat and sold

fruit to incoming and outgoing ships.

"Yes, my name is Olver. Have you any business with me f" asked Harold, in sharp impatience.

"This for the Inglis Captain;" and the yellow man took a letter from beneath a greasy jacket lying in his boat.

Estrild's writing! Harold seized the letter with a hand of

Looking on, the man smiled complacently and talked his fill. Yes, it was the lovely young Inglesa on board the big ship that sailed two, three hours agone for the Cape who had given him the letter, and he waited till the ship had sailed before he found the Signor Captain. Was the letter right?

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d his fill. big ship had given before he Harold looked up in blind agony; like Samson, he would fain have laid his hands upon the pillars which held up the triumphant laughing lives of his foes, and have fallen with them in bitter gladness.

Why had the man not given the letter sooner? What did the lady say? Was she well? How was she looking? A thousand useless questions rushed to Harold's lips from his heart as he stood gazing into the face of the man who had seen Estrild. This insignificant little yellow creature grew to be a prince in his eyes—a being to be envied and wondered at; he had had speech with an angel. And yet Harold's soul was full of anger against this stranger to whom Estrild had spoken, while to him she had denied the hearing of her voice, the sight even of her shadow.

"What did she say to you?" he cried impatiently.

"The Signora had no time for speech; the other lady come and ask me sharply what I do there, and the young lady go away directly. Excellency will understand it was like this. I sell my fruit, and she come on deck and buy some; and she pay me with a gold piece and whisper, 'This is yours if you take this letter to the Inglis gentleman—you can read address? I nod 'Yes' and hide the letter in my basket. And the pale lady dart out from cabin quick as lizard, and no more words pass. The letter will tell more to the excellency than I can."

Harold tore it open, and found these pencilled lines-

"I am safe, though in strange hands. Daniel is with me, and other friends; now you will not fear for my safety. I implore you not to pursue the ship, but to meet me at Langarth. You will hear she is gone to the Cape. Believe nothing you hear, but await in England a letter from me, summoning you to Langarth. I can explain nothing; I can only entreat you not to heed any of the reasons that seem to point to another course. Oh, Harold, I wish you could understand the agony of entreaty in which I write this! But how can I expect you will, when the anguish of my prayer and the foreboding of death I shall feel if you refuse it are incomprehensible even to myself? I know that my life depends on your acquiescence, but how I know it I cannot tell you. It is a mysterious warning spoken in the spirit—listen to it, my first and only love, or elso I die; the fear of your

refusal comes upon me like a great darkness in which I grope

and fall into a grave.

"I write strongly because I know you will feel tempted to follow the Venture to the Cape. Harold, you will not see me there. Do not rush after a mistaken duty because you perceive I am a kind of prisoner—do not alarm yourself for this or exaggerate the dangers of my position. I repeat, I am safe and well and happy. How can I help being happy, knowing now that you live and still love me? For more than a yeer I believed you dead; and I have been ill, as you have been; but my voyage and my joy have brought back health. Daniel has told me all you have done and suffered. Oh, my dearest, I thought once it was not possible to love you better than I did in the old days, but I know now that I love you ten times more than I did then! Dearest, farewell! I hasten to seize the only chance I have to send you this. We sail immediately—I hear the orders given. Daniel's slight illness greatly perplexes and puts in fear——"

Here the letter broke off, and Harold, clutching it tightly, as though some strange hand would tear it from him, gazed upwards and around him with the bewildered angry grief of a man who feels his last opportunity of action is gone. Why had he not insisted on boarding the ship? Why had he not forced the English Consul to free Estrild from the clutches of these villains who held her prisoner? What accursed bewilderment had come over him that, blinded to the truth of her presence, he had not acted while there was yet time? And why was she on board the Venture? Surely some devilry was going on of which she was the victim, and which she either could not understand or dared not explain?

And now he began to consider what he could do to save her. The fastest boat he could hire would have no chance of overtaking the great ship speeding on with all sails set. And, if he followed her to the Cape, as reasons and impatience urged him to do, how was he to find a vessel in which to take his passage?

"At what hour did the ship sail?" Harold asked the question in a voice so filled with pain and with eyes so lighted with wrath and anguish that the little yellow man glared at him in amazement.

The exact hour? Well, it might be four o'clock—yes, three hours ago—or more; and she was gone to the Cape.

Harold ret He was like path, and see ness. There burst into fur wreck it; but had exhausted boarding the every avenue on whose hear away he knew riding at anch lines of road le which he balan he wait here for obey Estrild's

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Harold returned to his hotel without asking another question. He was like a man dazed, lost in a bewildering wood without path, and seeking with bursting heart for some clue in the dark-There was too a surging rage within him that would have burst into fury could he have met with an object on which to wreck it; but he could only fall foul of himself, and, when he had exhausted every epithet on what he deemed his folly in not boarding the Venture by storm, when he had twisted through every avenue of thought, there still remained the wide black sea, on whose heaving unanswering waste Estrild had been borne away he knew not whither, there still remained his own ship riding at anchor, and there still stretched before him, like two lines of road leading to unknown ends, the alternative courses which he balanced and re-balanced in his doubting mind. Should he wait here for the next ship bound for the Cape, or should he obey Estrild's command and pursue his voyage to England?

He read and re-read her letter again and again before he came to a decision, and could prevail on himself to renounce his longing desire to follow her. At last came the one clear thought that she had written with a truer perception of her own position than he could possibly have, and that he would do rightly in obeying her wish, though it might look to him like abandoning her to her fate. Yet it was danger in England she evidently feared, and danger in the ship; and he was fain to confess that to go to the Cape would be steering in the dark without a compass, whereas her letter pointed to a place of meeting, saying plainly, "Come to me at Langarth, and save me from some danger I dread." What if he should go to the Cape and find the ship had never touched there, and then, when he was far away, the conviction should fall on him that she had, in fact, sailed for England, and Estrild was in some deadly peril from which he was powerless now to rescue her? How would he bear his self-reproach for not having believed and obeyed her?

This thought decided him. He had the comfort of knowing that Daniel, who was a tower of strength, was with her; and he answered Estrild's passionate prayer by going on board his own ship; and the next day found him at sea on his way to

England.

CHAPTER XLI.

On seeing Daniel, Estrild had retained her self-possession. Except for a slight paleness which touched her face after its first flush, no outward sign betrayed her recognition of a defender and a friend; but an intense joy filled her heart, a sense of safety calmed every nerve, and she felt now that she had courage for any emergency. The deepest spring of joy lay, as she knew, in her belief that Harold lived; and this fact she was constantly whispering to herself, till her eyes shone like stars in the brightness of her hope. She had an intense faith in the powers of her sorrowful cousin, so that the doubt expressed in his letter became to her a reality. She dwelt but seldom on the confession of his love; it seemed to her to live only in the regions of his fancy. She was far from guessing that it was the sole great reality of his imaginative being; still less could she devine that death had come to him through this love of which she thought so little.

In her new-found tranquillity and happiness Estrild could wait patiently for the opportunity which she knew would come of speech with Daniel. When this time came, and she heard the history he had to relate, it was well for her that her heart was prepared for it, or her joy might have been too overwhelming. But there was much to temper it—anxiety at Harold's present peril in the midst of war, the recollection of her own dreary grief, which had led her into the fatal mistake of yielding to Mr. Vicat's plans and offering her life to save Gilbert's, her own present danger and Carrie's, in a ship commanded by a felonall this was sufficient to save her mind from being overbalanced by the intense joy that would fain have lifted her with airy wings above all thought of trouble. Again and again she had little snatches of talk with Daniel, which were to her like drinking an elixir of life; and her cheeks glowed with health, her step grew firm, her young and hitherto fragile frame gained in vital force and took a nobler form of beauty.

And yet sometimes she could listen to Daniel only with tears—for had he not to tell of Harold's sickness, sufferings, and danger? Then too she heard with a touch of fear, a little shrinking awe, the tale of Trevel's death and last words, so strangely corroborating the vision seen in the crystal, the whisper breathed in the mysterious air Gilbert gathered from the far winds.

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Estrild gre her feet, look "My fathe

"But his s know his dau and I'll save the good girl

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"Well, my ed about me f tub she was. like Jonah's w it was three m and others wit a touch of it i more passed av to the port of and once more home to Corny ture; but folks drunkard-wh I was was stan picture-I hear pilot that ship dearie,' I said, 'The Captain fixed me with h

"And you think that man Trevel killed Tristram?" she said, her eyes growing large with many thoughts. "I am sure he did," Daniel answered; "but there lies a mysssession. tery behind the dead which no hand will ever unveil." r its first

She was silent a moment, her heart heavy with the fate of

"And this Captain Sinclair and his wife are the very man and the very woman you and Harold met in that dreadful

"The very same, my dear. I knew them again the very instant I set eyes on them. And they are as fit for the devil's

work as Judas was."

Estrild grew a little pale, and Carrie, lying on the deck at her feet, looked up with frightened face.

"My father could never have meant harm to his son," she

said, dropping her head as she spoke.

"But his son isn't here," interjected Daniel. "And he didn't know his daughter would be. You are a brave girl, my dear; and I'll save this ship as much for her sake as Miss Estrild's and the good girl that brought me here."

"Tell her that story," said Carrie. "She doesn't know Mary

Armstrong."

"Well, my dear, when Mr. Olver left me at the Cape, I looked about me for a ship going home, and I found one—and an old tub she was. She wrecked me and threw me up on an island. like Jonah's whale. No need to tell my adventures there, only it was three months before a ship put in for water and took me and others with me to Rio. There I fell ill of fever-and there's a touch of it in my veins now—so it happened that a year and more passed away before I got on English ground again. I came to the port of London, poor and whisht as a wrecked mariner, and once more I looked round for a ship, this time to take me home to Cornwall. Down among the docks I heard of the Venture; but folks said the Captain was a skulk and the mate was a drunkard—which he is—so I gave her up. But one day, when I was was standing looking at her—for she is as handsome as a picture—I heard a voice at my elbow saying, 'Are you going to pilot that ship down Channel, Captain? 'No thank you, dearie,' I said, looking down on her, thinking she was a child. 'The Captain and crew don't suit me.' Well, upon this she fixed me with her great earnest eyes, which look as if they had

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stars always shining in them, and I saw she was a woman for all her tiny stature; and I raised my hat a bit and I said. 'Beg pardon, miss." 'No offence,' she answered; 'but if you would offer your services to the Captain of that ship you would be well rewarded for it. Stop-I don't mean by money, but by saving human lives!' I thought that queer, so I looked hard in her face, and saw truth in every line, and saw too there was far more behind her words than she herself could tell me. I felt as if her two hands were on my heart gripping it, and her eyes seemed to have rays in them drawing my soul to do her bidding. 'I've saved a life or two in my time—that's a sailor's work,' I said to her; 'and if there's any life aboard the Venture dear to you-' 'There is!' she cried. 'Well, I'll pilot her as far as Falmouth, and look after your friend, miss, if you'll tell me his name.' 'And I hope it isn't the name of that handsome drunken mate,' I thought to myself. 'It is a lady,' she said, and her name is Carbonellis.' I felt my heart give a jump as I said, 'Carbonellis of Langarth?' 'The same,' she answered. 'Then if the Captain will take me, I'll be on that ship's books to-morrow. I know the young lady now; I'm a Langarth man-my 'Thank God!' she said quite low. name is Daniel Pascoe.' 'Now I can tell Mr. Irrian she is safe.' 'Who did you say, miss? I asked; and I felt very curious like, for that was the name Trevel had on his lips when raving. But she only answered he was a friend of hers-one who was sorry for Miss Carbonellis, and would spend all his substance to help her, because he knew of her grief. 'I am but his agent,' she said-'I am only doing his bidding; but I do it from my heart.' Well, miss, to make a long story short, she told me all that she and this friend of hers suspected and feared, and how they knew the ship was insured far above her value and that Mr. Vicat was nearly bankrupt-there, I'm glad Miss Carrie has moved away !-- and perhaps desperate enough for any deed, and how it was your money that was spent on this craft, and you were to sail in her, with his son—as he said—in the hope of saving his life, for he was sickly and dying. Then in telling this the young lady grew hot and angry, and declared your mind, weakened by grief, had been worked up in ways she could not describe, and she and Mr. Irrian were resolved to save you. I wanted much to ask who this gentleman was and why he had you in his thoughts; but she had a way with her which held me back from questions.

Then we p plan that I -time mus Miss Mary miss, it ne stolen or los the story of it for grant ing about it termined no could save young lady oh, yes; she was wringin so bravely to on board the her eyes shr speak."

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uestions.

Then we planned together what to do, and we hit at last upon a plan that I mean to carry out. No, I can't tell it to you, miss -time must do that. Now it was odd that in all my talk with Miss Mary Mr. Olver's name was never mentioned. You see, miss, it never came into my mind that all your letters had been stolen or lost, and you believed him dead. Having never heard the story of that inquest, I couldn't think such a thing. I took it for granted like you knew he was in India, and so said nothing about it. But I thought of him all the more, and was determined no harm should befall his sweetheart if my poor hands could save her from it. So here I am, miss; and when that young lady and I parted we shook hands like friends. Andoh, yes; she did say then one word about Mr. Olver! As she was wringing my hand hard, she said, 'I don't forget who tried so bravely to save my father's life—I don't forget what happened on board the Alert;' and then I fancied she grew very pale, and her eyes shrank away from mine to hide the pain she wouldn't speak."

This was Daniel's story, and Estrild pondered it, wondering much why Mr. Irrian should feel an interest in her fate so deep that he should interfere to protect her life. It could not be because of that sad time of sickness at Salisbury, when Mary came and soothed her and himself back to health by her wonder-working music. Some slight sympathy he might feel, knowing her story, but surely such sympathy in a stranger would soon pass away unless some other link bound her to his memory! Could it be through the crime of the man Trevel that Mr. Irrian had became her defender? It seemed impossible, and yet possible, because Mary Armstrong was his friend, and the blood of the stained deck of the Alert haunted them both, and Trevel had cried out upon his name even in the throes of death. But Estrild shrank from dwelling on this theme; it touched too much upon the old mystery which had blighted her life.

Captain Sinclair knew nothing of steamships, and, though his furtive watchful eyes peered at all things as though he saw a foe in every shadow, yet he dared not interfere with the working of the ship. This was left to Daniel as pilot, while the mate was the real commander. On these two men Mrs. Sinclair's light eyes of fire often rested questioningly, as if balancing in her mind whether to trust the young man or the elder. Secretly

she was a pitiful coward for herself, and she loved her life dearly. They had been three days at sea when she sounded Daniel.

"Well, pilot, we can't put in at Portsmouth-so my husband

says."

"As the Cap'en pleases, ma'am," said Daniel, leaning on the binnacle. "Then I'll alter her course a bit. To run for Falmouth would suit me better."

"Yes?" said the woman, thrusting her light hair back from her face, for the wind was blowing her lint locks across her eyes. "Would you mind a longer cruise supposing Falmouth don't suit us either?"

"How far," said Daniel, "and what pay !"

The woman laughed, and looked him in the face curiously.

"We have an heiress on board," she said "She ought to pay well for safety, unless some one else pays-better." Then she laughed again, and flung her flying locks back with her strong hand impatiently. "See here—I am pay master, and I'll pay you handsomely. I have no fancy to cross the Bay of Biscay without you. My husband is but a land-lubber, if truth's told, and the mate, though a good sailor—"

"Doesn't always carry ballast," interjected Daniel.

"That's so," returned the woman "Sober, he can sail the ship; drunk, he might wreck her when—he wasn't wanted to;" and again the glance of fire from her eyes swept over Daniel's face, and she laughed that light laugh of hers which was as suggestive of all evil things as the rattle of the rattlesnake beneath brown leaves.

Daniel did not answer till he had given an order to the man at the wheel; then he said carelessly—

"Make it worth my while, and I'll put the ship in any port

you like, or no port if that suits you better."

What a laugh it was that answered him! And now she let her elfin locks fly over her face, and peered at him from between their snaky lengths.

"There's no doubt I can make it worth your while—well worth it. Our long boat is a good one, extra strong. What do you

think about her standing a rough sea?"

"She'd stand any sea in reason," said Daniel. "And there are seas," he added, looking at her quietly, "that are mostly reasonable—not given to storms like the Atlantic, which is a sea I'd sooner be on in a ship than a boat."

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She stood silent a moment, as if thinking over her words.

"That would make it a pretty long cruise," she said at length.

"I reckon it would, but in such company it couldn't but be

pleasant, leave alone its being safe."

Daniel made his compliment in rather an elephantine way; but it pleased her, for her vanity was her weak point.

"Well, I like to be safe," she answered, with her little pointed laugh; "but I don't know where the pleasant company is.

You are fond of talking to that idiot Hyde?"

Carrie, from the moment of her stepping on board, had put on a dense and stupid aspect, and Mrs. Sinclair, not considering that it takes a wise person to play the fool, had been completely and satisfactorily deceived by it. She did not wish to have a sharp woman as stewardess.

"Well, one can't always be talking to you," said Daniel; "the

Cap'en has got a jealous eye in his head."

"And always for the wrong man," laughed the Captain's wife.

Then she bit her lip slightly, as if vexed with herself; and Daniel made a mental note of the action.

"You seem to like a talk with the heiress now and then," she said tentatively; and, narrowing her eyes to mere lines of fire, she fixed a sharp look at him.

"She's uncommon fond of sea-yarns," said Daniel; "and an old shell-back like me can spin 'em out to any length. And, you see, we sailors has a sort o' pride in storms and wrecks we've pulled through; we like to tell of 'em."

"Ah, you're a bit vain, I suppose!" said Mrs. Sinclair. "But, mind you, the heiress's money is all tied up and given away; she can't finger a penny beyond what she've got with her; and that isn't much."

With this piece of warning information, and with fingers just touching her lip for silence, the Captain's wife closed the conversation.

"Now that's a woman who thinks every man a scoundrel, ready to sell his soul for money," said Daniel to himself, as he looked after her lithe figure. "To keep up that thought in her will be the hardest part I have to play."

CHAPTER XLII.

"That idiot Hyde is in hysterics!" exclaimed Mrs. Sinclair, entering Estrild's cabin abruptly. "I wish you would come to her and try to quiet her. My husband hates a screaming woman; it reminds him of his first wife."

Estrild found Carrie kneeling on the floor of the saloon, beating her hands together in alternate shrieks of laughter and ter-

"Oh, I shall die of it—I shall die of it!" she kept crying out.

"And I always said I wasn't romantic.
I hate romantic things.
I ain't fit to be a heroine.—not a bit! And I won't be turned into a heroine!"

Here came another shriek of laughter, which rang out piercingly, then ceased, only to begin again.

"Did you ever see such a fool?" asked the Captain's wife.

"I think you had better leave her alone with me," said Estrild. "I believe I can quiet her."

"Oh, I am quite willing to leave her to you! Only do quit her quickly. Screams from a woman have such an effect upon the Captain; they turn his brain nearly, and make him furious.

She walked away with a curl of contempt on her lip; and, as soon as she was gone, Carrie threw her arms round Estrild and burst into sobs. These were better than laughter; and she gradually grew calm enough to speak.

"Now tell me what has happened. What has frightened

you?" asked Estrild.

This question brought on another threat of frantic laughter; but Carrie checked it bravely.

"My dear," she said, with little bursts, "it was Tom."

"Tom ? My dear Carrie, you are dreaming!"

"No, no; I am in my senses. To think of anything so romantic happening to a plain girl like me! Oh, it's too ridiculous! Tom making himself a stowaway, and getting as black as a nigger with dirt, and as lean as a skeleton with starvation, just to be in the same boat with me, and drown with me, if I am to be drowned! Oh, dear! I am not worth his thumb-nail, much less his whole body, which is nearly turned into a bag of bones now for my sake. What shall I do? What with laughing at it and crying at it I am nearly dead."

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"We must tell Daniel of it," said Estrild, "and ask his advice."

"Yes, yes; but Tom must have victuals. He has been starving on a few biscuits ever since he hid away, a week ago. I was down below in the store-room when he came to me and nearly scared me to death with the first sound of his voice. But I was talking to him quietly enough, and filling his pockets with biscuits, when we heard her step coming. He had just time to escape; and then I screamed 'Rats!' with all my might, and rushed up here, she fellowing me angry as a fiend. And—and, to own the truth, when I once began to scream, I couldn't stop. You know I am not romantic; and I can't behave a bit like a heroine. And Tom appearing to me suddenly, like the ghost in a play, had upset my poor wits."

"You must keep your senses clear now, Carrie, for Tom's

sake."

"Well, so I will;" and, wiping her tears, Carrie, with a burst or two of laughter, subsided into quietude.

On being told of Tom's presence, Daniel's face brightened.

"That's another good man and true to add to the two I brought with me and the one I have gained over since. We shall do now. And, if I am laid low with fever, I shall feel there is some one to take my place."

"Oh, Daniel, there is no one can take your place!"—and tears sprang to Estrild's eyes as she spoke. The thought that

Daniel might be struck down by illness appalled her.

Down the breezy choppy seas of the Channel and across the Bay of Biscay Daniel piloted the ship, and on into warmer smoother waters, where the heat touched his veins with returning fever, and he had to lie down in weakness, and give up his

place to the mate.

This man was young and handsome; and, but for his propensity to drink, he would have been a smart officer. Drink had ruined him and lowered him into a reckless dare-devil, eager for any excitement that drowned memory. He was of good birth, and had been placed in the East-India Service when a lad, but had lost his ship and his commission through drunkenness. Disgraced, and at length discarded by his family, whom he had wearied and impoverished, borrowing of one and forging the name of the other, he sank at last—a lost man—into the den of outcasts over whom Mrs. Sinclair reigned as queen.

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He was ripe and ready for the evil she proposed when Mr. Vicat offered to make her husband captain of the Venture. Without the aid of a smart officer capable of navigating the ship, she knew he could not accept the post offered to him; so she spared no pains to induce this young fellow to follow her fortunes.

At the inquest on the man found in the Thames (whom Mr. Vicat had declared to be Harold Olver), Estrild's guardian had been brought into contact in his secret inquiries with her and the creatures she hid from justice; and he bore them in his mind as people who could be useful to him if needful. Thus, when his schemes were matured, he found ready to his hand the instruments by which to work them.

Until Daniel's illness kept him in his hammock, Estrild scarcely spoke to the young mate; but now, when she came on deck, she felt obliged to address a few words to him at times, lest the difference between her demeanour to him and to Daniel should be noticeable. He quickly took advantage of this to pay hes some unwelcome attentions, which she might scarcely have heeded but for the ire and hatred against her which they roused in the Captain's wife.

The woman began now to persecute her, to limit her walks on deck, to lock the door of the saloon to prevent her egress, and to force her into the dreariness of solitude by detaining Carrie at her own side. But both girls thought it wise to ignore many of her slights and insults, lest they should injure their defenders and hurry onward some catastrophe for which they were not prepared.

It was while things were in this strained state that the Venture touched at Madeira; and Estrild, gazing as the prisoner from her cabin window, saw for a single instant Harold's face. She uttered no cry, she held in her very breath lest it should betray her joy and wonder and hope, and yet Mrs. Sinclair's fears and suspicions were sharply aroused. For, though no whisper had fallen from Estrild's lips, yet her whole aspect was changed; for love transforms and glorifies, and her face shone with the radiance his passing touch had left. So Mrs Sinclair, after one glance thrown, upon the sea, drew the curtain across the window, and seated herself so near it that Estrild could not reach it again without thrusting her aside. Retaining her self-possession and calmness, instead of the hot turmoil of her heart, she remained so

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passive that the woman's suspicions were gradually dulled, and at most her only fear was that Estrild had formed a resolve to appeal to the coming stranger for help. It was impossible for her to guess who the stranger was; nor in her passing glance did she recognize in his bronzed visage the face of a man who had bribed her to let Trevel depart. In her life she was too used to scenes of violence to bear this one vividly in her memory. It was one fight among many—that was all.

Estrild soon recognized the impossibility of gaining speech with Harold; and the hope of rescue by his hands died within

her even as it rose.

There is no prison so secure as a ship; it has double walls, and its outer one—the sea—is stronger than a breastwork of iron.

No soul was allowed to go on shore, no boat was unslung, and a strict watch was kept on all while the *Venture* stood off the fair isle of Madeira. Only the fruit-seller came on board, and Estrild, by a rare chance escaping for a moment from her gaolers, sent her letter to Harold through his hand. In seeing him, in remembering how they had last parted, the scene of Tristram's death rose up vividly before her, and the old dread seized upon her with a cold clutch Impelled, she knew not why, by a shivering terror of death, she implored him to meet her at Langarth; for some strange whisper in her soul seemed to tell her that only through him could her life be saved. That she would go to Langarth she felt certain, for she had firm faith in Daniel; and she knew that through his strong hand a brave spirit she would be rescued from the peril now besetting her.

The ship lay becalmed in a hot sea; not a breath of wind touched her listless sails, not a drop of rain fell; yet an unwholesome dampness was on all things, a dense mist stood all around—impenetrable, warm as a steaming vapour, and deadly as the miasma of a marsh in which snakes love to die.

The Captain's wife lay on the deck, fainting with the heat, and angry as a wounded viper, for the handsome mate was standing by Estriid's side, talking to her eagerly. The woman listened, and overheard a word or two that fell into her ear like poison.

"You would like to sail away from this close heat? Well, say the word I have asked you for, and when the wind comes I will take this ship where you please."

Estrild did not answer; she turned her face away from the

man's fierce amorous gaze, and started aside when she felt the sudden grasp of Mrs. Sinclair's strong hand on her arm.

"Go below!" she cried furiously. "I will not have you here for deck, interrupting an officer of this ship in his duties!"

"Do not touch me!" Estrild answered, feeling she had grown

white to the lips and could say no more.

"Unhand the young lady!" said the mate in a voice of cool command, with eyes fixed on her with an expression that showed he knew his power.

She obeyed him instantly, with a laugh ghastly to hear.

"She's too good to be touched, I suppose ?" she said viciously.

"Yes certainly-by you."

"Look here, Mr. Percy," said the woman, containing her rage no longer—"you are mate of the *Venture*, but my husband is the Captain; and you will take the ship where he orders you,"

"Perhaps he'll be good enough to work the ship also," rejoined the handsome Mr. Percy insolently—scamps always choose an alias that is a good name. "I expect a squall to break over us before sunset; maybe you'll tell Captain Sinclair to leave his bottle and come on deck and give orders to prepare for it. I am going below."

He followed Estrild to the saloon, and stood a moment irreso lute, gnawing his fingers, his face dark with the passions raging within him. Then he came opposite to her, and, resting his hands on the table by which she sat, he strove to look into her eyes.

"You don't mind what that woman says, I hope? You know I don't care for her—you know I love you; she has no right even to intrude into your presence. Say you know I love you."

Estrild looked up, white and resolute, too angry to speak; but he was desperate, and this made him the stronger of the two.

"You may despise me if you will, but your life is in my hands," he said, clenching his fingers involuntarily. "That vil lain Sinclair has engaged to scuttle this ship; he waits only to be near enough the Cape to do this with safety to himself and his wife, and the ruffian crew they have hired. They intend to get safe off in the cutter and long-boat; the seaman whom they have taken as pilot, though he may be your friend, cannot prevent this vile plot from being carried out to its last deadly letter. It is I alone who can save you. Give me your hand, and I will

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run this ship into a safe port, where we can make a new home and be happy; and I will give these miscreants up to justice."

"Let me pass, Mr. Percy!" said Estrild, striving to get by him to reach her own cabin; but he pushed the table closer to the couch on which she sat and prevented her egress.

"So you do not consider me worthy of an answer?" he exclaimed, with intense bitterness. "You will find my words are true, and you will cling to me then for safety."

"Never!" Estrild cried passionately.

"Never?" he repeated. "But I say you will—I am resolved you shall! Death, mind you, is a terrible thing, and you will shrink from it. Better be my wife than die."

"I should think death preferable," Estrild said, with pale lips,

trying again to pass him.

He stopped her with both arms outspread, his face dark with

"Is that your last word?" he asked, in a voice of concentrated passion.

"Yes. Let me go by, Mr. Percy, or I will call for help."

His arms dropped, he let her pass, hissing between his teeth—
"You will suffer for this, Miss Carbonellis, and repent when
too late."

She paid no heed to his words; she closed the door of her cabin and locked it, and then fell upon her knees and prayed with tears.

It seemed hours ere Carrie came with a word of comfort, and a message from Daniel bidding her be of good heart, the fever had run its course and was leaving him.

"Then there's Tom," Carrie said—"a fellow strong as iron—he'll fight for us. Why are you tearful and frightened?"

Estrild told her something of what had passed, but not all, for Mr. Vicat was her father, and for her sake she did not like to repeat the words which implied that the Captain was under an engagement to him to wreck the *Venture*.

"Scuttle the ship?" said Carrie. "Then now I understand why Tom is so busy whittling wood—making things that look like pegs. Poor fellow, it is well for him that I have got the care of the stores! I keep him well supplied."

"But how can you get down to see him, Carrie?"

"Oh, well enough! I can creep about like a cat now, and the man Daniel brought on board, whom they call 'Dick the gunner,'

because he shuts one eye when he is looking at you, carries down candles and stores and all sorts of things to the hold. told me to trust him."

As these two whispered thus together, a sound rose in the air unlike any other sound on earth. It was a mighty roar, louder than mingled thunders, stronger than the seas which it lifted and tore and scattered as it passed. On it rolled, like an infernal drum-beat calling fiends to battle; and swifter than lightning it swooped down upon the ship with sudden blow, beneath which she reeled from stern to prow, staggering like a drunkard in his cups. The top-mast fell crashing into the boiling sea below, and ropes cracked like threads, as, reeling over beneath. the strain, the ship rose again; and the wrecked mast was caraway—a mere whisp of straw upon the raging waves.

In the appalling roar of the hurrican now fiercely swirling around them all other sounds were swallowed up, or touched the ear vaguely, as making some small part of its own huge and horrible outcry. Yet, rising amid the storm, Estrild heard the voice of Daniel shouting like a giant to the wind; and feet hurried to and fro, and hands were swift to obey his orders; and the good ship righted herself, and lifted her prow gallantly above the mighty waves that rushed upon her with white death upon

their crests.

"We are saved—Daniel is on deck!" Estrild whispered to the weeping terror-stricken Carrie, who was clinging to her with a clutch of agony.

"No, no; we are going to die!" cried Carrie hysterically. "Let me go; I'll die with Tom—if I must die—like a heroine;

I'll drown with his arms around me!"

"Carrie, is this a time to talk foolishly? Hark—some one is

trying the door!"

Estrild opened it, and confronted the Captain's wife; she was pale to ghastliness, but her eyes flamed and her long lint locks

hung in ragged confusion on her shoulders.

"The pilot has battened us down," she said in a hollow voice; "we shall drown like rats in a hole! You are good girls—pray for me! We are wrecked—we are sinking! Oh, pray pray, both of you—down on your knees and pray!"

She held on to Carrie with both hands, quivering and trembling in an agony of fear; while every shout of the sailors, every rush of sea across the deck, every fierce howl of the tempest, elicit and writhi

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l tremsailors, ne tempest, elicited a fresh shriek from her lips, a renewed trembling and writhing of her frame.

Amazed at this display of cowardice in a woman apparently so strong, Estrild bent over her with soothing calming words, and would have lifted her from the floor where she lay, but she cried out—

"No; don't touch me! It's true what he said—too true—I have no right to be near you; I ought never to have come inside the ship. Oh, let me escape—only let me escape death this time, and I'll repent—I'll confess everything!"

"Will you?" said her husband, appearing suddenly at the door. "You'll have to reckon with me first. It's your doing, woman, that I am here with this traitor Percy, who is playing false to us both. Come and look at the gallant scamp, and see what he is worth. For my part, if we are going to die, I am glad to have it over, and finish life and all its courses."

His shrinking furtive eyes seemed to have caught courage from the danger which threatened him; his pinched blanched face wore a new aspect. He dragged his wife away, and, ere he closed the cabin door, Estrild caught a glimpse of the mate seated by the table where she had left him, a brandy-bottle before him, his senses lost, his head resting on his outspread arms—looking what he was, a desperate and ruined ruffian. So at this moment all command of the ship, all responsibility, devolved on Daniel. But he worked with an unwilling and vile crew, the sole men he could rely on being only four—two seamen he had brought with him, "Dick the gunner," who was the carpenter, and Tom, who, although no sailor, could and did work at the pumps like a man. At such a time of terror his advent was unnoticed save by his friends.

The darkness was intense, and, driven by the wind, the ship ploughed through it blindly, plunging onwards like a creature fighting its way through a thousand deaths. Morning broke on a leaden and gloomy sea, on faces worn and anxious, haggard with the night's toil, on a ship—a partial wreck—that seemed to lie at the mercy of the waves, but also on a little ridge of cloud on the horizon which was land.

On this dim shore Mrs. Sinclair fixed her eyes in hope; if the wind abated, the boats could reach it safely.

CHAPTER XLIII.

HAROLD was in London, treading its pavements like a stranger. Another man had his chambers; his papers, huddled into a box, had been sent to his cousin, who was now a member of Parliament, and in town.

Harold betook himself to his house, and was received with amazement, mingled with a warm welcome and a peal of laughter.

"Faith, my dear fellow, I buried you nately and respectably at my own expense," said The Macarthy, grasping his hand; "but all the same I didn't believe it was yourself, as I felt sure you'd make a more dacent corpse than the scamp who has meanly got your honourable name put upon his tombstone. Your papers, dear boy? They are all intact, and I wish you joy of 'em; and I'm glad they don't belong to me if there's bills amongst'em."

There is no need to tell what Harold felt on reading Estrild's letter of recall. It was no wonder she believed him dead when she received no answer to such a message as this. He heard all the history of his supposed death from his cousin, and could in a great measure now divine the advantage taken of it by Mr. Vicat to influence Estrild when grief had broken her spirit. In a fierce mood he went to that gentleman's house, to find it occupied by a new tenant; but a few inquiries in the neighbourhood led to his discovering his present abode. It was a small house in a dismal suburb, and he was shown into a dingy parlor, where a man paralysed and uncertain of speech sat in a ragged arm-chair by the window. In this man, so terribly changed and dreadful to the sight, he did not at first recognise Mr. Vicat. It was when Mrs. Vicat entered that the truth broke upon him.

"Oh, Mr. Olver, is it you?" she cried, with a burst of tears which she wiped away hastily. "I knew you were living—I heard it a little while ago from Mary Armstrong. She has been a ministering angel to me. But for her, we should be beggars and outcasts. You see my husband is a wreck; his mind gave way for a time when he found his daughter was on board the Venture. Then creditors fell upon him, he was declared bankrupt, and Miss Glendorgal, alarmed at not hearing from Estrild, came to London with the family solicitor, and all the Langarth estate was taken out of Mr. Vicat's hands. Oh, Mr. Olver, he

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"I am perhaps t A glea had spent thousands of Estrild's money, he had done many evil things, but the worst wickedness of all was trying to marry her to his poor crippled son!"

"Did he dare form such a scheme?" cried Harold, turning to

the impotent man with fury in his eyes.

"Ah, and I should have carried it out too," said Mr. Vicat, in thick imperfect utterance, "if Gilbert had only have lived a day or two longer! A better match for her than you, sir; and she was a weak girl, easily worked on through he foolish pity and her belief in that wizard son of mine. But he could do strange things; and I wish—I wish—he could have helped me when—when—" Here memory failed, and with the old vacant look he gazed from the window again.

It was a painful spectacle, and in pity Harold turned from it, feeling more of horror than of anger as Mrs. Vicat gave him the history of the last two years, and he could see dimly what a web had been woven around Estrild's life, and how dreadful was the plot by which Mr. Vicat had hoped to possess himself of her

wealth.

"So she made a settlement in that wretched man's favour?"
Harold said, with a gesture of disgust and indignation.

"I fear so," Mrs. Vicat answered.

"Oh, it's safe—quite safe!" broke in Mr. Vicat with a dreadful chuckle. "And, when the Venture goes down at sea, which she is bound to do, I shall be a rich man. There's the heavy insurance too to come in. Then we'll have a grand wedding, my dear—we'll marry Carrie in proper style. That's my daughter, sir—my favorite daughter. She is gone to see a friend; she'll be home soon. I am sitting at the window watching for her—just at this angle I can look all up the street. I'll tell you when she is coming; you'll like her—every one likes her." He looked out eagerly, and took no more notice of Harold; he had forgotten who he was.

"He was not so bad as this at first," said Mrs. Vicat—"he knew once that Carrie was on board the *Venture*; but since the blow came that paralysed him he has always fancied she is coming home in an hour or two. He watches for her like that all day and every day."

"I am sorry for you indeed," said Harold; but you know perhaps that I saw the Venture at Madeira safe and sound?"

A gleam of joy sprang into Mrs. Vicat's patient eyes; she

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went over to her husband and laid her hand on his vacant forehead.

"My dear, here is good news for you-Mr. Olver saw the Ven-

ture at Madeira-Estrild and Carrie are safe."

"Ah, at Madeira! Then it is all right—nothing was to be done till they neared the Cape. Yes, we shall hear news—great news soon. They can't keep the Largarth money from me then. My dear, isn't Carrie a little long this evening in coming back?"

Mrs. Vicat took her hand away from his forehead, and laid a

kiss on it instead from her trembling lips.

"Yes, Mary is keeping her rather late; but she will be here soon," she said; then, beckening to Harold, she took a packet of letters from her husband's desk and gave them to him. Three of these were his own, one from the Cape and two from India—the letters which, as he had fancied, Estrild had left unanswered in her resolve to make their parting final. Why were all unopened? Why Mr. Vicat had refrained from breaking their seals was a secret of his own heart. Perhaps he feared they they were from Harold, and he dreaded making his fear a certainty—he preferred to believe him dead.

Harold glanced at the letters with a rush of indignant pain that made his blood tingle, but he said nothing. This weak woman who was innocent was not a creature on whom to wreak his anger, and the criminal who had caused all this agony was

punished by a stronger Hand than his.

"Miss Carbonellis was a prisoner on board the Venture," he said; "yet she succeeded in sending me a letter to assure me of

her safety and that she had a friend on board."

"Mary Armstrong's doing," interjected Mrs. Vicat, clasping her hands in thankfulness. "She travelled hastily from Cumberland to come to our help—not that I suspected my husband capable of——" She stopped, as if, unable to give utterance to her thoughts, fearing to inculpate and knowing she could not excuse him.

"From Cumberland?" repeated Harold. "Then Mrs. Arm-

strong does not live in London now?"

"Mrs. Armstrong died a year ago, and since then Mary has lived with a distant relative, a very wealthy man, whose charities are boundless. Mary is his agent in these, for his name is never mentioned, his face never seen by those he helps. I am indebted to him, through her, for our home and bread."

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ary has se chariname is I am Her voice broke and her tears fell, and a moment or two passed before Harold troubled her to speak again.

"I should like to see Miss Armstrong," he said. "Can you

give me her address?"

"Yes; but it would be a long journey for you to go to her. She is at Mr. Irrian's, in Cumberland."

"Mr. Irrian!" The name startled Harold into sudden pale-

ness. He had last heard it from Trevel's lips.

"The name of his place is Trame," continued Mrs. Vicat. "A queer name; Mary says it means 'a dream.' She keeps up the town-house still where her mother used to live. Perhaps you had better wait till she comes there."

"No; I am impatient to see her-she can explain much that

I will not ask you to tell me."

"You are very good," said Mrs. Vicat, her words rising with a sob in her throat. "I know you think I ought not to have allowed Estrild to be decoyed on board that ship; but Mr. Vicat's own son was going, and I could not—I dared not believe——"

"My dear," broke in Mr. Vicat solemnly, "you prayed for the Venture. You said, 'God prosper the good ship!'—so she is safe. And, even if she sinks, Gilbert will raise her. He can do strange things—he'll lift her with threads of light. I saw a battle in the air once; you were in it, sir, and the room was full of smoke—it killed him. Carrie is long in coming." He looked from the window again, and forgot that he had been talking.

Harold hastened to say good-bye.

"And let me assure you," he said, on parting with Mrs. Vicat, "that I have a firm belief in the vessel's safety. Estrild's letter gives me the conviction that she felt no cause for fear; and Daniel Pascoe is not the man to let her trust in him in vain."

Nevertheless, though he said this, his heart was full of a sickening fear as he went on to Lloyd's and made enquiries there which led to nothing. The ship had touched at Madeira—they were aware of that—and had sailed for the Cape; they knew no more.

Full of heaviness and anxiety that could take no certain form, and therefore pained the more because it gave no chance of action, Harold felt that to see Mary Armstrong was the best and only course before him. This girl who had interfered on

Estrild's behalf was a mystery to him. What was her motive? Was it compunction for her father's sin? And was Cumberland guilty? These questions, amid a throng of thoughts, haunted him as in a lumbering hackney-coach he drove to the office of the Northern Mail, and booked himself for an outside place to a certain town in Cumberland.

Through the long slow journey—though fast then—which he began that night the same questions pressed upon his mind incessantly. His promise to Mary Armstrong, which he had kept, his promise to Cumberland, not yet fulfilled, haunted him persistently.

sistently.

He was dead, poor young fellow—he was certainly dead. And yet, unless he was assured of this as a known fact, he was not bound to keep that rash promise. How could he go to a man and tell him that his only son was glad to die? Perhaps before leaving London he ought to have inquired at the East India Office if news had been received of Cumberland's death; but—

but he was not sorry he had left this undone.

Through the night into the day, and through the day again into the night, the mail rolled along the white roads with rattle of wheels and blowing of horn, while glimpses of quiet country towns and solitary cottages among the lonely hills, and with hasty meals snatched at old-world inns, and cheery chat with old-world coachmen, but also with weariness and cramps, and broken sleep, and miseries untold—forgotten now, with all the pleasures of the old-world travelling, swept away by the breath of steam.

When the little sleepy Northern town was reached at last, Harold found there was still a long drive before him, as Trame was nine miles away among lakes and hills. He took a few hours' sleep, then hired a post-chase and started on his lonely drive. And, as he wound round about the hills, or in the valleys entered into their shadows, the same indefinable fears and forebodings haunted him. They came upon him, an indistinguishable throng, and he could no more give them shape or form than he could bestow a body on the phantoms in the clouds that rolled around the crags and peaks above him.

An old-fashioned stone house standing against storm and rain on a steep hill-side; a winding road leading to it among sighing pines; a lawn in front stretching down to a cliff, beneath which there dashed a mountain torrent springing over rocks and boulders, till it into a pool touched wit tense that it round about choly grew t

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and rain sighing th which and boulders, till it leaped an overhanging ridge and fell in boiling foam into a pool beneath, from which there rose a shower of spray touched with opal tints by the setting sun. A solitude so intense that it seemed a sin to break its silence by a footfall dwelt round about the great cold stone house, and a singular melancholy grew upon the mind in gazing at its gray worn aspect.

This was Traine, and Harold, as he stood before its closed por-

tals, felt himself an intruder.

He asked for Miss Armstrong, and was ushered into a long low room untouched by the setting sun, its gray dimness lighted only by a fire of logs on the hearth. By the glow of these he saw three figures. Two of them were seated—Mary and a white-haired gentleman—the third half turned towards him, and then flitted away into the darkness of some room beyond him.

Harold checked his steps with a sudden paleness spreading over his face. The thought of a promise unfulfilled thrilled

through his nerves; he ought to have kept his word.

"Am I haunted, or is it a delusion of the firelight ?"

He gave his hand to Mary with the question in his mind. She looked up at him with grateful eyes, her own hand-clasp close and warm.

"You have nobly kept your word to me," she said. "I have to thank you for a dear life."

Harold felt bewildered—he could not answer her.

"This is Doctor Arnold. He knows Estrild; he attended her during her illness at Salisbury."

"It was a cruel time," Harold said vaguely. "I could not

guess she was there."

His eyes were still strained towards the inner room—it was full of darkness. He knew he was still pale; he felt his heart beating loudly against his side. In another moment a low cry broke from his lips. A figure was coming forward from out of the darkness into the glow of the firelight. It was Cumberland—not pale, not gray with the shadow of death, as he had last seen him, but with hues of health on his handsome face and an air of joy all about him.

"Cumberland!" Harold exclaimed, in a voice which shook with a thousand mingled feelings; and a deep flush flew over his paleness as he grasped the young man's outstretched hand.

"I verily believe you took he for my own ghost," said Cum-

berland, with a touch of his old boyish laughter.

"If I did, I was justified," returned Harold—"for I left you at Calcutta on the borders of ghostland."

Cumberland's young face took a graver shade.

"I am always there," he answered. Mary rose and stood beside him.

"We are in a haunted house here, Mr. Olver," she said; "and

its inhabitants are too fond of ghosts."

"We have Shakspere's warrant that there are things in heaven and earth past our philosophy to comprehend," said Doctor Arnold.

"It is past mine to understand how Cumberland got to Eng-

land," observed Harold, still full of amazement.

"In a ship—like yourself," said Cumberland laughingly; "but my ship was not delayed as yours was. We made a very quick passage."

"But you were so ill when I left you," persisted Harold, "that

it seems a miracle."

"Yes, it was a miracle. I got better suddenly when quite given up, and was ordered home at once by the doctors. So in

reality I sailed only ten days after you."

Harold gazed at him from head to foot, still amazed, incredulous, and wondering—the Cumberland he had left dying, and glad to die, was so unlike the man standing before him healthful and happy.

"You are still surprised to see me alive. Of course you believed me dead, and you are come to fulfil your promise to my

father."

"Your father?" questioned Harold.

"Yes; I am Mr. Irrian's son."

CHAPTER XLIV.

As the tempest subsided, Mrs. Sinclair's repentance dwindled; and, when the waves were stilled and the sun shone out, she was her cruel self again. But she did not forget her terror; it brought upon her a fevered restlessness and fierce resolve to hasten matters and reach land as quickly as she could. So she looked upon the low ridge of dusky cloud on the horizon with longing eyes, and wondered and wondered if that was the shore

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dwindled; t, she was terror; it resolve to l. So she rizon with the shore she wished for. No one could tell her but Daniel, and he kept his lips closed. It was hopeless to appeal to the mate; he had taken to a fierce drinking bout, and through all the hours of the storm he passed only from one stage of madness to another. But for Daniel the ship would have been lost—she knew that; but she knew also he was Estrild's friend, and this poisoned her gratitude.

Her hatred of Estrild had grown intense, for any rough word the mate gave her she laid to her charge; his rage of drunkenness was her doing; the imprecations and insults flung at herself all sprung from the man's sudden love for this white-faced girl. As the fire of her jealousy flamed and raged within her, it burnt up the last remnant of pity and softness in her soul, and she looked forward to Estrild's death with the keen desire of a wolf just fastening on his prey.

It was the second day after the hurricane when Estrild came on deck, and, though knowing herself to be watched, she went straight to Daniel and grasped his hand, and thanked him fervently for the brave skill and seamanship that had saved their lives.

"I hope the weather will keep fair," said Daniel, "for we've sprung a leak, and I won't promise to pull the ship through another such a storm."

Mrs. Sinclair drew a little nearer and listened.

"Is there no finding the leak and repairing it, Daniel?"

"The carpenter is down below in that hope now, miss; and, if he fails——"

"Yes?" Estrild said eagerly.

"Then we must run for the nearest port and keep all hands at the pumps. But, you see, miss the men are worn out—and some of them mutinous too," he added, in a lower voice.

"And what is the nearest port? What land is that over there,

if it is land?" said Estrild breathlessly.

"That is the coast of Africa," said Daniel, answering only her

last question.

Mrs. Sinclair had heard every word; a gleam of joy shot into her cruel eyes, her heart swelled, yet felt buoyant. For her, in her ignorance, the coast of Africa meant the Cape—the land of her dreams—and surely the boats could reach it in a few hours! She ventured to ask the question—

"Well, Mr. Pascoe, if things come to the worst and the leak increases, I suppose we could take to the boats?"

"I reckon we should have to do it."

"And would it take us long to reach that land over there?"

"With a fair-wind, such as we have now, from six to eight hours," said Daniel.

Mrs. Sinclair walked away with a cruel smile upon her lips-

she had heard all she wanted to know.

That night, while Daniel, exhausted by work and wakefulness, gave himself a few hours' rest, the boat was provisioned and got into readiness for a sudden launching. The harassed and mutinous crew, glad to leave a ship which kept them constantly at the pumps, glad of the prospect of land and money, which were lavishly promised them, worked with a will and with all the stealthy silence the evil deed required.

It was four in the morning; a faint light in the east was rising above the dusky line which touched the sea like a cloud, but towards which all eyes were turned as the land of their hope. One boat was lowered safely, the other waited. If Daniel had heard what was going on, he made no sign; he seemed to sleep the profound slumber of an over-wearied man.

" All is ready," whispered Mrs. Sinclair to the mate.

"Then get into the boat," he answered.

"Not without you," she said.

" Very well; then I'll fetch the girl."

"What girl?" she asked, in a fierce whisper.

"Not Hyde," he said, with a short laugh.

"You shall not save the other!" said Mrs. Sinclair, grasping him with a hand like a vice. "Of what use is all we have done if she lives? We are paid well—I'll keep my word with the man who paid me."

"And I'll keep mine," returned the other, wrenching himself from her clutch. "I swore that girl should cling to me for help, and she shall; she shall beg her life of me yet, and have it on my terms!" He burst away from her and rushed down the companion-ladder, stumbling in the darkness as he went.

"Let him go!" said the miserable Sinclair, holding back his wife from following the mate. "We don't want that drunkard with us. I'll have the boat lowered at once, and leave him in

the ship."

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"I'd leave you, and a thousand such as you, to drown before I would leave him!" she said.

"Take care what you say," he answered. "There's no time for quarrelling. The ship is scuttled, as you know, and she is sinking."

"Go and fetch Percy then," she said, pushing him from her as if to hurry him on the errand. "I'll not move till he

comes."

"And I'll not move an inch to save the scoundrel's carcass from a dog's death!" he hissed between his teeth. "I never intend to let my wife's lover land with her at the cape," His eyes, usually so shrinking, were full of a wild fury, his white pinched face had lost its scared look.

His wife gazed at him for a moment in surprise, and then

burst into a hard laugh.

"You play the man too late. Percy comes with me, whether you like his company or no. Stand out of my way; I'll fetch

him myself!"

There was no need, for the mate at that moment reeled on deck. He was very white, and there was a stunned look about him as of a man who had received a blow; his lips were livid and shaking.

"Well, where is she?" asked Mrs. Sinclair mockingly.

"She has answered me as if I were a dog; and Hyde's bully—the stowaway—struck me down as I tried to reach her cabin door. But I called out; I made her understand the state of things, and offered her her life. She refused it; and now she may drown. I'll not lift hand or voice to save her. That man threatened me with a pistol; I have one too, and I would have shot him if I hadn't thought drowning a better death for him."

He spoke with all the sulky fury of a beaten ruffian. The marks of Tom's fists were on his face—he put up his hand and felt the bruise—a white froth stood upon his lips.

There is a love which turns to hate; it was the sort of love this man had felt for Estrild, and hate was boiling within him how, together with a thirst for vengeance.

"They laughed," he said bitterly, "when their watch-dog struck me down; but it is we who have the laughing side. Come

on, old girl-you are the woman for me after all-and we'll lead

a jolly life in a new land!"

He put his arms around the woman, forgetting that her husband was by her side, forgetting all things in his brutal anger, the fumes of drink too being still in his brain. He was wrenched aside and flung upon the deck in an instant, and Sinclair stood over him and spurned him with his foot as he lay. The one great passion of this man's soul—jealousy—was working in him with a wrath that gave him the strength of a madman. He flung himself on the prostrate mate and held him by the throat.

"It is you who will drown!" he hissed in his face. "No boat

shall hold you and me together!"

Choking with the grip of that nervous hand upon his windpipe, the mate could make no answer—he could but writhe and struggle for a breath or two of life which seemed fast ebbing.

"Let him go!" shrieked the woman.

But her husband took no heed of her words—they flew past him, not touching his sense. He still knelt upon Percy, holding him down as a man might hold an infuriated dog.

Mrs. Sinclair looked around for help; there was none. The long-boat stood a furlong off, some of the crew standing, eagerly beckoning to the others to follow. Two men were in the other boat, ready to be lowered; two others were searching for some missing gear; so these three were alone on the poop, the gray dawn scarcely making them visible to the others.

Mrs. Sinclair knelt down and looked into her lover's face—it was purple, and his lips were whitening with foam. At that moment something cold touched her hand; it was a pistol which had fallen from the mate's pocket in the struggle. She caught it up and shot her husband straight in the breast.

He fell back, and the mate rose staggering to his feet. Half, fainting, dizzy, nearly senseless, he clung to his rescuer, dimly

wondering what had happened.

The men in the boat peered through the darkness at the group, but understood nothing. The two others, coming up from the lower deck, ran aft to them with fear on their faces.

"Quick," they cried—"there is no time to lose! The water is rising fast! What is this?"

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They looked down on the deathly-white face of the Captain. He did not utter a word.

"He has shot himself," said his wife. "We must leave him; he is as good as a dead man."

She moved away without another look, her arm round Percy, supporting his uncertain steps.

In another instant Sinclair's fainting eyes closed, and he saw no more.

"Let us stand off and see the old Venture go down," said the recovered mate, with grim satisfaction in his hard tone. "How many scamps are there on board that wouldn't join us?"

"Eight, all told," said a Malay, his white teeth shining

through the dark line of his lips.

"We may call 'em eleven," said another man, "for the pilot is worth three ordinary seamen. I was afraid of his coming on deck every minute. It is a wonder he slept so long."

Mrs. Sinclair, who had been shivering visibly, laughed a little

in a forced way.

"I took care he should sleep," she said.

The light was stronger now. The mate turned and looked her in the face; she was still clinging to his arm. He shook off her hand rudely.

"You are a woman who frightens a man," he said between his

lips "Was Sinclair dead when we left?"

"I neither know nor care," she answered. "He was killing you, and your life was worth a thousand such lives as his!"

"They are crowding on more sail!" suddenly cried a voice.
"They have found out we are gone! They mean to run us down!"

"Her hold is half full of water," said another—" she won't answer her helm—she'll go down in a minute—she's scuttled in a dozen places, Dick said."

"I hope that girl will come on deck," murmured the mate.

"Perhaps even now, if she dropped overboard-"

"Look at that chest," whispered Mrs. Sinclair—"you know what it holds—all gold. I would have it in gold. I have earned it; you will enjoy it. Don't let me hear that girl's name again. Row away, lads—we'll wait no longer!"

They rowed a furlong or two, then paused on their oars and waited again. The light rose between them and the silent ship;

they looked to see her go down into the smooth sea; their breath stood upon their lips, their hearts beat expectantly, they were ready to give a triumphant cheer ere they dipped their oars into the water once more.

But no such sight touched their cruel eyes. They saw the ship stagger for a moment, as if unwilling to obey the bold hand that steered her; then she turned slowly with prow to the north, and they saw Daniel standing at the wheel; they heard the faint echo of a cheer, and the *Venture* sailed away, leaving their boat alone on the wide sea.

Consternation sat on every face, execrations passed from lip to lip; Mrs. Sinclair grew ghastly pale, but she did not shriek or weep.

"Can we get on board again?" she asked; her terror thrilled

through her voice.

She read her answer on the man's desperate face. The stretch of sea between them and the ship was fast increasing to a wide dim gulf; she was passing into the morning mist. A little while and her white sails would vanish amid its wreathing vapour; a moment more and the veil covered her. She was as lost to them as though their wicked scheme had not failed and she and all on board had gone down to the death prepared for them.

"Daniel, are we safe now?" Estrild asked.

"Safe as the rock of Gibraltar, my dear. Did you think I was going to be circumvented by a set of foreign scamps like they traitors in the boats over yonder—Malays and low Greeks and niggers? I'm thankful to say there isn't an English sailor amongst 'em except the mate. No; they are with us to a man. And, though Tom there, who is comforting that crying girl a little too hard, hasn't the luck to be a sailor, yet he has the making of one in him. And he has done good work this night brave work! But for him, 'Dick the gunner' couldn't have got safe out of their hands. Each boat fancies he is in the other one. It is well for him and for us that he is here instead. I reckon they would have killed him when they found out the trick he'd played them. Now, my dear, I must work, and not talk, especially as I'm still a bit sleepy, as I had to drink some of the grog that she-wolf mixed, or she would have suspected me."

"Daniel, is her husband dead?" asked Estrild shrinkingly.

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"No," said Daniel, drawing a great breath of life; "but there is no hope for him. By sunset he will be gone."

"Can I help him? Can I do anything for him?"

"Perhaps you might read or speak a comforting word to him, if not afraid of such a sight as he is now."

"I am not afraid," Estrild answered; "and Carrie will be with me."

As she turned away towards the companion-ladder, the sun lifted suddenly the great white veil from the sea, and she saw the boats making for the dim shore which stood in the south like a line upon the sky. She gazed at them for a moment in wistful pity, her eyes shadowed with the sorrow the innocent feel for the guilty. Then she looked back at Daniel and pointed to the distant shore.

"Daniel, what will they find there?"

"Snakes and savages," said the old sailor grimly, "and a line of surf a mile broad. Give scamps rope long enough, as I've done, and they're sure to hang themselves. If the mate had kept from the bottle—well, then, I reckon, he wouldn't have jumped overboard in the dark; he'd have looked for his latitude at sea instead of falling on it headlong upon land."

CHAPTER XLV.

If Harold soon recovered from his surprise on hearing Cumberland's confession, there were other things at Trame which sorely perplexed him. The master of the house was never visible; he lived in his own rooms, he saw no guests, he received no visitors. He sent courteous messages to Harold, but never once permitted him to imagine an interview would be possible. Assured by Mary and Doctor Arnold that this was his invariable custom, Harold could not look on it as an incivility, and yet it made him uneasy. An air of mystery was around him, a shadow of gloom so oppressive that he would have quitted Trame at once but for his anxiety to hear explanations which Mary and Cumberland evaded.

The latter was the only happy one of the party, but his joy was not contagious. Mary often glanced at him wistfully, and Harold would fix a steady gaze upon his fresh young face, and

wonder if it was indeed possible that his hand, on board the Alert— But at this point his thought always stopped with a sort of shock. It was so horrible to suppose him capable of crime, it seemed on reflection so impossible, that to ask a question on the matter, to draw near it even by a breath, was a deadly insult which could never be forgiven. Better let the mystery remain a mystery still buried in the sea with Trevel than stand up at a man's own board and say, "Do you know, in my secret heart, I am suspecting you of having blood upon your hands."

Thus Harold's thoughts worked impatiently upon his brain, and doubt and pain mingled with his friendship for Cumberland and his gratitude to Mr. Irrian. He had cause to be grateful for he knew now that money had been spent lavishly to secure the service of true men who would stand by Daniel in any plan he might devise for the safety of the Venture. Mr. Vicat had paid well, but Mr. Irrian had paid better. Yet why he should care so much to protect Estrild from a danger which at that time appeared to be only imaginary he could not comprehend. The great benevolence for which he was famed did not appear a sufficient reason for this interference on behalf of a stranger. Moreover, the deepest puzzle in Harold's mind lay in the fact of Mr. Irrian's prescience of the danger that threatened Estrild; others might vaguely suspect Mr. Vicat of foul play, but he from the first laid his hand on the black spot of treachery in the man's heart; and carefully, and through many weeks of watchful endeavour, he prepared a counter-plan to defeat his cruel conspiracy. Speaking of this to Mary, she answered that Mr. Irrian was a man of fair powers of mind, and he had an instinctive penetration which enabled him to pierce through all masks and get at a man's true character.

"But he never saw Mr. Vicat," observed Harold.

"He had heard of him from me," said Mary, smiling.

Harold was only half satisfied.

"And had he heard too of Estrild from you?" he asked.
"You came only once to Mr. Vicat's—you saw her only once," he added, "so personally you could not have felt any interest in her fate."

"You are mistaken," Mary answered; "I saw her several times at Salisbury when she did not see me. And I was deeply interested in her because of Mr. Irrian's intense anxiety..."

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She stopped, then went on, with a slight flush on her face, "You know he was at the same hotel, and naturally, being so ill himself, he was sorry for her illness."

This was a bungling conclusion, and again Harold felt that, although her words might be true, a deeper truth lay behind

them which she concealed.

"And in this fact of an illness to each occurring at the same time and place lies the secret of Mr. Irrian's interest in her?" he said tentatively.

"It is a pity you left the Bar," returned Mary, with a laugh; "you would have cross-examined well. I see Doctor Arnold

coming; I shall turn you over to him now."

This talk had taken place in the garden, and Mary turned to

leave him; but Harold detained her for another question.

"Knowing of Estrild's grief, why did you not relieve it by telling her I lived?" he said. Surely you heard of me from Cumberland!"

"Do you think," asked Mary reproachfully, "that had he written to me, I would have kept back the truth for a moment? You forget that, knowing or guessing I was with his father, he dared not send me a letter."

"And is there a complete reconciliation between them now?"
"I hope so," Mary answered; but Harold saw that her lip quivered, and she walked away quickly, as if determined to

avoid further questioning.

On the night of Harold's arrival Cumberland had confessed to him that a serious quarrel with his father had been the cause of his leaving home and going to India. But the whole subject had appeared so painful to him that Harold had abstained from dwelling on it, so that he still remained ignorant of the reason he had, or believed he had, for leaving his home and renouncing even his name. True, he had a right to the name of Cumberland, as he had explained, for it was his mother's name, and he inherited her property, which was considerable enough to make him independent. All this Harold had heard during the first half-hour of his stay at Trame, while he had kept his chaise waiting, meaning to depart as soon as his interview with Mary Armstrong was over; but as was natural on seeing his friend again, he soon yielded to his entreaty to remain as a guest. Not that Cumberland's invitation alone decided him; it was the curious mixture of doubt, of interest, of mystery unsolved, which lay like a cloud on his own mind that half consciously, half unconscious-

ly, influenced him to remain at Trame.

"It is a grand old pile," said Doctor Arnold, coming up to him where he stood at the end of a yew-tree avenue, looking back at the shadows gathering round the gables and peaks of Trame.

"I suppose it is very old ?" Harold interrogated.

"As old as these yews; there is not such another avenue in England—so sombre, so dark, and so ancient. Look at these gnarled trunks; they are wonderful!"

"Everything is wonderful at Trame," said Harold—"from Miss Armstrong's music, which rushes like a wild wind through the dim corridors, down to myself, the guest of an invisible host, the friend of a man whom I half believe to be——" He stopped abruptly, looking up at the dark trees whose black shadows hung like a pall above him.

"Whom you half believe to be a little cracked," said Doctor Arnold, finishing the sentence in his own way. "Well, certainly young Irrian—or Cumberland, as you continue to call him—thas strange ideas or, rather, as a medical man, I must call them delusions. It is through these that he quitted England. His departure was, in fact, a flight; his father pursued him, but was too late to stop his voyage to India."

"Yes; he thought it was a good place to get killed in," interposed Harold. "This much of his feelings he told me."

"Just so; he was overwhelmed with melancholy and a mad desire to die. But even that was not so strong as his wild wish to escape his father's presence; he seemed to hold him in a kind of horror, and declared he would rush away to the ends of the earth rather than meet him again."

"I suppose he has got over that now?" said Harold.

"Well, you will think it strange when I tell you he has not. Although he is here at Trame, he has neither seen his father nor

spoken to him since his return."

"That is strange indeed!"—and Harold pondered introspectively for a moment, his thoughts dwelling on scenes in India and phases of Cumberland's character. "I should not have thought him revengeful," he said. "Surely the quarrel between father and son must have been very terrible, and Mr. Irrian must be to blame."

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not have sheltered young Irrian on board his ship, or have procured his commission for him in the Indian Army."

Harold felt as if he were drawing near the brink of a precipice, and that one step farther, one look beyond, would reveal to him some horror of which as yet he had only dreamed. For an instant he remained silent, then he was compelled to speak.

"Cumberland was on board the Alert just before the storm in

which she was lost?" he said, in slow accents.

He could not look up; he waited for the answer with heart beating fast and lips growing pale and dry. The black shadow of the yews made a darkness around them—the two men scarce saw each other's faces; his paleness passed unnoticed.

"True," said Doctor Arnold carelessly, never guessing what his words meant to Harold. "And it was the belief that his son was drowned that caused Mr. Irrian's illness at Salisbury. He was on his way back from Portsmouth, whither he had gone in the hope of finding him, when the terrible news reached him of the wreck of the Alert. Then Mary and Mrs. Armstrong came to him, bringing a letter."

"Ah, yes!" interjected Harold. "It was a letter given to

me by an outward-bound East Indiaman." *

"Just so," continued Doctor Arnold; "and you kindly took it to them yourself. Well, that letter saved Mr. Irrian's life; it was from Captain Armstrong, assuring him of his son's safety. He knew then that the young fellow had left the *Alert* before the storm that wrecked her."

Harold drew a great breath and pressed against the sombre tree beneath which he stood; he felt the need of some strength outside his own on which to lean. His very heart was trembling; he found it impossible to think, he could decide on no plan of action that appeared to him within the bounds of his power. To accept a man's hospitality and denounce his son—his only son! No, it was impossible! The course of action he might pursue pressed upon him in a confused way, broken, and following one on the other like clouds driven by the wind. Once hope sprang upon him in the thought that Cumberland was not guilty, except through some accident which had caused the shot; but this hope died quickly. An innocent man does not fly from justice. Captain Armstrong would not have put to sea in threatening weather to save his friend only from the pain of giving evidence at an inquest. So on whichever side Harold

looked there seemed to be no escape, no way by which he could

avoid the dreadful duty that lay before him.

"These Irrians are gloomy men," continued Doctor Arnold, as he walked up and down beneath the shadows, while Harold still stood, dazed and sorrowful, leaning against the tree. "Even the happy knowledge of his son's safety did not remove from Mr. Irrian the horrible melancholy that had seized upon him; nothing soothed him but Mary's music. He spends his great income in doing good and yet treats himself as if he were a criminal."

"Yes; he dooms himself to solitary continement, as unworthy of human intercourse. Even Mary sits in an ante-room when she plays her harp to him. Sometimes through the partially open door he will wave a pale hand to her in thanks, or more rarely still he will let her see his face with a sad smile on it, while a word or two of blessing fall from his lips which would

wring a heart of stone."
"Mad, I suppose?" said Harold.

"Mad? No—sane as you or I. He manages all his affairs with a clearness and precision quite wonderful. It is simple grief that is destroying him—grief that is eating heart and life away."

A light seemed to break upon Harold's mind. Was he aware of his son's guilt, and was it this knowledge that was killing

him ?

"Since when has he led this strange lonely life of penance?" he asked, raising his head at last, and looking keenly at Doctor Arnold.

"Since his illness at Salisbury. I have attended him since that period, coming here at intervals—more at Mary's wish than his. I would do much for Mary; she is a girl endowed with great strength of character, and she possesses too, wonderful soothing powers. She is full of love and gentleness; she could persuade a lion to be a lamb."

"I know she is persuasive; her sweet voice wins souls and makes a man forget his duty," said Harold, in a low bitter tone,

as though speaking to himself.

"Eh—what?" said the Doctor. "No, she is not at all that sort of girl. She is like the finest steel, pliable and gentle, yet strong."

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asked Harold, passing over the doctor's intervening words as though he had not heard them.

"Well, I can hardly affirm that, for I hear that he was always of a sad nature, given to fitful moods of gloom. And, strange to say, when he was young, during his father's lifetime, he evinced much the same disposition as his son. He too went into the Army and did his utmost to get killed. Young Irrian was desperately rash, I believe, in India."

"Yes—savagely determined to die if he could," said Harold.
"But he seems to have forgotten his gloom, of at all events he

can hide it more easily now than he did then."

Harold did not hear Doctor Arnold's answer; he had relapsed into thought. Father and son had not met, though under the same roof and apparently reconciled. Could it be that this sorrowing and mournful recluse doing penance for his son's sin could bear all things except the sight of his face? Was he virtually saying, "I can forgive you, I can hide your crime, I can even slowly die for it; but I cannot touch your hand, I cannot suffer your presence"?

"Well, yes, the young fellow seems lighted-hearted enough; yet somehow he always gives me the impression that his gaiety is forced. I knew a man once who lived under a secret horror, which he was always striving to hide or to shake off. Now I see an old resemblance at times between that man and young

Irrian."

"What became of him ?" asked Harold, rousing himself.

"Well, I thought he would commit suicide; but he didn't—he lived to be hanged. He was a man of my profession; he had poisoned his wife."

"I shall leave Trame to-night," said Harold.

"What !" exclaimed the Doctor, turning back on his path to look at him. "You don't seem well, Olver—your eyes are slight-

ly dilated. / Have you seen the Trame ghost?"

Is there a ghost?" asked Harold, pressing his hand on his forehead. "I wish I could see it, and it would tell me what—what path leads out of the labyrinth. Yes, I do feel a little strange. I am indebted to Mr. Irrian for Estrild's life, am I not! And I think I understand why he has saved her. Yes, I owe her life and my happiners to this sad, melancholy man. Oh, I must certainly quit Trame at once! Then there is Mary

Armstrong too-she loves Cumberland. Is there a place near

this where I can hire a carriage ?"

"You are slightly feverish," said Doctor Arnold, holding him now by the wrist. "You are not fit to travel to-day—I set my veto upon it; and there is no chaise to be had nearer than the town. Let us walk; you are wrong to stand still beneath these deep shadows. You have caught a chill."

"I am quite well," Harold answered, walking on with him abstractedly. "I was thinking over what you said just now—that, where there is a secret horror which a man tries to beat down, it arises from some act or fact of which the world is ignor-

ant."

"Certainly it does in most instances—that is where there is no disease, mind you. So you have found out my little friend Mary's secret? Upon my word, I believe she would let herself be boiled alive to spare that young fellow any trouble."

"No doubt—no doubt," said Harold. "Yes, I perceive her motive throughout has been love for Cumberland. It is a pity—

a sad pity!"

"Well, between ourselves, I think so too. These haunted men

ought not to marry."

"Haunted!" repeated Harold, with a wan smile. "I suppose you mean haunted by remorse. There must be some farm or place near where I can at least hire a horse?"

"There are horses and to spare at Trame. But you must listen to reason; you cannot leave in this hurried way—it would give offence. Mr. Irrian is very sensitive to any slight shown to him. You surely owe him some consideration!"

"I owe him more than I can ever pay. I am deeply sorry for him."

"Then you must endure our society for a day or two longer, especially as you are not well, and are under no strong necessity to depart."

"There is the strongest necessity possible," said Harold. "If I stay here, I shall bring trouble. Nine miles—it is not far; I

can walk to the town."

"And get lost on the hills! It is too late to dream of such a project. I perceive your nerves are a little shaken. Seriously now, have you seen or heard the Trame ghost?"

"Is it the ghost of a hidden crime?" asked Harold in a

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"True. But this particular ghost is a rarer sort. It is two years or more since it was last seen. There is an idea prevalent that Mary keeps it away, and that it had no power to appear while she is at Trame. Evil spirits, connot come into her presence. I believe it is her music that makes the charm, and the old Crusader and his chant are fain to vanish before it."

Harold stopped suddenly, with all his wandering thoughts brought instantly into a single focus.

"Is this ghost a Crusader?" he asked, in a changed voice.

"They say he is."

"Then I should like to see him."

"Well, you may have an opportunity after to-morrow, for the spell of Mary's music will be removed. She is going to Carlisle for a few days, I am sorry to say."

"Then I will stay at Trame," said Harold, "for those few

days."

"I am glad to hear it. I should be horribly lonely otherwise, for young Irrian escorts Mary on her journey. So, you see, you and I will have Trame and its ghost to ourselves."

"You leave out the master of Trame."

"Poor man—he is a ghost himself! Only a pale hand seen at the door or window—only the shadow of a haggard face passing over wall or blind!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

It was a relief to Harold to know that he would be spared the companionship of Cumberland, as he still always called him. There was only this one evening in which to endure his presence; in the morning he would leave for Carlisle with Mary; and Harold resolved to quit Trame before his return.

To himself he scarcely gave a reason for his sudden change of purpose in remaining a few days longer. It was partly an instinctive feeling that he ought to stay and partly a superstitious feeling which decided him, and above all perhaps it was the weight removed from his mind knowing that Cumberland would be absent. To remain, if he were at Trame, would be impossible; the mental suffering to himself—perhaps to both—would be great. He said "to both," because at times, in the midst of his joyousness, Cumberland would cast an uneasy glance his way, and in addressing him there was a timidity in his manner, a quiver in voice which spoke of fear and grief.

The whole situation was full of sorrow, dismay, and doubt; and, though for a few minutes Harold might converse and fling off his burden, yet after this momentary ease his mind like a bent steel, flew back to its old attitude of watchful yet confused pain.

That evening they all sat in a large room called the library. It was full of shadows and recesses, and it had a dark groined roof and deep ancient windows with seats around them.

Mary and Cumberland sat together in the embrasure of one these windows. It looked out upon the yew-tree walk, and the waterfall, in a subdued murmur, pierced the thick glass in low music. The darkness of the yews without and the heavy shadow of the velvet window-curtain nearly hid these two figures. The light of the solitary lamp seemed to flit by their faces, to throw a slight glow within the darkness of the yews, where, at the entrance of the long black walk, it made a little circle of flickering fire.

Doctor Arnold and Harold sometimes spoke together, but both were reading, and one was engrossed with his book, while the other was full of dark thoughts.

He glanced often at the lovers with a wistful sort of envy, the shadow of Estrild standing at the threshold of all the avenues of his troubled thought. To his fancy she seemed to guard these people, whispering continually of safety on the sea through Mary and the master of Trame. Well, he had striven nobly to expiate his son's guilt, and for his sake—

Here his thought broke, for a few murmured words from the window fell upon his ear.

"Leonard, I hate to see you so happy," said Mary—"it is cruel!"

Her lover laughed and whispered back some answer unheard. "I have been thinking," observed Doctor Arnold, laying his book on his knee, "over your remark this evening on the horror arising in the mind from secret act or fact of which the sufferer

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nheard. ing his horror sufferer himself alone is cognisant. I believe, if truth were told, this is the source of half the grief in the world."

"In other words," said Harold, "you mean man is created

with a conscience and gifted with a memory."

He glanced towards the window. Mary was listening with fixed sorrowful eyes; Cumberland had ceased to laugh, but his face was turned towards the darkness without, as if he would not hear, or heard unwillingly. A wan smile touched Harold's lips.

"No; the feeling to which I allude," continued Doctor Arnold, "is stronger than conscience and clearer-sighted than memory. It is instinct; and behind instinct there always lies

some great truth, or reason, if you prefer that word."

"Don't listen, Mary," whispered Cumberland. "Why does

he prose like that, making one's flesh creep?"

Mary moved slightly away from him; he kept his head turned to the window, his eyes fixed on the yew-tree walk; the little circle of light that flickered and gleamed on its entrance touched his young face fitfully with a pale light. Harold heard his words, and kept silent, all his heart listening, hoping for he knew not what.

"Instinct is, in reality, faith," continued the Doctor. "The whole living world teaches us that. The young bird who has never seen the sea crosses the ocena, believing he shall find land; and he does. It is through belying his faith the criminal suffers."

"Why begrudge me my light-heartedness, Mary," broke in Cumberland's voice. "It will not last long. Are you preaching to us, Doctor?" he asked, turning to him with a slight laugh. "Let me say a word for the criminal, who lives alone within the circle of horror and hatred that the world and his own heart draw around him. It is stronger than his prison walls; it is a ring of fire which he cannot cross—"

"What is that outside?" asked Doctor Arnold, interrupting

hurriedly.

A figure was standing just within the flickering flame or reflection of the lamplight which fell on the arched entrance of the yew-tree walk. And behind him was black darkness, and the shadow of light in which he stood did not reach his face; it only touched his pale hand, which hung listless by his side. His attitude was inexpressibly mournful, and in an instant—even as

the eye fell on him—he turned and vanished within the black depth that stretched beyond him.

"It was Mr. Irrian," said Mary. "He walks in the yew-tree

avenue at times at night."

Harold, being farthest from the window, had caught no glimpse of the sad lonely figure, and, though he half rose at Doctor Arnold's exclamation, he did not take a step forward, a feeling of delicacy holding him to his seat.

He was glad when Mary hastily drew down the blind. The solitary walk in darkness which the master of Trame allowed

himself ought not to be intruded on even by a glance.

As Cumberland came forward from the window, Harold saw he was very pale, and his hand shook as, holding it over chin and mouth, he hid the trembling of his lips.

"How ghastly it is to see a son so shaken by the sight of the father upon whose heart he has laid such a burden!" said Har-

old to himself.

But, if Cumberland was shaken, he flung off his agitation quickly; and, coming behind Mary's chair, he pressed her head back upon his breast, and, stooping, kissed her on the forehead.

"Mary, you are my antidote for every ill," he whispered. "Dearest, you must not stay long away. I could not endure

the horror of this place alone."

"I must remain a fortnight," Mary answered. "Mr. Olver, I go every year to Carlisle to pay a visit to my great-aunt, old Mrs. Cumberland; she is the link of relationship between me and Mr. Irrian. Cannot you stay here till I return? Oh, I wish you would try to stay!"

"I cannot indeed," said Harold decidedly. "It is quite im-

possible."

Cumberland did not speak; evidently he dared not second

Mary's invitation.

A silence fell on the little party, broken only by the measured step without, which came and went as the lonely master of Trame passed up and down beneath the darkness of the yews. His son at times threw a hasty glance towards the curtained window, and seemed to grow impatient and angry. He rose suddenly and began to stride up and down the long room, his tread sounding like a wistful echo of the steps without.

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vade all minds but his. Yet no one spoke of this; they were like a party awaiting the reading of a will or the appearance of a spectre, when no one likes to disclose his hope, his fear, or the shrinking of his flesh to another.

Why was Mr. Irrian pacing that funeral walk in such bitter loneliness? Would he come to the window and look in upon them with the horrible feelings of a Frankenstein to whom all home comforts were denied; or would he suddenly appear amongst them and claim his rightful place by his own fireside? This surely would be natural; and yet Harold shrank from the thought with a kind of horror. That Mr. Irrian should stand without in the cold flicker of his own lamplight, or pace the darkness to and fro stealthily like an outcast, seemed to him—he knew not why—more fitting than that he should place himself amongst them like an ordinary man whose soul sorrow had not withered.

"Mary, give us some music," said Cumberland, stopping suddenly by her chair.

"Not now," she answered in a low voice, "He would come to the window to listen. I could not bear it; the sorrow of it all would be too much for me. Oh, Leonard, you have been too happy—cruelly happy of late!"

The young man turned away as if in anger, and paced the room again, but at the darkest end he stopped, and burst into a harsh laugh.

"Olver, I must go out to India again, and get killed in earnest this time. That will please Mary. You won't be there to hinder me."

"No," said Harold, with laconic coldness.

"Well, it is rather hard, having had my life saved against my will, that I should be reproached for enjoying it a little."

"Not for that," interposed Mary, "but for the cause of your joy."

She spoke hurriedly and checked herself, as if alarmed at her own words. Harold saw her grow pale.

A short silence followed her speech, as her listeners considered it was meant for Cumberland alone. Still standing in the darkness, he turned now to Doctor Arnold.

"These hereditary instincts are strange things, Doctor. Don't they, to your mind, excuse the sinner? A curse runs in his

blood, you see. Can the children of Canaan help it if their father was accursed?"

"It is a wide question," said the Doctor. "It is possible to

escape a curse."

"Yes?" said Cumberland; and his voice came out of the darkness with a sigh in the old wistful way Harold remembered so well in India. Somehow the doubtful affirmative touched him, and he looked towards the young dim figure more kindly.

"Let us put a case," continued Cumberland. "In Germany the office of executioner is or was hereditary. Now in such a race a thirst for blood might run throught their veins—the desire

to kill might be a passion."

"It might," said Doctor Arnold. "And in the execution of

criminals the passion would be gratified."

"Without sin?" said Cumberland; and, stepping farther back, he leaned against the old oak panelling of the wall, where his figure looked like a shadow or a picture seen dimly.

Glancing at him thus, a perplexing memory fell on Harold's

mind of some shadowy resemblance to some one forgotten.

"No, not without sin, if he did his horrible work not as a duty

laid on him, but as a ghastly thing of joy."

"Ah, you are right there! But I have not finished my case yet. The executioners may abhor the office forced upon them, may seek with anguish every outlet of escape, and, finding none, may strive to die. Would they be to blame if they rushed on death?"

"Come, come, young man—you are talking unhealthily!" said

the Doctor. "I shall not answer that question."

"Well then, I will put another," returned Cnmberland, in the same sad voice. "Let us suppose it possible that only one criminal is left in the kingdom, and, that one being dead, the executioner is free of his office for ever. Now, if that unfortunate being were in such danger of death that escape from it seemed beyond hope, would it be a sin in the man on whom the doom of executioner fell to be a little glad?"

No one replied, for Mary rose hurriedly, and going into the dimness where her lover stood, put her hand on his arm and whispered to him. In a moment more he came forward a little into the light, and, throwing back his head, laughed in a forced

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said. "I have been gloomy as a tombstone. I feel as if I should never be glad again. I am going to relieve you of my shadow. Good night!"

He went without holding out his hand to any one. Mary followed him wistfully with her eyes, and then returned to her

seat by the fire, and took up her work again.

"He cannot bear to hear Mr. Irrian pacing the yew-tree walk in that mournful way," she said, as if excusing him. "It tries his nerves."

"He has been rather odd to-night," observed the Doctor; "but he is a young fellow who often says odd things. That was a queer notion of his about the hereditary executioner being glad if some one else killed——" He stopped, for a slight sound struck the window-pane; it was as though a finger had tapped on it, as if asking for admittance. "Can Mr. Irrian wish to speak to me?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" Mary answered. "It was only a leaf blown against

the pane."

Harold went to the window and drew aside the blind; all without was blank emptiness and darkness. A sharp wind was blowing strongly from the east; it waved the yew-trees like funeral plumes. Dark clouds were sweeping across a sky faintly visible by the light of a few stars. A thickness was in the air like the damp mist arising from dead leaves; the atmosphere seemed charged with something deadly. It gave Harold a peculiar unpleasant thrill, as still holding the blind back, he stood a moment looking out upon the night, and listened to the sound of the waterfall, which, shaken by the wind, rushed downwards with an unwonted wail.

He let the blind fall back, and returned to his seat with a vague feeling that something was wrong or some danger was near. People who have suffered sorrow or passed through dangers know the feeling well, yet none can explain it for none know its cause. It is an uneasiness which warns them that all is not well; it is a voice without speech; it is unlike anything else that can be felt. Moreover, it is seldom that this inward foreboding can be expressed to another; it passes throught the soul silently, and steals away as it came, without words.

Doctor Arnold had vanished; Harold and Mary were alone. He was glad, for he felt a need to say good-bye to her with all the kindness she deserved. In the happy calm of Mary's young personality his forebodings passed; hope smiled upon him again. Her influence was always calming; child as she seemed in appearance, she was strong in heart and mind; and her voice and touch were a tonic against all morbid thoughts.

"Mary, you know I have kept my promise," Harold said-"the promise made when you gave ma this;" and he showed her

the jewelled pen. "I have hurt no one you loved."

"You saved his life," she answered simply.

"I did not know then he was the man I had pursued so far as India. When I knew it, I left him. I never opened the letter he gave me with his father's address. Had I opened it, I should not have come here, unless news had reached me of his death. Mary, when I leave Trame I hope I shall never meet him again. He will go away early to-morrow without a good-bye, and it is better so. I do not think I could take his hand."

Mary bent her head forward; her tears were falling quietly.

"Why not?" she said, in a faint voice.

"I cannot tell you why. It is better you should not know. Your father saved him once, and now you, Mary, save him again, for it was for your sake in India, it is for your sake here at Trame that I withhold my hand."

At that instant the slight sound at the window came again, and Harold started and glanced towards it, but did not again move from his seat to look out upon the night.

"I confess," he continued, "that, if Estrild had not recalled me and given up her superstitious fear of the future, I could not act as I am acting now."

"And do you think you are acting justly ?" Mary asked, with bitterness in her tone.

"No, not justly. But the man whom you love, the man whom your father died to save, I must try to forgive. One thing more -I cannot forget all that you and Mr. Irrian have done to save Estrild. For that good deed which gives me my life's happiness, I owe forgiveness for that other deed."

"Hush!" Mary interposed hurriedly. "I will hear no more, lest you say something I cannot forgive. You know not what you say. There are mysteries and griefs around us that neither

you nor I can understand!"

She was very pale, her voice shook, her hand trembled as she held it out to him. Her manner more than her words, impressed Harold st given him

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Harold strangely, and the peculiar thrill which the chill air had given him at the window rushed through his veins again.

"Good night and good-bye," Mary said kindly. "You and I can never have aught but goodwill to each other, happen what may."

"Never" returned Harold emphatically.

"You strove to save my father's life's; you rushed among a thousand deaths to rescue Leonard"—again her voice shook—"I owe you more than I can ever pay." She turned her face from him—it had grown paler and paler. "Keep Estrild in London; Langarth is an unlucky dwelling."

"She shall not live there," Harold said.

These simple words seemed to break down Mary's calmness.

She clasped her hands a little wildly.

"Mr. Irrian has done all that man can do to save her!" she cried. "He cannot fight against the unseen power—" She checked herself, and her large gray eyes, full of a piteous prayer, seemed to ask pardon as she gazed up into Harold's face.

"You speak truly," he said "Death comes to Langarth by

a strange messenger."

"Yes;" and with a shudder she nestled close to him, as a

child would in fear.

He put his arm around her with something of the same feeling that he had on their first interview, when he had fitted her to his knee as a child, and, looking down on her wonderfully innocent infantine face, he bent to kiss her. She gave him her cheek quietly, as a child might, without a shade of colour touching its pure paleness.

"You will never hurt any one I love?" she said, her great eyes

pleading with him more passionately than her voice.

"No, never," he answered—for at that moment he felt he could refuse nothing to Mary Armstrong. There was not a shadow of any unfaithfulness in this to the great love that had filled his heart for years; it was due only to the wonderful charm of the girl who had the purity and peace of a child with the soul of a woman.

Once more they said good-bye, and parted. Cumberland's voice from the hall without was calling, "Mary—Mary!" and she hurried away quickly.

Left alone, Harold sank into a reverie, watching the embers burn low on the hearth, and dreaming of the days to come. He heard the opening and shutting of doors, but paid no heed to it, nor cared to rouse himself till a servant entered to put out the lamp.

"Oh, I will do it!" Harold said carelessly.

But the man stood still within the door—he had a scared look.

"Young Mr. Irrian and Miss Armstrong are gone, sir," he said.

"Gone," Harold cried—"at this time of night! I thought

they did not leave till the morning?"

"Mr. Leonard changed his mind, sir, and insisted on leaving at once. Miss Armstrong will catch the Carlisle coach; it passes the east lodge at midnight."

Harold remained silent, pondering a moment in surprise.

"When will young Mr. Irrian return?" he asked.

"Oh, sir, I fear he means never to come back! He has left Trame as he did once before. Oh, this will be a sad trouble to Miss Mary and his father!"

, "But Miss Armstreng is with him?"

"No, sir, he saw her only to the coach; then he came back, saddled his horse himself, and rode away."

Harold listened in amazement. What could Cumberland have said to Mary to induce her to consent to this change of plan?

"Perhaps he has ridden to overtake the coach?"

"No, sir; I saw him take the south road, riding like the wind!"

A blank look of terror settled on the man's face; he stood stolidly still, as if wishing to be questioned, yet afraid to answer.

"Is this the way in which young Mr. Irrian left home the last time he fled?"

"Yes, sir."

"And his father knew nothing of his departure?"—" No, sir."

"Is he aware of it now?"

"I think not. I dare not tell him. Good night, sir!"

"Good night," said Harold. "Doubtless we shall get news in the morning."

The man shook his head and closed the door.

Once more Harold was alone, with new feelings to stir his thoughts through all the windings of his imagination.

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his suspicions? Had Mary repeated his words, and so strengthened his sudden resolve to fly in secret, not even telling her of his decision? She had gone in ignorance of it, Harold was certain; and he must have invented some reason to hurry her departure. Or could it be that Cumberland was unable to endure his position in his home under the roof of the father whose face he never saw, whose voice he never heard?

His punishment, like Cain's, had been greater than he could bear, and, like Cain, he had fled beneath the burden of it into

the secret places of the wilderness.

"Poor Mary," said Harold, almost aloud, a touch of infinite pity in his voice—"what suffering awaits her! And that un happy man condemned to loneliness, how will he endure this new misery?"

Harold glanced towards the window, for he fancied Mr. Irrian was still without; then he rose and extinguished the lamp, forgetting that now he would have to find his way to his room in

darkness.

In the moment when he stood irresolute, wishing some light were near at hand, the slight noise at the window like the tapping of a finger fell on his ear again. By the faint glow of the wood-fire he made his way to the hearth and stirred the embets; a bright flame shot up; and in the light of this he went to the window and raised the blind. At that instant a hand touched the pane, beckoning for admittance. It was a long gaunt hand, pale as the hand of a dead man and fleshless as a skeleton's. Instinctively and hurriedly Harold drew back, fearing to intrude his presence on Mr. Irrian's sad eyes.

"He takes me for the servant," he said to himself, "naturally

as the man always puts out the lamp."

He imagined Mr. Irrian had been shut out inadvertently, and was now seeking admittance, and, undecided how to act, he waited a moment, hoping to hear a servant's step or the opening of the hall door. The silence however around him was unbroken, and then he drew back the blind again. The darkness upon which he looked out, intensified by the flame of the wood within, hung before him like a black veil, hiding earth and sky. Nothing was visible, not even the dim waving of the yews; and no pale figure came forward, no step sounded on the gravel.

"He has recognised me," Harold said, "and, as usual, has retreated into his solitude. I will open the window and leave the

room. He will find it open when he comes again. I cannot call out to him—it would be an intrusion."

So Harold unclasped the heavy ancient casement; and, as he did this, he saw the pale hand again lying on the stone windowsill, the flame from the fire, now dying down, illumining it with a faint fitful light. No figure was visible, for the light touched the hand only; and, as Harold opened the casement, it instantly glided upwards, and, clutching it, got within.

Startled, Harold drew back hurriedly, a strange sensation seizing him at the heart, which he reasoned down as he hastened from the room into the darkness of the great hall and staircase. Here for an instant he stood still, and fancied he heard the casement flung back, followed by the sound of a step on the polished floor.

"I cannot have made a mistake," he said to himself. "It was Mr. Irrian. Mary saw him."

Reassured, yet uneasy—he knew not why—he hurried gropingly up the stairs, and, looking down from the gallery above, he saw the hand again gliding stealthily up the heavy oak bapisters.

With a beating heart Harold watched it to the turn in the great staircase which led to Mr. Irrian's rooms. Here it touched the curtain which hung over the doorway, and vanished within the darkness.

Harold drew a long breath of relief, and yet all his flesh had turned cold.

"Mr. Irrian has a singular repelling atmosphere about him," he said, to himself, as he got within the glow and light of his own room. "I am not sorry he keeps himself from the sight of his rare guests."

CHAPTER XLVII.

HAROLD passed a disturbed night. When sleep came at last, it brought vivid dreams of Estrild, of Langarth, of the ship tossing in a stormy sea, of dangers threatening her that Daniel could not avert; and mingled with these came ever a vision of the Dark Rider, whom he was following through the windings of interminable roads, with the pale hand that had clutched the window pointing the way where cross-roads met.

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In the cold deep darkness of the hour before dawn he awoke with the same foreboding and sense of danger that had touched his heart the night before. This feeling was so strong, so keen now that he resolved to rise and leave Trame with the morning The precience of evil about to fall on Estrild could not be driven from his mind, the necessity for taking some action to save her pressed upon him like a burning fever, or like a driving wind that impelled him forward on an unknown course. It was in vain he reasoned with himself, saying again and again that all efforts of his must be futile, for he was on land and she was at sea. What would it avail a tempest-tossed ship if he sought the shore and held out weak and frantic arms towards her across the raging waves? Nothing—there was nothing he could do to keep her from drifting on to wreck. But Daniel was a brave and skilful sailor; he would save the ship—he would save Estrild if man could do it.

These arguments had no effect upon the burning restlessness of his mind; he felt compelled to action as by a power outside himself, and which yet held his spirit as with a grasp of fire. Yielding to this strange force, he rose and drew aside the curtain of his window, hoping for some dim light from the sky and star by which to dress. A faint gray tinged the east and defined the rugged outlines of the great hill that towered above Trame; but the plateau on which it stood was still within its night shadow, and the river, swollen to a torrent, rushed on in black darkness.

Harold listened for a moment to its fierce roar, which sent an echo and a thrill through the old house which wandered from corridor to corridor, winding its way to every door like the wail of a lost spirit.

"It is not surprising," Harold thought, "that superstition has touched this old place with the name of a haunted house. The sound of the waterfall is like the rhythmic flow of an ancient song that speaks of battles long forgottem, of lives and sorrows wasted away; it is like—the Crusader's Chant!"

The thought struck him suddenly with a startling thrill of memory mingled with a wonder that the fancy or the resemblance

had not reached his mind earlier.

The tempest which had darkened the air the night before was now raging in full fury; great gusts of wind rushed down from the hill-tops and roared along the valley, striking the house as

they swooped by with a blow that made its strong casements quiver. It was like the rush of innumerable wings speeding in darkness to an unknown battle.

The awe of the storm added inexpressibly to the mournfulness of Harold's foreboding spirit, and the awakening dawn did not remove the weight from his mind, for it came with the growl of thunder and a downpour of fierce rain. Too restless to remain in his room, he descended the staircase in silence and darkness, feeling dimly that, if a step should sound or a whisper be spoken, the ghost that haunted Trame might rise at his right hand and ask why he—a stranger—had come to its ancient roof to trace its secret and tell of its guilt.

As he descended the last stair of the wide flight, a door was opened, a sudden flash of light sprang out upon him, and Doctor Arnold stood before him, pale and troubled.

"Is that you, Olver?" he said, in an astonished but low voice. "Come in here—I have something strange to tell you."

Harold obeyed, and the Doctor closed the door carefully behind him.

"I have been up all night," he said. "And what a night of storm and din! Mr. Irrian is ill—strangely ill, and feverish. He is a haunted man—he has seen the Trame ghost."

"Impossible!" said Harold, stepping back, almost angry in his amazement. "You mean he is delirious, owing to the shock, I suppose, of his son's cruel flight."

"No," returned the Doctor gravely; "I mean what I have said. And, Olver"—he drew closer to him and touched him on the shoulder—"I have seen it also."

Harold stared at him, and again drew back, for the Doctor's touch had a thrill of ice in it.

"Seen what?" he exclaimed. "The ghost?"—and he tried to laugh, but it was a laugh that died in his throat. "What was it like?"

"It is like the cold white hand of a dead man. It beckons incessantly. I tell you such a vision is horrible. I cannot stay here, Olver. Who admitted it, I wonder? It can never enter the house unless door or window is open to its importunate beckoning."

"I saw it last night," said Harold. "I opened the window at its bidding."

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He fell into a chair, and his hands now were as cold as those of Doctor Arnold, who had grasped him with chill fingers.

"I thought it was Mr. Irrian," he continued, "who had been

shut out by mistake."

His face was a little white, his voice rather shaken, but he

was growing full of disbelief and wonder, not of fear.

"That never happens," said Doctor Arnold. "Have you not noticed a stone staircase that runs down from the carved ancient balcony outside his window? By that way he goes out and comes in unseen."

"But it was certainly Mr. Irrian at the window," persisted

Harold, incredulous still.

"When? Do you mean after I left you and Mary?" asked Doctor Arnold.

"Yes."

"I went straight to Mr. Irrian then; and, although I did not enter his room to disturb him, I spoke to him from the anteroom, and wished him good night, and he answered cheerfully."

Harold remembered the stone staircase; it descended to an unfrequented part of the grounds, densely wooded; and its balustrade and the balcony above were covered with creeping plants the dying leaves of which hung about it, damp and listless.

"Mr. Irrian must have gone out again," he said, "after you left his room."

"I did not leave it. I have not left it all night till within the last half-hour. The casement that opens upon the balcony is in the ante-room where I sat."

"And you stayed there at Mr. Irrian's request?"

"Yes. So far from wishing to go out, he even asked me to lock that casement door and keep the key."

"That was an odd request."

"From any other person it might be considered so, but not from a man of his nervous temperament. It was after I had locked this door that I saw the apparition of the hand. A curtain, as you know, hangs on the outside of the door that opens upon the staircase. I had left this unclosed, and I saw the curtain sway to and fro, as though some one was moving it from without; then the white fingers came inside, clutching it, then the whole hand entered, beckoning and pointing to the casement door I had locked. The gesture was unmistakable—I was order-

ed to open it. I rose, grasping the table by which I sat. I was in a cold sweat. I felt my hair rise and my heart flutter danger-ously—all my blood had rushed to it. With eyes fixed, I watched the infernal thing as it quivered and beckoned, standing in the air about the height of a man's hand. There was a cold light about it which made it visible, thought it was so shadowy that I constantly saw it disappear, only to appear again. My teeth chattered in my head; I could bear no more. I closed my eyes in horror as the thing drew nearer, and when I opened them again, with a great shudder, it was gone. Then I was able to speak. I called out in agony, 'Irrian—Irrian!' He answered me in a dreadful voice of calm, 'Arnold, it is here! Do not leave me!' After that there was dead silence. I knew he could not speak with that hovering over him, so I waited."

Here Doctor Arnold checked his words abruptly, and flung himself into a seat with hands upon his forehead, as though it

ached with the night's watching.

"If I had not seen this thing myself, Arnold, I should believe

you had had a dream, or were suffering from a delusion."

"Why did you let this horror into the house?" was Doctor Arnold's answer. "I beg your pardon, Olver. You knew nothing of this strange story. Mary ought to have told you, and warned you that the apparition that haunts Trame comes in the shape of a hand craving admittance. Now we must be silent over the whole matter, or every servant will leave the house."

"They will hear nothing from me," returned Harold, "for I

am leaving immediately for London."

"I am sorry for that. I can't say I shall like being here alone; but I cannot desert Mr. Irrian till Mary returns. I shall send a messenger to her to-day to beg her to come back at once."

"A young girl is scarcely a fit person to bear the terrors of the supernatural, if this thing is beyond the pale of nature," said Harold. "Cannot you write to Mr. Irrian's son?"

"Do you suppose he has left an address? Can I send a letter

on the winds after him?"

"The Irrians seem to be an unaccountable race," remarked Harold. "You know them, I presume, better than I do."

"Not young Irrian!"

"No-but his father. What is he like?" asked Harold, with pardonable curiosity.

"He is thoroughly a gentleman," said Doctor Arnold—"a man

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of wide benevolence and incapable of practising any deception. I tell you this because you appear to doubt the character of this visitation. There is no charlatanism or trickery about it, I assure you. And Mr. Irrian is not proud of the family ghost; it is a matter on which he is most reticent."

"What is the history of the ghost-do you know?" asked

Harold.

"It is a family secret, and the little I know of it I am not at liberty to divulge. I heard it from Mr. Irrian last night. Olver, as a medical man, I am used to strange things. I can look without shrinking into the depths of nature, but this passes the bounds of nature—it comes from the other side, and I feel stunned and bewildered."

As the Doctor spoke a spasm of pain passed over his face; it bore the look of a man whose spirit had been shaken within him either by some terrible history or some dreadful sight.

"I feel no surprise now," he said, after a moment's pause, "at young Irrian's departure. I believe this infernal thing—Olver,

it is infernal—has driven him away."

"Surely, if the apparition bodes evil, it was not a time to desert his post!" Harold answered coldly. — He had other rea-

sons for flight."

"Perhaps so;" and Doctor Arnold gave Harold one keen glance, then turned away abruptly. "I am thinking of flight myself," he said. "I have the key of Mr. Irrian's door here"—he touched his breast pocket. "But, if that hand haunts me, how do I know that I shall not do its bidding and let it carry out its horrible desire."

"Why? What could happen if the door was opened?" demanded Harold. "You cannot suppose anything dreadful would

occur through so simple an act."

"Death would happen. Mr. Irrian would follow his son, and die. Yes; nothing could save him—he feels that. Good-bye! I cannot talk to you, Olver. I am unhinged, and may say things for which I should be sorry. Mr. Irrian is aware of your intention to leave; he does not press you to stay. A haunted house is not a pleasant abode. A carriage will await you at any hour you fix, and your host bids you good speed and a pleasant journey."

"One word more," said Harold. "If it be possible, do not tell Mr Irrian that my hand was the one to give admittance to that creature, or thing or ghost, or whatever it may be. I owe him much. I am sorry to be the person to do him harm."

"Do not trouble yourself; it would have entered somehow—it always does. Once more good-bye."

He wrung Harold's hand and hurried away.

Through the long journey to London, through the whirr of wheels, the cloud of dust or the downpour of rain that the day or the night brought upon the road, the rush of the waterfall, the time-stained towers of Trame and the vision of the pale hand haunted Harold's memory with a persistent foreboding of evil to come.

At his rooms he awaited Estrild's promised summons to Langarth with a sickening impatience of the heart that grew in strength day by day, like the burning of a fever.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A ship labouring in a heavy sea, and in her best cabin her Captain dying miserably of his wound. Estrild stood by his berth; she wiped the moisture from his forehead and laid her cool hand upon it. He looked up at her with dying eyes full of remorse and pain.

"You are very good to me - too good—I don't deserve it from you. The storm is well-nigh spent. If Daniel can leave the deck, I should like to see him. I have something on my mind. I will tell it to him—it is not fit for your ears. Pray for me the while. It may be heaven will bear a prayer from innocent lips, even for such a lost wretch as I am. Will you touch my hand and say good-bye? No—not my right hand; it has something on it that I am always looking at. I see it even in darkness."

He held his left hand towards her feebly; she took it, with tears springing to her eyes, and pressed it gently.

"If I can be sorry for you," she said, in her soft voice, "if I can be pitiful, do you not feel that the God of infinite mercy and love will show you pity?"

"It is such as you who feel that," said the man. "It is too late for me to think of such things. Fetch Daniel; my strength is going. I can't thank you; but I feel your touch upon my hand

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t is too strength my hand is worth more than I can speak of—it gives me hope somehow. Yes, I'll try to believe there's forgiveness on the other side when I've crossed over. Don't come again—don't see me die—it is not a sight for your young eyes."

Feebly yet feverishly, he raised his head slightly and watched her to the cabin door; then, when she was gone, he sank back

with a heavy sigh.

"She has tended me like an angel; and I was paid to drown her, and she knows it. Then there must be something in what

she says-yes, all goodness is forgiving."

When Daniel came to him, his eyes were closed, and he opened them unwillingly, with the old shrinking furtive look in them, letting the lids fall again quickly, as if fearing to meet the gaze of an honest man.

"You have something on your mind, I hear, Out with it quickly, man, and don't fear to speak; nothing in the world can hurt you now! I know you can't show a clean log; but there—you are bound for a port where maybe when logs are overhauled, allowances are made for folks who sail without a chart."

"It's all dark," returned Sinclair; "I see only my sins and sorrows, I feel only my pain. If there is anything beyond, it dosen't touch me. There's no light—no light! Fetch pen and paper and take down my words. I'd die silent, only the young lady has tried to do me good."

Daniel fetched writing-materials and sat by him, as brokenly, with many painful struggles for breath, he spoke his last con-

fession.

"I, Richard Johnson, alias Sinclair, wish to own that I die justly by a woman's hand, because a woman's blood is on my hand. I forgive my wife my death. I confess that she and I agreed to wreck this ship the Venture. We were well paid—my wife has the money with her."

"It will do her no good," broke in Daniel. "Glass beads

might save her life-gold won't."

"Unite on quickly. I was to scuttle this ship and let the young lady drown; but I was to save as many of the crew as would come with me; and nothing was to be done till the young gentleman who was to sail with us was dead. The doctors had told his father he could only live a week or two. 'And so,' he said

to me, 'I want the young fellow to be happy while his life lasts. Let him have his dream out; when he is gone, let the Venture and his bride sink down to the depths after him.' I should have been shocked at this, but my wife laughed, and so I took it lightly too. But, when the young lady came aboard, Mr. Vicat whispered to me, as a secret, that his son was dead, and we might hasten matters, he said, as soon as we had passed Madeira."

"Dead! Was his son dead?" said Daniel. "And he knew that when he brought his niece on board this ship to drown her?"

"Yes, he knew it—he told me of it."

"And do you know," asked Daniel, "that the dear young lady took this voyage and gave into his plans only in the hope of saving his poor son's life?"

"I never heard that."

"Ah, Mr. Vicat is a worse villain than you," resumed Daniel; "and I hope some remorse seized him when he found his daughter was doomed to die with his niece! You didn't know Carrie Hyde was his daughter? No? Well, you know it now. Go on—I'm waiting for the rest of your story. You are past talking to."

Yes, past all things—caring nothing now for contempt, or even for pity or love; hoping nothing, fearing nothing, and yet having a dim awakening conscience which would fain make poor amends by confession before sinking into the gulf of darkness.

"You know the rest, and how our schemes failed. The very man whom I ordered to scuttle the ship was your man, and lied when he told me he had obeyed orders."

"He had obeyed my orders. Just you put my name to this document, else it's worth nothing in law."

"Wait—I've more to say. Give me a drink; my strength is spent."

Daniel's pity grew on him as he helped the man, and his voice involuntarily took a softer tone.

"Now, mate, let us finish this yarn if we can."

"You came to our den two years ago—you dragged away a man called Trevel. Where is he?"

"Dead," said Daniel—"on board the ship where a press-gang took him and me and the gentleman who was with him."

"The gentleman, they said, was drowned."

"Like enough. Go on, man; you are losing time."

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"I recognised you days back. It's through you I'm here. If you hadn't dragged away Trevel, I should have escaped from that den, and broke away from the woman who——

"There-don't talk of that-best not."

"No; you are right. Trevel and I were going up North; he had a secret to sell to a rich gentleman. His son was aboard the Alert, and there he shot the brother of the young lady here. I know now he was her brother, though, when Trevel talked of him, I didn't even ask his name."

"What's the name of the man that murdered him?" said

Daniel, pausing, pen in hand his face set and stern.

"Ah, that's past me to tell! Trevel kept that secret."

"Didn't he shoot Mr. Carbonellis himself?"

"No. Trevel's share in it was an accideat; he swore that to me, and he was too frightened not to tell the truth."

"Well, let's hear his story," said Daniel impatiently.

"He said the gentleman was very young, and he came aboard the Alert looking pale and scared. This was at Portsmouth, just afore the Captain sailed for some outlandish place down in Cornwall—I can't mind the name."

"I know the name. Go on, man, faster! What happened

when Mr. Carbonellis came aboard?

"A fight was look for with some smuggling craft; but the Captain dreaded bloodshed; he wanted to take the craft, not lives. So all the crew had particular orders not to fire a shot. Well, they bore down upon the smugglers in the night, and were coming to close quarters, when Trevel, who had a pistol in his hand, stumbled over a coil of rope—and that, he said, wouldn't have happened only he was startled by a whistle that came over the sea-a wild sort of cry, like the seals give in their caves on stormy nights, so he told me-and, at the minute he was recovering from his fall, he swore that the young gentleman, who was standing by him, put a hand cold as ice over his hand and fired his pistol straight into Mr. Carbonellis's breast. He fell dead instantly; and then Trevel, in the confusion, jumped overboard, for he thought he should be the one blamed, because the pistol was his, and he should have no chance of having his word took against a gentleman's; but, as I hope for mercy, he swore to me that he never touched the trigger of his pistol. That young man's hand, he said, was cold as death and strong as iron, and he it was that shot Mr. Carbonellis. Well, Trevel

stopped in hiding till he heard of the wreck of the Alert; then he determined to go up North and make the father of this young gentleman pay him well for keeping quiet. He knew he must keep silent now, because he saw he'd done wrong to jump overboard; he ought to have spoke the truth at the very first. But that strange wild whistle, he said, had took all strength and heart out of him, and knowing the young fellow to be the Captain's relative made him the more afraid to speak. Why the lad—he was but a lad-had such a grudge against Mr. Carbonellis that he should kill him he couldn't guess. I've no more to say; and I shouldn't have told this, only the young lady has been good to me, full of forgiveness and kindness, and I thought she'd like to know the truth about her brother; and whether she'll forgive the lad that killed him or whether she'll bring him under the law is for her to judge, not me. Only I think she's all for pity and pardon. God bless her! Guide my hand, pilot-I can't see. I'll put my name to what you've writ down. Close up the paper—the tale is told."

He sank back, the story of his own life, its sins and sorrows,

told, reckoned up, and closed for ever.

The funeral was over. Carrie and Estrild stood by Daniel's side as he read the service, and, when the deep blue waters had covered the dead, both moved away with hearts full of awe.

Later in the day Estrild took Daniel's arm and paced the deck,

talking of many things.

"Carrie and I owe our lives to you, Daniel."

"And to Miss Armstrong and that rich friend of hers, who

spent money like water."

"I do not forget them, Daniel. I shrine their names in my memory, crowned with all that my gratitude can give them. I have one thing to say—it is that I forgive Mr. Vicat for Gilberts and for Carrie's sake. She risked her life for me, and saves her father. Daniel, his crime is buried in the depths with that poor man—it is forgotten, it has passed into oblivion."

"As you please, Miss Estrild. He deserves hanging all the same; but, since you wish it, no one shall hear of the matter

from me."

"I wish it. Look at Carrie—she and her lover are very happy. Do you think I could ever let mine be the hand to lay a burden of guilt and sorrow on their kind hearts?"

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"I don't think you could, miss. I don't think you could hurt a sparrow, or kill even a sarpint."

"Daniel, I have been thinking much of poor Gilbert-I pitied

him greatly."

"Yes, miss; Mr. Vicat knew pretty well how to work upon

your pity—the scamp!"

"I was shocked by the news of his death—not grieved, I think, for I believe it was well for him to die. He had strange gifts and powers I could not comprehend; he said they were natural, but they seemed to me out of nature. Daniel, this is not the first time I have been present at a funeral at sea. Through Gilbert's aid—how or in what way I cannot tell you—I saw Trevel buried; and when he was dying I heard his last words. He said, 'An accident, as I hope for mercy!'"

"He did say that, miss, or words meaning that; but that you heard them I can scarce believe, though I don't deny there's things on airth past our ken. I've seen myself a sight that no

money would tempt me to see again."

"I want to tell you Daniel, that, since I know for certain the words Trevel uttered were true only as far as he was concerned, I have felt happier about my brother's death. I shall break no promise in marrying Mr. Olver now."

"No, my dear," said Daniel, patting her fair delicate hand with his rough brown one. "It's all fair sailing for you now,

and a safe port near to anchor in for life."

"Daniel, one word more. I do not know the name of the man who killed Tristram—I wish never to know it. I have passed through dangers and sorrows, and my life has been given to me by a miracle; then, in return, I lay my forgiveness on that man's name, and I bury it down there in the sea—the deep waters from which you and Mary Armstrong have saved me. I cannot tell why, unless it be because he was her father's friend, but I wish her to know what I have said—through you, Daniel—let her hear it from you."

"She shall, miss."

"I take your promise; we will never speak of this again. What land shall we see first, Daniel?"

"The Lizard Point, miss; and then I steer straight for Langarth."

CHAPTER XLIX.

It was sweet to be at home again, to see the old familiar places loved from childhood—sweeter still to hear the welcome given by the kindly people, and sweetest of all to see again the face of Pleasance and feel once more the peace and calm of her loving presence. But there was a joy to come above all these—the joy of happy love. Harold would soon be on his way to Langarth.

With a beating heart Estrild counted the days and hours, and every morning's sun brought a softer rose-flush to her cheeks, a clearer brightness to her eyes, tinting her beauty with ethereal touch that made it half divine—for the painter's hand was the hand of love.

Certainly she had never been so beautiful as now, when the sea-voyage had restored health to mind and body; and, stronger in spirit than of yore, she trod her own halls in safety, all dangers past, and the hope of life and love and joy opening before her like a long vista filled with light and spread with flowers.

How shall pen describe her home-coming—the joy, the wonder, the delight, the kindly greeting from a hundred voices, the outstretched hands, the brightening eyes shining half with tears, half with joy, the exclamations and the cheers when the crowd upon the sands, watching the good ship the *Venture*, suddenly saw Estrild's bright face upon the deck, and Daniel by her side, waving a greeting with hand and cap lifted above his head?

Then the cheer burst forth that shook all hearts with an electric bound, and as the enthusiasm spread, people on the heights caught up the echo, and cheered and cheered again.

When the *Venture's* boat touched the beach, fifty hands seized the gunwale with eager grasp, and thus, as it were, Estrild was floated in upon the people's hearts amid a thousand cries of joy.

They gave her the welcome of a queen, and she held out both her hands with tears upon her cheeks, and could not speak to thank them.

As for Daniel, the whole crowd would have hugged him with its five hundred arms, had such an embrace been possible; and failing this, his hand was seized and shaken till he was fain to cry for quarter.

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Words like these were said a hundred times, while Michael stood with hand upon his uncle's shoulder, able only with that

silent touch to speak the fullness of his heart.

"And Joe, my son—have 'ee heard ought of Joe since I've been gone?" asked Daniel, throwing his arm round his neck with kindly hug, and thus relieving himself somewhat of the friendly electricity rushing through his veins which would fain have made him hug all the surging crowd.

"Joe is well," said Michael; "and he it getting on fine, sure enough. I've a letter from 'un in my pocket; you shall read 'un by-and-by. I can't tell 'ee nothin' now. I be chocked up full with joy; I can't spaik; my heart is aching with glory. Hallelujah, amen "—and Michael threw his hat into the air, then rushed into a big wave to recover it, for it had fallen into the sea, and, coming back/ was able to wipe his wet cheeks and say it was only sea-water on them.

Carrie stood by and saw all this, and wondered at it a little, being used only to London ways, where folks, being accustomed to surprises, fireworks, and princes, do not heed them much, but take them in a quiet business way more to her mind than all this enthusiasm. But, when her own turn came to be cheered and admired, she was forced to confess it was rather pleasant. It came about quite easily through Daniel, who at the Carbonellis Arms that night told her story and Tom's to a listening crowd; and forthwith, whether she would or no, she found herself a heroine, and she and Tom were looked on as models for all true lovers.

So, in the morning, when she went to the little church-town of Langarth, she found herself famous; and the men looked at her, and the women looked Tom, and the children brought her flowers, and stared in her face with big round eyes; and some of the boys said timidly—

"Father say you are a real heroine; you stood by the young

lady, even when you thought you'd drown for it."

And the little girls took Tom's hand, and, with the boldness of girls, asked if it was true that he was a brave sweetheart and had gone to sea for the pretty lady's sake.

"And mother says there's few sweethearts nowadays like you to risk their lives for love. And what's love?" the little ones asked, and ran laughing away, unanswered.

In the evening when work was over, the people, thinking they had not said enough, came in a crowd to Langarth, and asked to see Carrie and Tom.

So Pleasance and Estrild made them stand out upon the balcony outside her windows, and on appearing they were cheered as though they were a royal bride and bridegroom. Then Michael, coming forward from the crowd, made a little speech, declaring, if Tom was not such a real right-down good fellow, the Cornishmen, one and all, would dispute his right to Carrie, for they were in love with her themselves. But, since he was brave and she was brave, they deserved each other.

"And we thank 'ee with aal our hearts for what you've done," concluded Michael. "And one and all we wish 'ee joy, and long life, and many children good as yourselves!"

Then the cheers rang out again, and Carrie laughed with tears streaming fast upon her face, and was fain forced to run away and throw herself weeping into Estrild's arms.

"Hear am I," she solbed forth, "crying for joy, and made a heroine of when I don't deserve it—and poor mother in such sorrow at home! Mother is the true heroine; but she's old, and she isn't in love, so the name won't fit her, you see! Oh, dear, how foolish everything is!"

So Carrie said; and yet her eyes were shining with happy tears, for, although her heart was heavy for all the grief at home, of which she had heard from Pleasance, yet she knew she could bring comfort to her mother by her helpful presence, and she felt that what she had done for Estrild had gained forgiveness for her father.

And so the sun went down on the second day of their homecoming with that mingling of joy and sorrow that all days bring, and Estrild said to Pleasance—

"To-morrow Harold will have my letter—surely he will start at once! Oh, I hope he will not delay his coming!"

"My dear, why should he delay his journey? Of course he will be here as quickly as the mail can bring him."

"Will he?" asked Estrild wistfully. "Oh, I fear something may happen to detain him! I am afraid of I know not what."

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something not what." ed; "you have passed through dangers and anxiety, and now that peace has come it startles you."

"But I am not at peace, Pleasance; I am full of gloomy

fears."

Pleasance smiled a little sadly.

"There crops out the Carbonellis temperament," she said, "which sea and storm cannot cure or change. It is the unwonted calm around you after the tempest which fills you with apprehension."

"Is it not the calm before the storm which is always full of dread? You may think it a mere fancy, Pleasance, but it is true that amid all the dangers I have passed I never felt so fear-

ful as I do now."

At that moment Carrie entered, her bright face lighted up by a smile.

"What a queer superstitious old man Prior is!" she exclaimed.

"I left him scaring Tom with the story of the Black Rider who brings death to Langarth. It sounds real, but of course it can't be true; and I came away lest I should shock him with my disbelief."

Estrild flushed painfully, and Pleasance made a sign to Carrie to be silent, but she did not see it.

"Londoner as I am," she continued, "I still have a touch of sympathy with these old faiths, even if I laugh at them; but I should never permit them to influence me gloomily."

"That would depend upon your experience of them," said Pleasance,

Carrie laughed.

"Oh, I have never seen a ghost," she answered, "though my mother has! The old Crusader, you know, paid her a visit—as she declared. Of course it was, in fact, a ghost clothed in flesh, and in garments of a good cut—unless the whole thing was a dream, as I have sometimes thought it was; in which case I should confess that there was a strange coincidence between the subject of her dream and the terrible event that occurred here."

"Amid the million dreams that visit half-sleeping brains, it would be singular indeed if a few had not a touch of truth in

them," observed Pleasance.

Estrild turned from the window where she had been standing, and laid her hand on her cousin's arm.

"You say that for my sake, Pleasance, but you know well that human reasoning cannot touch some mysteries."

and see Daniel. Let is the healthiest man alive—his mind is sound and clear as a ray of sunlight; he will do us good."

"He is a wonderful man for dreams, for all that," said Carrie, still in a laughing tone. "I liked his stories, for I enjoy a good mystery with a touch of the awful in it, though I never make myself miserable over things not quite clear to my own stupid head."

"Carrie, you are out of tune with me to-day," Estrild said abruptly. "Pleasance, I will dress, and meet you on the lawn."

She left the room hurriedly, and in her own chamber knelt down to pray. The foreboding of danger at Langarth which had oppressed her spirit when she wrote to Harold at Madeira had come upon her now with a new and darker force. In vain she wrestled against it, telling herself that all was well with herthat joy, hope, love were waiting to crown her life; in vain she reasoned that perchance the fever of happiness that had touched her veins in her home-coming had brought a reaction of despondency; the inward voice of warning still uttered its dread whisper. and would not be stilled either by her sorrow or joy-for both these were with her, and her heart was troubled in turn by each The old familiar scenes loved from childhood, the tender memories rising like a cloud by every tree and nook, every turret and shadow of dear Langarth, had brought back recollections of Tristram that like a tightening chain wrung her heart with all the piteous pain of love and loss.

But Harold was coming to her, and the thought of his presence was as a warm wave, a glow of sunshine, rushing up to the very lips, filling every vein with life; and she began to cling now almost deliriously to the hope of his coming. One touch of his hand, and this cloud of gloom, this foreboding of some approaching horror, would flee away for ever; the sense of succour, help, and safety through the stronger soul grew upon her; and, when she rose from her knees, she stretched her arms out longingly towards the spirit of her lover as though to draw him towards her by some invisible force that sent an inarticulate cry through the distance that divided them.

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"My dear, you have forgotten that beyond your light words Estrild hears her brother's voice; and, in spite of all its comfort, her return home has brought back to her some of the old horror that mingles with all the recollections that naturally crowd about her now; so she could ill hear the tone in which you spoke of things so real to her, though perhaps unreal to you."

"You mean the Langarth superstitions?"

"Yes," said Pleasance uneasily; "and it is not all a superstition. The Black Rider, as the people call him, came here on the night of Tristram's death, as he always comes when a Carbonellis dies."

"You too-do you believe in that?" exclaimed Carrie.

"Who has such cause to believe it as I have?" returned Pleasance. "The dread of that black messenger—whether man or demon—has wrecked my life."

The sorrowful lines on her fair face, the deep shadow of grief in her dark eyes broke clearly now upon Carrie's mental vision,

and checked her own speech.

"I can understand," continued Pleasance, "how impossible it is for you, who have not seen our sorrow, to enter into our feelings. How can I describe to you the pain and horror of that dreadful morning when Tristram was borne home dead—he who had gone forth in the evening full of life and strength?"

She tried to steady her voice, but stopped, and with shaking

lips left her words unuttered.

"Yet Estrild has been greatly comforted since she has known the manner of his death through the confession of the man Sinclair," said Carrie.

"I have not dared to ask her for the details, but I should like

to hear them," said Pleasance, recovering her calm.

Carrie gave them, condensing the wretched Captain's statement, but leaving out nothing of importance. To her surprise Pleasance listened in a sort of a pathy, with face growing gray and pale; and, when the tale was finished, she rose with a deep sigh of pain.

"It is only the old story that I have heard so many times before," she said wearily—"always the hand of iron that closes on the hand of flesh; and that hand, unwilling though it may be, takes the life demanded, and a Carbonellis falls. What if it be

through a sword in the hand of a friend or a pistol in the grasp of a stranger? It is ever the unseen hand with clutch of steel which deals the blow of death."

Carrie's face was full of protest, but she did not venture on words of disbelief.

"Estrild is waiting in the garden, and beckoning to you," she said, in a dry tone.

CHAPTER L.

A man, trevel-strained and weary, rushed up the staircase at Harold's chambers, entered his room abruptly with hurried mien, and flung himself into a chair as if breathless with his own speed.

"Doctor Arnold!" exclaimed Harold in amazement. "Why

have you left Trame? What has happened?"

"He has escaped—he is gone!" returned the Doctor in a low gasping voice. "I am in a frenzied state of anxiety. I feel in a manner responsible for all that may happen. I had charge of him. I ought to have known he was not sane."

Harold gazed at him in wonder.

"Of whom are you speaking? You cannot mean Mr. Irrian?"

"Yes, yes; Mr. Irrian. He has fled—he has gone in search of his son. His mind is unhinged by that young man's strange conduct, and he has left home in a mad way to seek for him. You will remember this is what he did on the occasion of his son's first flight; and it will end in the same way—he will have a dangerous illness."

"Explain—do explain what has occurred," said Harold im-

patiently.

"Give me a glass of wine," returned the Doctor. "I am thoroughly exhausted" Harold gave it, and, as the Doctor sat the glass down empty, he drew his chair to the table and rested his head for a moment on his hands. "I am trying to think," he said, "how it happened. I want to tell you, but how can I explain what is totally inexplicable?"

Harold made no reply; he seemed to need all his breath and

strength to hold down his impatience.

"After you left us," continued Doctor Arnold, "things went

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quietly for a day or two. But during this time, however, I saw but little of Mr. Irrian. He wrote me a note in which he said solitude and perfect quiet were best for him, as by these means he recovered his nerve sooner. I was quite of his opinion, so I disturbed him as little as was consonant with my duty as his medical attendant. At the rare times when I entered his room he always appeared tranquil, and I often found him sleeping. Only once, on awaking suddenly, his words struck me as strange.

"'Take your hand from my forehead,' he said. 'Let me

est.

"'I am not touching you,' I answered. Then he looked up at me in a curious, searching, sad way.

"'I have been dreaming,' he said. 'Is there any news?'

"I thought he meant of his son, so I answered unwillingly-

" 'There are no letters.'

"Then he looked at me as if he did not understand my words; and after a moment's hesitation he repeated the word.

"'Letters? Oh, no; I do not expect any! The newspapers

-where are they? I want them!'

"I looked on his request as a good sign of returning health, so I answered cheerfully that he should have them every day.

"Olver, the look he gave me in reply haunts me now—there was something ghastly in it. I felt my heart bound with a sudden dreadful apprehension, and I laid my hand upon his wrist. He flung it off instantly, and started up with wild misery in his eyes; then he threw himseef back into his seat like a man in despair, passing his hand across his forehead as if to thrust away some pain or pressure there. Then the thought struck me that, being shaken in nerve, he had imagined the hand that touched him was not mine, and I ventured to ask him if that strange vision had haunted him again.

"Olver, you will scarcely credit me when I tell you his

answer.

"'It was my own hand,' he said. 'You are all deceived; the hand is mine.'"

"Did he say that?" exclaimed Harold. "Then it was Mr. Irrian at the window—it was his hand I saw on the balustrade of the staircase?"

"Was it?" returned Doctor Arnold. "I have tried to answer that question to myself, but I cannot."

"But Mr. Irrian confessed it. You tell me it was his own

assertion?" persisted Harold.

"Yes," said the other slowly; "but how he could deceive my senses, and make his hand appear in one room while he spoke to me from the other, is more than I can explain."

"Never mind explanations; go on, I entreat you!" rejoined

Harold impatiently.

"Well, he held out his thin hand in an odd way, smiling as he spoke, while his eyes belied his lips. They were distended in the sort of gaze into which a deadly serpent might fascinate a man, and for a moment he appeared to have no power to remove

them from the contemplation of his own ghostly hand.

"'You are dreaming still, Mr. Irrian,' I said to him gently, in a soothing tone. 'Will you try to sleep again?' He caught at the suggestion eagerly, and, leaning back on the cushion I adjusted for him, he fell soon into a quiet slumber. After watching him for a minute or two, in order to feel assured he was sleeping comfortably, I stole away as noiselessly as I could. Olver, that was the last time I saw him!"

Harold stared at him incredulously; his haggard looks, his weary figure leaning dejectedly over the arm of his chair, all struck him as proofs of a fatigue too intense for healthy speech.

Surely now he was not talking coherently!

"I perceive you scarcely believe me," continued Doctor Arnold, rousing himself; "but I assure you I am telling you the sober truth. I have not seen Mr. Irrian again, though I have seen his hand, or the thing that haunts Trame, whatever it is."

"My dear Arnold, you are over-fatigued; you are talking at

random."

"I warned you that my statements would appear incredible. Let me explain what happened. I went for a ride, and on my return betook myself as usual to the sitting room which, as you know, adjoins Mr. Irrian's chamber. All the newspapers, which had by my order been placed on the table, were gone. I was glad of this; to care for the news of the world outside oneself is a healthy sign; so, feeling reassured, and knowing how much my patient disliked being disturbed, I went down to the library, where I dined and afterwards took a quiet pipe. I smoked rather longer than usual, for I felt strangely supine, unwilling to move—in fact there was a sort of lethargy over me, from which

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I roused myself with difficulty. I hesitated an instant at the door of Mr. Irrian's sitting room, then decided to go in, knock at his own door, and wish him good night.

"'Good night to those that can rest,' he answered. 'Wait

for me a moment. I have something to tell you.'

"I sat down to wait, but he was long in coming, and that curious stupor fell over me again; but whether I slept or not I cannot tell you. At all events to my own senses I seemed to be wide awake, when, by the light of the dying lamp, for it was nearly out, I saw a hand just in front of me, pointing peremptorily to the closed window. You will remember, Olver, it opened on a little stone balcony, with steps leading to the garden, and by Mr. Irrian's wish it had been securely fastened and locked, the key being in my possession. There was no mistaking now the wish expressed in his pointing hand that this window should be opened. I rose, a little dazed. I could see the curtain that hung before his door move. I could not see himself; the hand was near the curtain. I called out to him eagerly—almost angrily—'Mr. Irrian, why are you masquerading with me? Do you wish the window to be opened?'

"As I live, Olver, he answered me from within the room—
'Yes, open it; and wait for me in the yew-tree walk. I am

coming quickly.'

"It was an odd request; but I was used to Mr. Irrian's odd ways, and I knew it was his habit to walk at night in this place. But now I must make a strange confession. The compelling power of that ghostly hand of his was so great that, had his voice bidden me in tones of anguish to leave the window untouched, I should not have listened to it—I should not have dared disobey that white ghostly hand.

"I unbarred and unlocked the casement window with nervous haste, and, as I opened it, a gleam of moonlight flickered in, the lamp was quenched, the room was plunged in black darkness. I hurried down the stone stairs, I paced the yew-walk for an hour, but I never saw Mr. Irrian. The quiet of the night, the light of the soft stars and moon, which threw a pale glimmer through the dark leaves of the yew-trees, calmed the turmoil of my thoughts. I came to myself suddenly, like a man walking from abnormal sleep. I felt as though the night had passed in a dream, and all that I had seen, felt, and heard was unreal. In this mood I hastened back to the house. An intense quiet reigned every-

where; not a footfall, not a sound disturbed the silence. After listening intently for a moment, and calling softly to Mr. Irrian, I grew convinced that he was sleeping. I closed the window with a quiet hand, then went to my own room, flung myself upon the bed, and fell into a profound sleep.

"I awoke to the sound of a hurried knocking; then the man who attended on Mr. Irrian came to my bedside with white frightened face; a group of other scared servants stood at the door. His master was gone—none knew how, none knew whither. Could I tell him what orders were left?

"I could tell him nothing; I could only listen and disbelieve until I descended to Mr. Irrian's rooms and found them empty.

"On his table lay a note addressed to me, which explained the wild motive which had actuated him.

"Here is the letter! Read it, Olver, yourself."

Harold took the slip of paper which the Doctor extracted from his pocket-book, and read the one line it contained.

"I am going in search of my son. I need his help."

"He needs it indeed," said Harold, as with a sad look he handed the paper back. "There is an intense pathos in these few words which touch one's heart. His son is cruel indeed."

For a moment Doctor Arnold was silent; then he said—

"Have-you received any news of young Irrian?"
"None. And I hope we shall not meet again."

"Wait—do not judge hastily. The things unseen are greater than the things seen. Outwardly his conduct looks cruel, but it may not be really so. There, I will say no more."

"Where is Mary?" asked Harold.

"Still at Carlisle. I have withheld this news from her in mercy."

"But she has an extraordinary influence over Mr. Irrian," observed Harold. "Would it not be wise to send for her?"

"Yes—but not until I find him. Can you give me no clue, no help? Do you know nothing of young Irrian's haunts?"

"Absolutely nothing. There is no Captain Armstrong now with whom he can take refuge. How many more lives, I wonder will be sacrificed to this young man's melancholy and erratic moods?"

"That is a far-reaching question indeed, Olver. This time I fear his father will be the sacrifice."

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"Why have you come to London?" asked Harold with sudden eagerness. "Have you traced Mr. Irrian thus far?"

"I must say both 'Yes' and 'No' to that, because my intelligence is so vague. I came mostly in the hope that you could assist me. You know Cumberland, as you call him, better than I do, and I thought you might be able to judge what his line of conduct would be—where, in fact, he would hide."

"My knowledge of him in India would only lead to the conclusion that he was gone on some desperate adventure where he was likely to lose his life. But why trouble yourself about him? Let him go where he will; is is his father only whom you should strive to find."

"I can only find him by tracing the son. I have tracked Cumberland to London; I am sure Mr. Irrian has followed his steps, though I can no more trace them than I can the passing of a ghost."

"But how did Mr. Irrian get away from Trame? Surely you

must know what road his carriage took!"

"He had no carriage, no horse; he must have left on foot, and hidden himself so completely—perhaps in the woods, perhaps by some disguise—that by the most searching inquiry I could gain no news of him. Now you can understand my anxiety, Olver, and the necessity I am under to find his son. Mr. Irrian may be dead or dying somewhere, unknown and untended. Can you—will you accompany me on my journey?"

"Where are you going?" asked Harold.

"To Portsmouth. At the booking-office of the Portsmouth mail I have discovered that young Irrian took a ticket some days ago."

"Then he is gone to sea," said Harold, with thoughts rushing fast upon him of Cumberland's vovage in the *Alert*, and all that followed it. He grew pale, and strange thoughts, suspicions, fears, took a sudden hold upon his mind. "I cannot go with you," he said resolutely. "Every day, every hour I am hoping and expecting news that will hurry me at once to Cornwall."

"Then I must go alone, and instantly," returned the Doctor, rising with the unwillingness of a weary man. "Stay, Olver—your words have reminded me of something that concerns your interests greatly. Excuse my having forgotten it in my distress of mind. You will remember how nobly, how generously Mr. Irrian acted through Mary's agency, when he guessed Miss Car-

bonellis's life was endangered? Well, I found this letter on the floor of his room, dropped perhaps in his haste, or most likely scarcely read or remembered in the anguish of his thoughts of his son. You perceive it is endorsed in pencil, 'For Harold Olver.'"

While Doctor Arnold was speaking, Harold had scanned the letter with eager eyes. It was from Lloyd's office in London, and ran thus—

"Sir—In accordance with your request we beg to inform you that we have received news, signalled by telegraph, that a large ship answering to the description of the *Venture* has been seen safe off the Scilly Isles. This vessel was largely insured by the fraudulent bankrupt Mr. Vicat, and we had reason to believe foul play was intended; we are glad therefore to be able to send you the above intelligence of her safety."

Harold put the letter down with a flush of joy on his face.

"This is good news indeed," he said; "and I shall start im mediately for Langarth. I am sorry I cannot help you, Arnold, but you see it is impossible. I am all the more sorry because I owe my happiness to Mr. Irrian. Even this letter reaches me through his thoughtful kindness. Doubtless he wrote to Lloyd's for my sake."

"Yes, yes, no doubt," returned the Doctor hurriedly. He held out his hand; and Harold grasped and retained it with a touch of self-reproach on his conscience. Mr. Irrian had done so much for him, and now in his haste to reach Estrild he was selfishly deserting him.

His heart smote him, and for a moment he hesitated, but the recollection of Estrild's letter, imploring him to meet her at Langarth, returned to him with sudden force, and he relinquished the Doctor's hand with the renewed conviction that he was acting rightly.

"Although I cannot accompany you, Arnold, I can aid you in one way—I can prosecute inquiries all along the road. You are going to Portsmouth; I can travel by way of Bristol; and, as I am not obliged to hurry forwards by the mail, I shall have many chances of getting at news of Mr. Irrian if he has wandered so far."

"It is a good notion," returned his friend. "But with one

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fixed, mad idea, the poor man is certainly following his son. I hope—I believe I shall find him at Portsmouth. It was the place he visited during his first attack. Well, good-bye, Olver; you'll do all you can, I know."

"Stay one instant! It is not worth while to go to that man

Vicat and see if he has been there?"

"Why should he do that?" asked the Doctor, half turning as he reached the door.

"Well, I scarcely know; but, since he had a letter about the Venture only on the very day he left Trame, I fancied——"

"No; you are wrong. His sole thought is of his son; he will follow him only, and reach him in a bee-line if he can."

The Doctor waved his hand, and was gone.

Harold stood a moment lost in thought, and troubled still by the sense of ingratitude that had stung his conscience. Striving to fling this off, he began to prepare for his journey; but, while packing, the idea that Mr. Irrian might have gone to the Vicats' took fuller possession of him.

"I'll go and see—at least I can do that for him. I have half

an hour or so to spare," he said, as he looked at his watch.

So, in spite of his intense repugnance towards Mr. Vicat, he was soon driving fast to the mean house in the suburb where

this unhappy man was drivelling out his days.

A crowd of children, as usual, overflowed the passage and staircase. Uncouthly shy, and yet curious as wild animals, they peeped and peered at the visitor, and then rushed away with titters and whispers which by no means added to Harold's patience as he stood waiting in the hall, where the rough servant had left him while she went to inform her mistress of his presence.

"Missus is very ill indeed, sir, and can't see no one; she must be kept quiet, the doctor says. Perhaps you will see master?" said the girl, on returning.

"There isn't much sense in pa to-day," observed one of the

elder children.

Harold beckoned to her, and she drew near him in jerks, amid
the breathless curiosity of the others.

"Tell your mother I am sorry she is ill; but I bring her 'good

news-your sister will soon be home again,"

"Oh, she knows it! He told her; that's what upset hershe's been fainting and fainting ever since." "Who told her?" asked Harold eagerly.

His question or his voice brought on a universal scare, and the whole crowd fled in a state of wild terror of shyness.

"I will see Mr. Vicat," said Harold, repressing his repugnance

to the alternative as he best could.

"I am sorry the children is so rough and shy, sir," said the maid apologetically. "But their ma has skeered them rather." At this point she found herself at the parlour door, so she stopped abruptly and opened it for Harold to enter.

Mr. Vicat was sitting at the window in a state of radiant

happiness.

"My daughter, Carrie, sir, will be here to welcome you very shortly. If you will look out of the window, you will see the

exact angle at which she will turn the street corner."

Harold knew this was Mr. Vicat's daily delusion; yet, coupled with the child's assertion, it strengthened his belief that, even if wandering in dementia seeking his son, Mr. Irrian in the generous goodness of his heart had gathered sense sufficient to bring the forlorn family good news.

"Then you have been made aware of your daughter's return

through your visitor?" observed Harold tentatively.

"Yes—through a visitor," returned Mr. Vicat with pompous gravity. "My wife saw him. Unfortunately she is too ill to take a journey."

"There is no necessity for that," said Harold. "Your daughter will be taken care of, and will travel to you safe-

ly."

"Yes; she is coming up the street soon. There is no question of my daughter's safety, sir. The Venture, you see, was doomed, and my niece——"

"But your visitor has told you the Venture is saved, and your

niece also?"

The question struck an ugly chord in Mr. Vicat's untuned

"The plan was well devised, sir; but people from the other world stepped in and ruined it. The deed of gift gave all to Gilbert. He died too soon. I should have hidden that and had the money if—if——" He put his hand to his forehead and stared about him vacantly. "You have not met an undertaker, sir, have you?" he asked abruptly.

"I have not had that pleasure," said Harold, half smiling,

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f smiling,

with mingled amusement and pity, though Mr. Vicat's references to the evil plot had naturally at first roused only his indignation.

"You are going?" observed Mr. Vicat, still with eyes staring at him vacantly. "Then, if you meet an undertaker, you had better send him to—to—what is the place called?—Langarth. Thank you; yes—Langarth. The ancients had no undertakers, sir."

"Perhaps not," said Harold, still pitiful, and oppressed, he knew not why, by a vague misgiving.

"Ah, it was a pity—it was a neglect of a respectable calling!

Good-bye! I expect Carrie any moment!"

He turned his face again to the window; and Harold shut the door on him, and let himself out into the street silently.

CHAPTER LI.

"She's the purtiest schooner-yacht that ever skimmed the sea," said Daniel, putting down his glass. "Who's aboard, Michael? D've knaw?"

"I dun'oo' mor'n the dead," said Michael. "I reckon 'tis some whisht traade or other, for they don't leave a soul come ashore, They'll be like Jonah's gourd, you'll see. They comed in a night; and they'll go in a night."

"Well, and thee'st as poor-tempered as Jonah oover it,

Michael, simmun to me."

"Maybe I do feel a bit oogly," acknowledged Michael. "For I'd as lief have a stone thrawed at me as a bad word. Oogliness, my dear! Why, there's oogliness enough aboard thic craft to sink her. Maybe Jonah hisself is there; and they won't get no peace till he's thrawed overboard."

"Iss," said Michael in a slow way, as if still pondering over an unaccountable fact. "I rowed out airly this mornin' and axee 'em ef they wanted a pilot, or fresh mait, or baker's traade. And a young fellow, with his hat cocked on one side, pert as a magpie, shouts out, 'Sheer off, you fellow! We don't want nauthin'! 'Yes, you do, my son!' says I. 'You want a civil tongue in your head; and ef you come ashore, we'll give 'ee a

Cornish hug and larn 'ee manners!' 'Go to the devil!' says he, mad as fire. 'No thank 'ee, my dear,' I answers quite perlite; 'I won't step afore you. The road is yours; and you be making pretty good course along it too. A pleasant voyage to 'ee!' I says. 'And good-bye!' I heard langwidge coming arter me, uncle, I can tell 'ee, as I rowed away. 'Twas hot enough to set the sea afire 'most."

"Big words swell no sails," said Daniel. "They northern seamen can carry a deal of swearin' in their holds without sinking; their ships be too good for that! What says the proverb—

"'A northern ship to keep my life; But a western woman for my wife'?"

"So thic craft be a North-country waun, uncle?" said Michael.
"But my mind misgives me she's in the Preventive sarvice now."

"Whether your guess be true, I can't say; but I recken she've never been in these waters before to-day."

"Here be the Langarth ladies, uncle!" interposed Michael.

Estrild came across the sands, looking so bright, so fresh, so beautiful, that Daniel, who had again lifted his glass, lowered it, and turned an absorbing gaze upon her approaching figure, with eyes that beamed with pleasure.

"Purtier than a picture, Michael," he said, with satisfaction. "I reckon a fair woman on land and a sailing ship at sea be the two best things the airth can shaw."

"What are you spying at, Daniel?" asked Pleasance, as she and Estrild drew near.

Daniel pointed to the schooner lying in the roads, whose reefed sails were just catching red gleams from the setting sun.

"A suspicious craft, miss. I can't make her out. She should run for Falmouth afore the wind rises, since she don't choose to put in at Langarth."

"Before the wind rises?" repeated Estrild. "Why, Daniel,

there is not a breath of wind stirring."

"There'll be half a gale before nightfall, miss. Look at the sky; 'tis full of tiery flakes, easier to read than book-larning."

"But that pretty little ship would not be in any danger if a storm rose, Daniel, would she?"

"Not if she held to her anchors."

"And they have not anchored in a good place," observed Pleasance, who had taken the glass from Daniel's hand.

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"That's it, miss! They be strangers to this coast, that's sar-

"And I hope they'll keep strangers," observed Michael. "We don't want no Jonahs to be thrawed up ashore at Langarth."

This remark led to questioning, and to a history of the morosereception given to Michael this morning.

"And I say that ef folks lay to off a friendly coast they shouldn't fling stones at it," observed Michael sententiously.

Estrild smiled assent and passed on with Daniel; but Pleasance lingered behind with Michael, and said anxiously—

"I hope that is not a smuggling craft, Michael ?"

"I'm afeard 'tis somethin' wuss, miss. My mind misgives me —'tis a spy."

"A spy?" repeated Pleasance.

"Well, miss, the Langarth folks have got a venture on the sea to-night; and to run in under the bows of a strange schooner would be risky work. I wish I could warn 'em to keep off."

"And can't that be done, Michael?" asked Pleasance, her sympathies instantly awakened on the side of the free-traders.

"No message can reach the Curlew now. Twenty boats might go out and not find her; she's bound to come in to-night."

"And what then, Michael?"

"Why, ef we don't get the cargo out of her afore daylight, we shall be most of us in prison afore nightfall to-morrow."

"Oh, Michael, why have you made such a bad use of the good

Curlew?"

"Bad use, miss? "Tis aunly fair traade, and goods honestly bought and paid for. But I reckon 'tis a poor chance of saving em we've got now. Auh, my dear, 'tis a whisht job—'tis transportation for life to some of us, and starvation to wives and children! There, we shall fight like men, that's sartain!"

The thought of bloodshed appalled Pleasance; she grew pale,

her hands and voice trembled.

"Surely, Michael, you are exaggerating the danger! That

schooner is only a yacht; she is not a Revenue cutter!"

"Auh, eddn't she?" said Michael, in the tone of a man perfectly settled in his own opinion. "She's waun of the king's ships disguised a bit yacht-fashion, that's what she is! In coorse she eddn't a cutter; I never said she was! But she's a Preventive sarvice boat, and a good waun too!"

"How can you be sure of that, Michael?"

"As ef I didn't knaw the cut of the jib of they fellows!" returned Michael, looking towards the distant schooner with mingled contempt and defiance. "Ef they wadn't up to some sacret plot, why don't 'em come ashore like other yachtmen for fresh mait and garden stuff, and to coosy a bit? Bless you, miss, a true yacht's crew pulls ashore as soon as they sees land, wanting aal soorts of traade; and they're sure to tell what gentry is aboard, making believe to like the sea. Now these chaps aunly cry out, 'Sheer eff!' ef you comes nigh 'em; and they don't come ashore or lev' nobody come aboord. "That's a Preventive trick I've seen afore to-day! Auh, I bain't took in by innocent looks! I reckon there'll be a fight afore morning. Good evening, miss! I must go around and warn our folks."

"Stay, Michael! Can nothing be done to prevent a fray?

Think of the misery that will come of it!"

"There's aunly one thing—ef Miss Estrild will help us, we might manage to kep clear then of a fight."

"Yes, yes. What can she do?"

"Oh, I dursn't ask her, miss; because, you see, she never have forgive nor forgot how Mr. Tristram died!"

"You want leave to hide the cargo in the cave?" said Pleas-

ance hurriedly.

Michael nodded, then gazed wistfully out to sea towards the strange schooner, which lay still as a painted ship, her masts standing out against the fiery sky in wonderful straight clearness.

"Agin' darkness falls I reckon she'll wish she'd chosen better moorings," said Michael, with a grim pleasure. "The sea waient bide quiet much longer; it'll be a rough night and a dark waun. Aal the better too for we! Now, do 'ee think Miss Estrild will stretch out a hand to save men's lives to-night?"

"Michael, you are asking her to connive at and share in an

illegal act! She will not do it."

"Then there'll be murder here afore mornin'," said Michael, getting white and angry; "for we men have sworn that the Curlew and cargo sha'nt be seized while there's life in us."

In the excitement under which both were speaking neither had noticed that Estrild and Daniel had turned back, and were now so close as to be within hearing of their words. Now, to the intense surprise of Pleasance, Estrild came forward with flushed cheeks and eyes shining with a forced eagerness; and, laying one

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ther had ere now to the flushed ying one soft white hand on Michael's arm, she pointed with the other to

the little ship lying in the roads.

"Whether that ship holds friends or foes, I am resolved it shall bring no death to Langarth," she said, in a low, firm voice, "My brother lost his life through not standing by his own people. I dare not follow his example, though he was perhaps right, and though I am no more a friend of this wicked illegal trading than he was; but I will grant you the use of the cave, or the park, or my house, or all that I possess rather than endanger one life at dear Langarth. Rather than that my home-coming—this time of joy—should be changed into one of mourning, I would die myself!"

"There now," cried Michael, with a glance of triumph at Pleasance, "didn't I tell 'ee so? Miss Estrild have got the right sperit in her, like the ould Squire, who showed us a blind eye or gived us a helping hand many a time in the good ould days gone

by—the Lord rest his soul for it!" he concluded piously.

Meanwhile, Daniel by a sign had shown both Michael and Pleasance that during his walk with Estrild he had made a clean breast of the matter, and she was as fully aware as themselves of the danger threatening the *Curlew*; hence, when she came up to them, she was prepared to speak from her heart, though not her judgment.

"Consider, Estrild, I entreat you," said Pleasance, "that you

will be acting against the law in what you do!"

"I have considered," she answered feverishly. "Remembers, what happened when Tristram helped the law. I may be wrong, or the law may be wrong—at all events it is right to make an effort to save lives. Come with me, Daniel; I will go home through the caves, and then you can see where the cargo can best be stowed. No, Pleasance, I would rather you returned home by the cliff—I know you hate caverns. Moreover, I do not wish you to appear as having any part in this illegal deed of mine."

She waved her hand to Pleasance and went down the beach with Daniel, and in a moment or two both had disappeared within the grim opening in the cliff which led to the caves.

Pleasance stood for a moment gazing wistfully down the long reach of white sand, now devoid of all life save the hovering flights of sea-birds, and then she turned to Michael with the shadow of unshed tears in her eyes, "If sorrow comes of this deed, Michael, it will be through your sin, not hers."

"Then I'll stan' it," said Michael contentedly. "I don't reckon it no sin to save lives—lives of men with little children

clingin' to their hands for bread!"

"That's your way of talking, Michael—that's how you have persuaded Estrild to an act of which she will repent," returned Pleasance angrily. "If really needed to save lives, why couldn't you have stowed away your ill-gotten goods in the cavern without telling her?"

"As ef we'd do anything so mean," retorted Michael indignantly. "And what would be the good of et, ef we couldn't bring the carts to the graate rift in the park at the head-like of the cavern, and cart the kegs away saafe afore daybreak!"

"Oh, I understand now why you have pledged Estrild to help you! But the Preventive men may search the cave and cart away the kegs themselves from the beach."

"Why, Miss Pleasance, what be 'ee thinking of? That's roadling talk, sure 'nough. Do 'em want to be drowned, they men? They may be sarpints, but they baint fishes, to get through two fathom of sea-waetur."

"Ah, I forgot that the spring-tides fill the cavern! Yes, yes

-I see your evil cargo will be safe enough till morning l"

"Carts and hosses on the beach at high tide!" continued Michael, amused at the thought. "Lord, they'd be swallowed up like the host of Pharoah."

By this time the two as they talked had reached the narrow path which zig-zagged up the face of the cliff; and here both

stopped and look seawards.

The sun was setting in the waves, and flakes of his red light, dying in flame were wafted towards them on the crests of the swelling seas, which cast the light from them with melancholy sighs as they fell darkening on the sands.

Thick clouds were rising in the south, speeding onwards to obscure the glory of the sun, but catching fire as they came and showing on their western edges jagged peaks and great rents all

aflame.

"Good-bye, Michael," said Pleasance, with a heavy sigh. "The air is opressive to-night. I wish I had gone with Estrild."

"She's safe enough with uncle Daniel. Good night, miss.

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I've got a long round to make to the farmers to borry carts. There's a pewer lot of 'em have goet money on this ventur', miss."
"To their shame!" returned Pleasance, raising her voice, as

"To their shame!" returned Pleasance, raising her voice, as winding up the steep path, she was now some distance above him.

She stayed her steps a moment to say this, half turning again towards the sea. In doing this she espied a little hoat drawn up high on the beach behind the rock which projected at this point where the path began, she pointed now to the spot, and made a sign to Michael to go around the sharp headland. He did so at the cost of a wetting from an inrushing wave which sent its salt spray so high up the cliff that it touched Pleasance's face.

"What boat is it?" she called eagerly.

Michael was examining it with a scrutinising eye, his face sat to unwonted hardness.

"Tis a boat from the schooner, come to spy out the land!" he said angrily.

"Are you sure, Michael?"

"Her name is on the stern," he answered—"Elaine. Now, Miss Pleasance, you'll own I wes right."

"No, Michael, there's no harm in boat or yacht; it is you who fancy harm. 'Conscience makes cowards of us all!'"

Rather pleased at the aptness of her quotation, Pleasance passed on, and was soon out of sight amid bushes and rocks.

"A woman must have the laest word," said Michael to himself.

"Aunly waun pair of sculls," he continued, peering into the boat; "then Jonah have comed ashore by hisself, aunless the crew sent 'un adrift to save theirselves. Well, now, I reckon anyhow I'd best slip the knot of the painter, and then thic there spy wain't get aboord agin in this craft to car' news of we, or to keep his bones from the fisbes."

So saying, Michael cooly unslipped the rope from the stake which had been driven into the sands to keep the boat secure. Then, with a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes, he went down the long stretch of darkening sands towards the little church-town of Langarth.

Here he and two others mounted sorry horses and rode away to carry their messages to outlaying farms.

Pleasance, on reaching the house, ordered her pony-carriage and drove home, as it was her wont to do in the evenings.

Living alone, as she did, she did not like to leave her little

household to themselves by night as well as by day.

To Carrie's inquiry for Estrild she answered that she was safe with Daniel, and would no doubt return with him. So Carrie felt no anxiety, even when twilight slipped impreceptibly into night and a rising wind mouned painfully round the old house of Langarth.

CHAPTER LIL

Within the cave the light penetrated for some little distance, and the flare of crimson in the sky cast a red streak across the

white glistening sand which paved the cavern.

To look back was to behold the glory of sun and sky framed like a picture by the dark rocky entrance of the cave; to look forward was to meet black darkness at which the eye quivered and recoiled.

"You perceive, miss," observed Daniel, "that it would not be safe to stow the casks here—they might be seen from the beach. We must roll them farther on, into the ould place where they used to lie in your father's time."

"Just as you will, Daniel; but we cannot go farther on with-

out a light."

"There used to be an ould lantern kept here somewhere abouts," said Daniel, running his hand up the wall of rock. "Auh, iss, here he is, and a beauty he be too! But that's nothin' so long as there's a bit of candle in 'un."

There was; and, since it was made of strong yellow wax, it

was in sufficiently good condition to burn.

"I reckon Markin have been in here prying round afore we comed," observed Daniel, as he noted the freshness of the candle.

"Now I hope my tinder is good."

He pulled from his pocket a small tin box which held flint, steel, and tinder; and now began the troublesome business of procuring a light, which in the beginning of this great century could only be got by knocking a flint and steel together till sparks fell into the tinder and ignited it. Then it had to be blown at with careful breath while a clumsy sulphur-match was held to the slow-burning tinder. It was a process to be watched with interest, and the operator had to give his concentrated at-

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ld flint, ness of century her till I to be tch was watched ated attention to it in order to ensure success. Thus it happened that, while the ruddy flickering light illumined Daniel's face and and threw it's glimmer also on Estrild's, neither heard a footfall not far from them; neither saw a form that flitted by swiftly in the darkness. The dim light that rose and fell with Daniel's breath make the darkness more intense, while of course rendering them visible to the person passing.

"It's a cranky ould machine," said Daniel, holding up the heavy lantern after lighting the candle within it; "but, so the light's good, as our pa'son once said, it don't matter what the outside look of the the lantern be that carr's it. Now, my dear, we'll step on, and I'll show 'ee where they used to stow the kegs

in the ould days when the Squires were friendly."

The path tended slightly upwards, but it was not difficult, and they soon reached the place indicated. Here the ladings of a big ship might be hidden away, and no man's eye be the wiser.

Daniel lifted his lantern on high, the better to show the vastness of the cave. And now the light fell and glimmered on a

surface of water.

"How's this!" cried he, in a surprised tone. "It's more'n three years since I was here last, and I disremember ef water was here then or no; but I reckon it wasn't."

"You are right-it was not here," Estrild answered.

Daniel walked to the edge of the pool which rippled darkly to his feet, and dipped his finger in it, then touched his lips.

"It's fresh water," he said, "though a bit brakish; so it's the stream, miss, which have found a new way for itself out to sea."

They skirted the pool's edge as far as it's low roof of rocks would permit, and found this was the case; but the way by which the water came or how it made it's way to the sea they could not discover. The overhanging rocks barred further progress except perhaps to a man, who might have dared to climb onwards on hands and knees.

Save for the glimmer on the water where the light fell, the pool lay in black darkness; and there was something awful in its solitude and depth and in the hollow echo of their voices which the rocky roof swept back to them across the darkness.

"Come away!" said Estrild, with a slight shudder. "This is a dismal place—a man might die in it, and his death never be known."

"Tis whisht and oogly," acquiesced Daniel; "and maybe

there's rifts too en the rock to hould a dead man; and he might

lie there unfound till Doomsday."

So saying they passed along the verge of the pool, the flash of light they carried coming and going in a wierd way across its black water, and their lonely tread awaking ghostly steps, which seemed to follow steathily, as their figures vanished beyond a huge rock. Past this the cavern narrowed, as Harold had found when he explored it; and soon the wall of rock was reached, which had appeared to him to bar all further ingress, till he had discovered the ladder which was placed here, and above and beyond which lay that deep gorge in the park where he and Estrild met and parted.

At this spot Daniel stopped, saying-

"I reckon, miss, you won't be timid now of going on alone?"
"No," Estrild returned; "what is there to fear? I know every step of the way. And the light from the rent in the rocks above will be enough for me; so you can have the lantern Daniel."

"I won't take it, miss. If you'll light me just past the big rock near the new pool, that's all I shall need. The ladder is safe," he added, putting his strong hand upon it, to feel how steady it was; "but you'll climb it the easier for having the lantern."

Estrild did not say no. She turned back with him, both walking slowly, while he spoke regretfully of Martin's imprudence in the use to which he had put the Curlew.

"And 'twould grieve me to the heart to lose her," he said.
"You know ef she's seized with a contraband cargo aboard she'll be sold, so I'm pewerly thankful to you, Miss Estrild——"

"Don't say a word, Daniel; I owe my life to you. What is

this trifle that I do in return? It is nothing."

"Well, I promise you, miss, if your goodness saves the Curlew to-night, she shall never run such a risk again. Now I shall go out to the head of the bay in a fishing-boat with a couple of men, and board her if I can come across her; and, ef not, we shall light a signal she'll onderstand. Good night, miss. There's no need to come farther; and the tide is running in fast, so I must hurry a bit."

He put the lantern in Estrild's hand, and, turning once, smiled, and waved a good-bye as she stood watching him wend his way into the darkness towards the sea-entrance of the cave.

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ng once, m wend As he disappeared her heart fell, and a wavering irresolution unsteadied her thoughts. A sudden impulse to follow Daniel seized her; but she resisted it, remembering that the tide would by this time have covered the sands, and to return under cliff and reach the winding path would be difficult if not impossible.

Daniel was gone to the left, where it was practicable to pass from rock to rock down to Langarth Church-town, but her way would lie to the right, where the waves beat against a wall of rock, so the only road open to her was through the cavern; and, as she had originally decided, she resolved now again to take it, knowing there was no cause for fear save in the fancies of her own imagination, touched wierdly by the wild loneliness and

darkness of the place.

But, while she stood in clouded thought, wavering, many minutes had passed, and she awoke to the consciousness of a deeper volume of sound than usual rolling towards her from the sea. A thousand wistful echoes gathered round her from the distant hollows of the cave, and these scarce had time to sigh away their voices ere the beat of the next-wave recalled them in louder and yet louder rolls of sound. The noise grew deafening; it was like standing in the midst of mingled thunders or the roar of cannon, and the mighty rush of reverberations upon the ear confused her. As a fugitive in a lost battle, bewildered by by the very horror of sound, seeks to fly from the din of raging death, yet runs to the cannon's mouth, so did Estrild now rush forward to the appalling din of the sea.

She was met by a great wave which rolled to her very feet, and, dashing up the rocks on either side, scattered its wild spray upon her head, and then fell back upon its brother wave with a long-drawn swell of sound. The noise of its fall shook the ground; but Estrild, though she started back from its roar.

gathered courage from the sight of her danger.

The tide had been on the flow for about three hours, and was rolling onward with unwonted force, fast filling the cavern with in-rushing death. A south-westerly wind, rapidly rising to a storm, hurried on the seas, which with dreadful roar beat against the rocky sides and roof, filling the hollows with immeasurable sound. Estrild knew she must hasten now to retrace her steps to safety, so she turned from the din that confused her senses, and set her face against the dar ness. The roar followed her like a pursuing host, but as she went onwards it subsided into

dull echoes and fell at last softly into silence. She breathed again now more calmly, and her self-possession and courage returned to her. So she walked on with steady step, smiling to herself at her own fears; but suddenly her foot touched water, and she recoiled with a shock of amazed bewilderment. Had she taken a wrong turning, or what had happened? She held the lantern low to examine the path, and the flash of its light touched the surface of a heaving lake. In an instant she perceived the truth. The stream without, swelled by the sudden storm, had increased the water of the pool, which was now spreading over the rocky way which led to the ladder. But it was not deep; in a moment she had passed through it and stood on the other side, and turned and looked down the watery waste. It had grown so large that it gave her a chill of fear; and her reflection in the water, as it rippled to her feet, had the look of a ghost standing desolate on the border of outer darkness—so faint, so wan did the image appear to her, as she watched it vanish as she moved away.

At this instant, when her heart was sinking, she fancied the sound of a step fell upon the stillness. Greatly startled, she leaned against a rock and listened intently, but heard only the slow gurgling of the water and her own quick heart-beats. Reassured, she went on swiftly through the narrowing and evernarrowing path that stretched on to the great wall of rock which closed the cave, against which the ladder leaned that led to light and safety. She reached it pantingly, telling herself in hurried thought that in another moment she would stand beneath the sky, freed from these dark straightened walls pressing now painfully upon heart and brain.

Eagerly she stretched out her hand to clasp the ladder-rung, and touched only the bare rock! Her heart stood still from the shock, yet she believed she had missed the exact spot; so she lifted the light higher, and saw the whole surface of the rock bare—the ladder was gone!

The recoil from hope to despair, the piteous horror of the truth struck her like a blow; her senses reeled, and she fell at the foot of the huge impregnable barrier, which, like the cruel door of a dungeon, shut out light and life, leaving her to darkness and to death.

She was awakened to consciousness by the cold touch of water on her hand; her left arm was outstretched and lay towards the

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pool—the water had risen and reached it. For one moment of bewilderment she knew not what had happened or where she was; then the ghastly truth returned upon her with a force that sent the blood to her heart in a rush of unutterable horror. The step was real which she had heard; and a cruel hand had removed the ladder with murderous purpose to cause her death. Yet no—that was impossible; throughout the whole wide world she hated no one, and no one hated her. It was accident-pure accident; and she was to die as all her race died, by the power of an unseen hand-for she knew she had to die. Stealing onward, only a hand's breadth from her, was the cold death which even now with insiduous touch was rippling to her feet. She kept her senses-she could measure the time. She knew what was happening, and what must happen. The unwonted high fierce tide, rolling inwards, had met the fresh water rushing out. and driving it back by its greater strength, forced it up through the narrow path; and for the next three hours it would rise and rise, till it took her life. It would not require that time to Would it take an hour? Yes, perhaps she might live yet an hour; or, if she could climb to some higher ledge of rock, two hours might be granted to her in which to pray and bid farewell to life, to her dear home, and to Harold-dearest of all!

The thought of him brought a gush of sudden tears and an agonised cry for life. The water was gathering cold about her feet; and in terror she held the light up high, lest some spray should touch and extinguish it Even in her fall, her grasp on the one comfort left her—a little light—had not relaxed, and it was still safe in her hand; but now she looked on it with eyes full of fear, for it was fast burning away, and in a few minutes utter darkness would fall upon and around her. In the short spell of light still granted to her she would strive—she would fight hard for her life.

She held the light aloft, and caught at a narrow ledge of rock with her left hand; by this she hung, and she succeeded in placing the lantern on it safely. To a man, with a man's strength and might, the task would have been difficult; to her it was an effort that left her breathless and exhausted, as, clinging now with both hands to the rocky ledge, she waited for renewed breath before making one superhuman struggle for life. With her strong young arms she succeeded, her terrors aiding her, in

drawing herself above the water, and gaining a precarious footing on a little ridge which helped her to reach the ledge where she found a resting place. It was narrow but slanted inwards, and by clinging to the rock above she could stand with tolerable security.

The sense of present safety brought infinite relief to the agonized tenison of her mind; and, after a minute spent in quiet thankfulness to rest and regain breath and strength, she was able calmly to scan her situation, and measure the chances of

escape with a touch of hopefulness.

She was now so high above the encroaching water that she knew herself to be safe for a time; the great question was, For how long a time? Would it be long enough for her rescue by Carrie, who would assuredly cause a search to be made for her when she and the household grew alarmed at her absence? Yes, yes, it would be long enough if they came soon; but who among them would think of this cavern—would dream of searching for her here? All who could tell of her having entered it were far away—Daniel in his fishing lugger at sea, Martin miles inland, Pleasance in her home. If they sent to her to inquire, then perhaps—— No, no; that was a hopeless thought—the water would reach her long before any messenger could return from Pleasance.

The thread of her thoughts broke here, and grew tangled and confused; she fancied she heard the sound of many voices, and her heart leapt with joy—it was Dani I and the crew of the Curlew coming through the tide to rescue her. She awoke from this dream with a start of pained fear. Was she losing her senses that she should allow so mad a fancy to possess her mind for a moment? Daniel and the Curlew's men could not enter the cave till the fierce tide was at half-ebb; and then, if they found her, it would be lying dead in the darkness.

She drew herself together with a shudder, and turued to look at the dwindling light; then she saw that with an effort she might reach a wider portion of the ledge, where there would be safer footing. On gaining this, she found a niche in the rock wide enough for her to rest in, either sitting or standing. She sat down, and in the comfort of this shelter leaned her face upon her arms and wept and prayed silently.

When she raised her eyes again the light was gone.

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so crushing all courage and nerve that she cowered against the rock, clutching it with trembling hands, and even pressing her face to it, because in this ghastly darkness, with death beneath,

it seemed a necessity to hold by something.

Some minutes passed thus, she knew not how long—she could not count time now-and then she was startled into a shriek by the sudden fall of the lantern. It fell, not to the ground, but into water; and the cry stayed suspended on Estrild's lips as she knew now the flood was deep enough to float it; only a few minutes ago, had it fallen, it would have touched ground, now the water bore it up and carried it away; so the flood had risen fast, and it would soon reach her ark of refuge. In this near approach of death she sought in her memory for words of comfort—words of promise. Many came to her mind, and she said them over many times; yet they grew mingled with the terrible threatenings of prophecy—the words of the seers who foretold desolation-

"How wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?" "When He uttereth His voice there is a multitude of waters." "Give glory before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains and while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death." "Behold the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion to make desolate, and a den of dragons."

These broken utterances, and many, many more came to her in ever-shifting memories; and through all these she was ever hearing the approach of the sea—a confused noise like the murmur of many voices crying "Death-death!" It was the breaking of the heavy seas upon the mass of fresh water pouring down to meet them; it was the rush and roar of waves dashing sullenly against the great rocks that hemmed them in; it was the sure and relentless advance of the sea that was bringing death upon its waters.

The rising tide had reached the inner portion of the cave, and the noise of its fury could be heard here at its very head. Estrild strove to shut out the appalling sound from her senses by hands pressed upon her ears. But this was vain; it grew in strength, it overwhelmed, it overcame all thought except the dread sense of its own awful power. Those who have stood in battle amid "confused noise and garments rolled in blood" know the very agony of sound, as do those who go down to the depths with the roar of the sea in their dying ears.

Before the march of this great sound Estrild's senses fainted; delusive thoughts, strange fancies began to teem within her mind and show themselves around her in visions; of this the compression of the air, driven forward by the water, affecting breath and brain, doubtless was in truth the cause. Be that as it may, dreams now pressed around her; the sound of the chafing surging seas changed to music—a music of preparation for a battle, the tread of innumerable hosts, the marching onwards of countless battalions, mingled with the call of a thousand trumpets, the roll of a thousand drums.

Stirred by the mighty sound, she rose in delirium to her feet and raised her voice in a wild song.

It was the Crusaders' chant! In a moment she recognized it with a return of sense, stilled her voice, and fell upon her knees, clinging to the rock. It was too late—the echoes of the cave had caught the song and flung it back from rock to rock, from wave to wave, till every rushing wind and every rolling sea sang the Crusaders' chant in wild repetition with voices that rose and swelled, died down and rose again.

It was a chant of terror, a chant of doom, and all the superstitious fears of her race swept over Estrild's heart, mingled with a sad satisfaction that at her death also this wild funeral song was not wanting,

And now the preparation for a battle changed to the march past of the crusading hosts; the tramp of ten thousand times ten thousand men swept by; and of all this mighty throng one alone was to live live to pine in a dungeon and thrust a withered hand through cruel bars for his daily pittance of bread. As the piteous story ran like a dark thread through her dream, she saw the hand in a pale prison light, beckoning and pointing downwards to the rising flood.

"You too must die," whispered an inward voice, not her own.
"You, the last of the race on which my hand has taken vengeance, must die, and my spirit will find rest. Farewell—an
everlasting farewell!"

The vision vanished; but, amid a hurrying to and fro, and the trembling of defeat and flight, a thousand singing voices took up the words—"Farewell—an everlasting farewell!" And then came hand-claspings and whispers of heart-broken partings, cries of pain, hurrying feet trampling down the dying, and again, re-

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The hand with the pale glory on it clutched her hand; and with the cold touch Estrild awoke from the confused vision that darkness and fear and the horror of great sound had brought upon her brain. Her right arm was hanging over the ledge on which she lay; and the water had risen now so high that as it lapped against the rock it touched her fingers.

She stretched her arm down in the darkness, and her hand was plunged in water to the wrist. So dreaded death was come; with cold sure feet he had crept onwards till but two inches of rock stood between her and his chill clutch. The sense that all was lost gave her a strange calm. She drew a little ivory tablet from her purse and strove to write a word of everlasting love—a farewell with hope—that might comfort Harold.

At this instant, when the flood with death's very touch was cold about her feet, a sudden revulsion of feeling seized her. In the very heart of the death that waited for her, there quivered a small pale light, no larger than the gold star in the heart of the tiniest flower. But it was the light of a mighty sun millions upon millions of miles away, that, shining as a small star in the earth's sky, sent now the reflection of his light through a little rift in her dungeon to quiver upon the dark waters and recall her to life and love.

The rift in the roof above her was narrow as the edge of her hand, and in a moment the star had passed; but its message remained on the heaving darkness; and, kneeling down, her face upon her cold wet hands, Estrild prayed, and thanked God for the hope that had been sent to her from beyond the worlds, in the message from the shining star, whispering to her spirit that she would be saved.

CHAPTER LIII.

Every mile that diminished the distance between him and Estrild lifted a portion of the load weighing on Harold's mind; and he felt more and more assured that he was right in setting aside all other purposes for the one he was now fulfilling. To

reach Langarth, to stand by Estrild's side and protect her from the unknown fear that assailed her, was his first duty. Great as his debt of gratitude might be to Mr. Irrian, the search for him must be left to Dr. Arnold. But, mindful of the promise he had made, he prosecuted earnest inquiries all along the route—at quaint hostelries in sleepy towns where the coach stopped for refreshment, and lonely posting houses where it stayed to change horses. But at none of these did he gain any information that brought certainty with it.

Descriptions were not wanting of all sorts of travellers—horsemen and footmen, and men in every kind of vehicle that ran upon wheels; but, as Harold listened, he could find no trait of likeness between them and Mr. Irrian; so at length he grew convinced that the unfortunate wanderer had taken the road to Southampton, and gradually his questions dropped, and he heard no more descriptions of strange travellers from fellow-passengers, ostlers, inkeepers, and turnpike-men.

In Cornwall at last, on the rugged side of it, where the Atlantic rushed down "on the thundering shores of Boss and Bude."

Harold had promised to take this northern road, not reflecting that it would involve a second journey across the county from its rugged iron coast on the north-east to the softer sea on the south shore. A stage passing from Padstow traversed this route twice a week, and Harold was fortunate enough to catch it as it started. But it was poorly horsed, and so crawled up the great hills or dragged down them with a slowness that chafed his spirit terribly. This grew to a feverish impatience when the coach crept along a high heath by the south coast, and he could look down on a surf-tormented shore and watch the long line of phosphoric light that gleamed along the sands or dashed up in pale fire against the tall cliffs that defined the bay of Langarth.

It was a rough night; rain fell in torrents, and a south-west wind, blowing in its strength, flung upon the shore heavy seas, whose thundering falls, echoing far inland, reached the ears of the drenched travellers as, to ease the starveling horses, they toiled up a long hill on foot, with rain and wind beating against their faces. Full of thought, Harold walked alone to avoid speech with others, for he was not in a mood to "make talk" with strangers. But sometimes a stray word caught his ear, distracting his attention for a moment ere he plunged back into

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reverie again. This happened at a spot where two lanes intersected the high road; at this place the stage had halte, and a rough box was jerked down from the piled roof.

"Here's your box, Mr. Trevail, but where's your horse-and-

cart ?"

The farmer thus addressed stared about him in dismay; then, putting two fingers to his lips, he whistled loudly. This brought running towards him a lank boy, who had taken shelter under a tree somewhere down the lane.

"Missus has been forced to send the donkey-cart; the hoss was wanted, sir," said the boy significantly.

"What's up then?"

The boy answered in a low voice; but Harold heard the word Curlew, and turned now a sharp attention to the colloquy. The farmer however kept silent for some moments after receiving the news given him; but he was evidently excited in a grave way.

"Go home with the cart as fast as you can, and bring on the mare to me. I shall ride over to Langarth, and see what's going

on."

"I can't bring the mare, sir; she've been pixy-ridden."

"Go 'long, you young varmit, and fetch her to waunce," said & the irate farmer. "Don't tell me none of your strams 'bout pixies."

"But she's gone, sir," persisted the boy; and missus says——"

"Please take your places, gentlemen," said the driver hurried-

ly. "I want to get on now."

Every one hastily clambered to his seat as the man waved his whip with impatience, and gathered up the reins with a jerky hand. Harold perforce mounted with the rest; and as the coach slowly descended the hill, the figures of the puzzled farmer and his boy disappeared, but their words remained with him. His seat was just behind the driver's; he leaned forward and said in a low voice—

"What is going on? Do you know?"

"How should I know?" returned the man with an uneasy laugh. "My ventures don't run in that line."

"The French have landed," said another man, giving Harold

a friendly lunge of warning.

"Going to land, you mean," returned the driver, "ef they bain't caught and hanged. There's a watchman aboard."

He pointed with his whip seawards; but in the descent of the

hill, the bay, the surf-lined shore, and the schooner lying off the headland were lost to view. Harold however had caught the veiled meaning of the answers given to him, and he felt vaguely uneasy. He knew the "landing of the French" was a cant term for the landing of French brandy and other contraband French products, and he had a misgiving of danger to Langarth through the daring deeds of the smugglers. His mind grew full of forebodings as the memory his first visit to Langarth shadowed it, when, as now, a desperate smuggling expedition was astir, and through it the life of a Carbonellis was lost.

"How near to the house of Langaath can you set me down?"

he asked of the coachman eagerly.

"About a matter of two miles," said the man carelessly, flinging the words back as he leaned forward to hear the whispered speech of his friend on the box-seat.

"They are deaf to anything but smuggling," thought Harold indignantly. "They smell French brandy; they are like hunters

after a fox-mad to pursue their sport"

Being angry he was injudicious.

"Well, I believe I onght to give information to the coastguard that a certain farmer has lent his horse and-cart for a bad purpose," he said, in a hard tone; "so you had better try and put me down a little nearer Langarth than two miles!"

Conversation all around him ceased; and every one listened

for the coachman's answer.

"If you don't mind a rough read," said the man in a civil tone, "you had best get down here; it's nearer by half a mile than the place where I reckoned on stopping."

"And which way must I go?"

"You see thic lane to the left?"—pointing with his whip.
"Keep straight on, and you can't miss. Your portmanty? Yes
—I'll leave he at the turnpike. Good night!"

Harold was down in the road now, and the driver was just starting the horses, when, from the window of the coach, a woman's hand dropped a slip of paper, and, by a gesture, signified to Harold that it was for him. At that same instant the coach drove off, amid the sound of ironical laughter.

"Informers are poor company for honest men!" shouted the coachman's friend. "If we meet again, maybe, I'll give 'ee a Cornish hug. But there, I never knowed a Londoner who could

wrastle!"

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"Yah!" yelled the coachman, that his voice might reach its mark. "I wouldn't have carr'd 'ee another mile for a hunder' pounds! Informers would make the ould coach smell of sulpher for a month!"

Another laugh, and the wheels rolled away through the mud, while Harold was left standing in the blinding rain, his veins tingling with fierce exasperation, mingled with a ludicrous sense of helplessness to avenge himself. After a second or two of inward raging, he picked up the slip of paper from the road; but it was mud-stained and rain-blotted, and in a good light would have been hard to decipher; here beneath clouded moon and stars it was impossible. He must find a cottage and get a light, and then make inquiries as to his road. Of course he would not take the one indicated, as it was most likely the wrong one. It cost him a good half-hour's walking before the light from a cottage window twinkled out at a little distance. He crossed the field leading to it, and found that a tiny child of five and a poor old bed-ridden woman, stone-deaf, were the only souls at home. He gave up the woman as hopeless, and the child could only tell him it was a "a long way to Langarth." So he turned to the pencilled lines on the rain-blotted paper, and read this-

"You are a good five miles from Langarth. Do not follow the road pointed out to you. It leads to an old mine; and you might easily fall into the shaft. Go straight on to the four-mile stone; then take the first lane on the left, bearing towards the sea."

On the outside of the folded slip was written-

"From a friend, who advises a stranger not to meddle, but to leave the coastguard to do its own work."

Harold smiled as he crushed the paper in his hand.

"I understand her meaning," he said to himself. "She was willing to save me from the shafts of her beloved country, but not to help me to inform against her friends. It is a sort of condition she makes. Now I wonder if her route will tumble me over the cliff, instead of into a shaft? Is there no horse to be hired anywhere about here, little girl?"

"Farmer Trevail's hoss be dead, mother said. Her's long with Mrs. Trevail; her's took bad—skeared like into fits. And—and I seed farmer Pryse's hoss not long agone," continued the child, staring at Harold with round eyes of fright. "And I felt scairt; and I comed in with grannie."

"Where can I find your father?" asked Harold impatiently.

"He's gone 'long with the hoss-and-cart to help the Langarth

men. Don't 'ee tell the sodgers, now-will 'ee ?"

At this reply Harold felt the chance of his gaining inform ation was hopeless, and he must trust now to his own head and and his own feet. He put half a crown in the deaf old woman's hand and departed. Her eyes gleamed with joy over the coin; and she screamed out her thanks in a shrill treble, yet was evidently suspicious, for, as Harold stood for a moment pondering outside the door, he heard her in the same shrill tone cry out to the child—

"He bain't no good, I reckon! You haven't told 'un nauthin', Molly?"

"No, grannie, 'cept that Farmer Trevail's wife was skeared

most to death."

"There, there," shrieked the woman in her high key—"don't 'ee tell me no strams 'bout ghosts! I've seed ghosts enough in my time. I mind the day when the ould Squire was found dead—drowned in vour inches of waetur, faace of 'un lying in the brook; and I seed the Black Rider go by with my aun eyes. Auh, I mind it better'n I mind what hap'd yesterday! I was a purty little cheeld then. And 'taties was dear then; they wesn't growed out in fields, like they be now. Auh, 'twes poor times!' Barley-bread and work hard for't. Ghosts? Auh, ghosts will come for us aal!"

Harold shut the door on the old woman's recollections; but some of her words rested in his mind, or rather quivered through it, bringing half-awakened thoughts and apprehensions that he flung aside. But his heart had a quicker beat as he set his face

steadfastly towards Langarth.

The south-west wind had brought in a fog from the sea, and he walked through a thick white mist which shut out every landmark, enclosing him step by step in the solitude of soft walls, through which he went as through the cells of a prison, ever enclosed, ever alone, nothing visible save the drear whiteness through which he paced darkly.

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sea, and very landoft walls, , ever enwhiteness Fearing to lose the turning to the left which he had been directed to follow, he walked close to the hedge on this side, and felt intensely relieved when he came upon the lane, and heard dimly in the distance the full soft rushing sound of the sea. Meeting the wind now in its force, he realized its strength, and knew that waves heaped storm-high must be sweeping down upon the shore and flinging their spray far up the cliffs of Langarth. He hurried on feverishly, beating against the fog and wind with strained eyes and rain-battered face, every step closed up behind him by the insiduous wall of mist, and every step in front taken darkly. The lane seemed interminable; and sometimes his doubting heart stayed his steps for a moment in uncertainty; then he pressed onwards, flushed with a new fever of haste.

Rewarded at last! Out of the darkness of night and mist there loomed upon him suddenly a denser darkness, taking shape as he neared it, and resolving itself into a low wall, which surrounded an outlying portion of Langarth. He recognized this fact with a feeling of intense relief; and, going back a step he

took a short run aud cleared the wall at a bound.

He was within the pale of Langarth, within a short measurable distance of home, joy, and love; and yet at this very instant, when his over-weighted heart had sprung back to its balance, and a smile at his own forebodings was standing on his lips, he was struck pale by a sound. It was a strangely soft clear whistle, not shrill or ear-piercing, and yet intense and far-reaching as a trumpet, sounding in the guests to Death's feast—a battle.

Struck motionless as though a hand had clutched him, Harold stood intently listening for an answering signal to this wild call; and, after a time, slow and breathless as seconds to a drowning man, it came softly on the wind, rising from the sea, clear and luminous as a thread in darkness, and yet mingled with all the wierd muffled sounds which crept spectrally through the mist.

"It was a smuggler's signal," said Harold to himself, with a breath of relief. "My nerves are unstrung or chafed, or I should not for an instant have harboured the wild idea that my mysterious fellow-traveller of three years ago—be he man or

demon-was whistling in the air to-night."

So saying, Harold walked swiftly onwards, and gradually gained a knowledge of his bearings. He perceived he was in



that wild unfrequented portion of the park which skirted the high rugged cliffs, beneath which the caves ran which he so well remembered visiting. With the recollection came also the remembrance of the deep ravine or gorge running up inland like a roofless continuation of the cavern, and towards which he now feared his steps were bending. The fear vexed him; for, if this impassable chasm lay between him and Langarth, then he must turn aside and head it; and this would increase his walk by more than a mile. That he was nearing it he now felt convinced, for the dreadful roaring of the sea beneath his feet shook the earth, and filled his ears with a sense of interminable sound. With a horrible power and strength it rolled along beneath him, like an infernal drum-beat calling lost souls to the caves of death.

Louder and louder grew the sullen roar of the pent-up waves, twining, tangling, and foaming in the rocky hollows beneath his path; yet he kept steadily on, resolved that only the chasm itself intercepting the way should force him to turn aside and choose the longer route. That he was not far from the horrible place he felt convinced, for a thousand wild echoes were rushing up its

hollows and screaming in his ears.

It was a wild night indeed; and the heaving sea, the strong wind, the sullen roar of breakers on the surf-tossed shore, the awful rush of waters heaped on waters within the cave, the swaying of the creaking trees, all filled the thick darkness with sound shrieking upon sound. Treading carefully, lest the great rift should loom upon him too suddenly, Harold walked on through the whirling sounds, when one struck upon his sense that rooted his feet to the grovnd. It was the echo of Estrild's delirious song; it was the Crusaders' chant passing wildly down the gorge on the wings of the wild wind.

As a falling star is for an instant distinct ere it is lost for ever, so was that fateful music for one second distinct and clear ere it was lost amid the voices of sea and storm. Yet still the echo from the cave's din seemed to bring it to him in fitful cadences,

mingled with the roar of the prisoned waves.

But when a man is lost at night, with fog and darkness all around him, and anxiety gnawing at his heart, fancies are apt to grow upon the mind, and phantoms, either of sound or sight, are too easily created.

Telling himself this truism, Harold faced about, meaning to leave the great rift, visible darkly to his eyes now, like a black

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line in the rank grass, and pursue his path by the safe road. He had not reached it, when there loomed on his vision a dark outline, taking shape as it neared him. It came so suddenly that he stepped aside to let it pass, although it was still so far away that by this one step he put it out of sight, and again it was sonly a darkness coming on softly, yet swiftly. A step forward, and once more it was a shape up-thrust through the mist, phantom-like, yet real.

It was the figure of a rider—a man with the set rigid face and livid eyes of a man in battle, whose horse stands fetlock-high in blood. Harold marked the wild trance-like aspect of the man with a moment's wonder; the next instant he had recognized him.

It was the stranger with whom he had crossed the ferry at Torpoint—the man who had ridden ahead of the coach through that long night-journey—the Black Rider who brought death to Langarth! Why was he here? What was his dread message now?

A horrible fear clutched Harold by the heart; but it was a fear so mingled with fierce wrath that it strung his nerve to steel. Man or demon, he would circumvent this fiend now, or die in the attempt. He would reach Langarth before him and baffle the murder that looked out from those livid blood-streaked eyes. Harold gave one glance to the dark figure passing into the mist; for one second he listened to ring of the horse's hoofs as they struck the road leading to Langarth, and he saw that his wild impulse to pursue the rider, to seize his bridle and hurl him from the saddle was one impossible to fulfil. How could foot contend with horse?

So there was one way—only one—by which he could reach Langa, the before the messenger of death—he must cross the chasm. As an arrow shot from a bow he sped towards it, Estrild's name on his parted lips, Estrild's life hanging on his panting breath. With far-stretched vision he could just disern the great rift looming darkly like a grave before him, when suddenly a sound fell upon his ear that drove the blood to his heart in one swift rush.

It was the sound of a horse galloping! The rider had turned and was pursuing his steps! Assured of the ominous fact by the fierce rapid hoof-beats that struck his car like a knell of death, Harold felt an access of wrath that made his veins run as

with living fire, bracing his nerves to steel. He rushed onwards; he reached the chasm and, as he cleared it with a bound, he could have fancied the breath from the horse's nostrils touched him like a hot wind. On the other side of the great rift, panting, he paused and turned, and saw with horror indescribable the strange horseman was following madly. For one instant he was visible, his hand lifted in the air, the next man and horse had gone crashing down into the darkness and death of the deep gorge. That the rider had striven to leap the gulf was certain by the action of his uplifted hand; but the terror-stricken horse had failed in his spring, and both now were lying on the rocks below crushed out of life.

Harold stood appalled for just a second's space; then, rushing to the edge of the ravine, he seized a stunted bush and flung himself over, and so, hanging on to projecting rock or tufted grass, or whatever his hand could seize with desperate clutch, he reach-

ed the bottom bruised and breathless.

The fog had lifted with strange swiftness beneath the glow of the moon just risen from the sea; and she drew the mist up as she rose as though a hand of light had seized, rent it to shreds, and flung it away. In the soft sheen, now clearing all things to the sight, Harold saw the horse stretched quivering in a death-throe. Beside it lay its rider, his pale set face looking upwards to the stars, his eyes wide open, that dread expression on them that Harold had noted—the look of a man in battle who faces his foes with the rage to kill set like a seal of fire on his brow. On his lips was a smile of derision; he had thought of victory, and died ere he knew defeat had befallen him.

With the feeling of repugnance that sent a chlll through his veins, Harold placed his hand over the heart of the prostrate man, and fancied he felt it beat. Then succour must be brought instantly! But how should he gain it? Remembering in a flash of thought that he had a dog-whistle with him, he drew it from his pocket and sounded it with a strong breath. An answering whistle resounded through the ravine. Did it come from Langarth? No; a figure was coming towards him in a dazed way from the end of the gorge nearest the sea. It came on as though it saw neither rock nor scaur; but it passed all these safely with swift steps, and yet with so strange a walk and mien that Harold's gaze was fixed on it in bewilderment.

A moment later he passed his hand across his eyes, as though

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to chase away a dream; then he called out, in a sharp voice of amazement—

"Cumberland! Good heavens, is it you? Come here! Tell

me if you can who this is! Is he man or fiend!"

Cumberland's fixed gaze passed over Harold, as though he did not see him; and flinging himself down on his knees beside the dead man, he raised slightly the cold white face, and, in a voice unlike his own, he whispered—

"Father, I have done your bidding!"

The words thrilled through Harold's veins; he laid his hand on the young man's shoulder and cried angrily—

"Cumberland! Rouse yourself! Are you mad? Who is

this man?"

Cumberland looked up, his hand pressed upon his forehead, and spoke as though the words were forced from him.

"It is my father-Mr. Irrian of Trame."

CHAPTER LIV.

Harold had no time to utter forth, even in broken words, the amazement, the horror, the pain, that rushed over him at Cumberland's strange avowal, for at that moment lights flashed upon them from above and many voices hailed them eagerly.

"Who is that below? Have you found her?" cried Carrie, in

sharp accents of fear.

"It is I-Harold Olver; I have found Mr. Irrian."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed another voice; and then, to Harold's intense surprise, Doctor Arnold appeared at the edge of the precipice, bending over it eagerly, striving to penetrate the darkness below.

"I traced him," he cried, "to within a few miles of this place; I lost him in the country lanes. Is he restored to sense? Is he

well ?

"He will feel ill no more in this world," said Harold—"he is dead."

A moment's silence, and then Doctor Arnold and the crowd around him repeated the word "dead" in many accents; and there arose in an instant a hubbub of voices and countless cries and questions which Harold could not answer,

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"Mr. Irrian tried to leap the gorge—his horse failed in the attempt; both fell—both are dead," he said simply. Further explanation, he felt, would only plunge him into the inexplicable mystery which lay now before him shrouded in death and hidden from all human comprehension.

Looking up, he saw Doctor Arnold's face, grown very pale, bending over the brink of the ravine. Close by him stood Prior, with a lantern in his hand. He lowered it as far as he could reach, crying, in a trembling voice—

"Who is that with you, sir?"

"It is Cumberland—that is, young Mr. Irrian," Harold said. This reply moved Doctor Arnold greatly, and he cried out in

a changed voice—
"Hold him! Do not let him go, Olver—I must come down to you at once! Prior, show me a way by which I can reach

bim."

"Down here, sir, to the right; the way is tolerably easy if you can hold on to the bushes and rocks."

Harold saw him turn away to follow Prior, then saw that Carrie and her lover held him by the arm; both said a few words to him in low eager tones.

"Yes, yes," he answered, "when I have spoken to young

Irrian."

"Then Tom and I will continue the search alone!" Carrie cried angrily.

"Do not stop me!" returned Doctor Arnold. "It is of vital

importance I should speak to this young man!"

He hurried onwards; and now Carrie came to the edge of the gorge, and, leaning over dangerously, while her lover held her to ensure her safety, she said, in a clear voice—

"Mr. Olver, can you hear me?"—"Yes, perfectly."

"Do you knew we are out searching for Estrild? She is lost!"

"Lost!" exclaimed Harold; and in his pained surprise he relinquished his hold of Cumberland, whom he had held by the wrist from the moment Doctor Arnold had cried out in such sharp accents of warning that he was not to let him go.

The young man himself had stood quietly in the same dazed way, not uttering a word through all the cries and questions sounding around him. But now, being released from Harold's grasp, he went onwards up the ravine, walking like a man in his

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estions larold's sleep, heedless of his path, and yet escaping the stumbling-blocks in his way. So going, he was met by Doctor Arnold and Prior; and the former, grasping his arm, led him back passively to the spot where Mr. Irrian lay and Harold stood listening to Carrie's story.

"If she has been overtaken on the beach by the tide, we cannot find her," she was saying, with a sob, "until the sea has gone

back; and even then-"

"Olver, come with me," interposed Doctor Arnold. "I have questions to put to young Irrian."

Harold turned on him in an amazed way.

"Surely your questions can wait!" he said, in a rage of anguish. "Nothing can be done for the dead; I am going to search for the living."

"For Heaven's sake, Olver, listen to me ere it be too late!

The girl is in peril of death—help me to save her!"

Again Harold turned, gazing into Doctor Anold's face in an agony of bewilderment; and the look that met him made him yield.

"Is it of Estrild's danger you mean to question this man?"

"Yes, yes; hold him fast!"

With intense repugnance Harold once more seized Cumberland's wrist. All the old feelings of suspicion and of horror were again flooding his mind. He was the slayer of Tristram, perhaps the murderer of Estrild also. Mary Armstrong and the old promise to her were all swept away as he held Cumberland with a clutch of iron.

"Softly, softly, Olver! Can't you see the young man is not in his normal state? He is uncouscious—he is hypnotised."

"Hypnotised?" repeated Harold.

"Yes; he is like a somnambulist or a man mesmerised—call it

what you will !"

"Then wake him, Arnold, if you have the power, and for dear life's sake let us hear the truth! Great Heaven, how we lose time! Where is Estrild?"

Harold put this question to the unhappy young man in his

grasp and looked into his dazed eyes unpityingly.

"Softly, Olver!" Doctor Arnold cried again. "To wake him would be fatal to our purpose; he would be oblivious to all that has happened while in his state of trance."

"Is he mad, or are you mad, Doctor Arnold, that you hold

me here to listen to your theories, when the dearest life on earth is perishing? Let me pass!"

Harold would have flung Cumberland from him and thrust

Doctor Arnold aside, but for the quiet question -

"Where will you go, Olver? Do you not know that every nook and glade of the park has been searched, and the village, and the road round? My only hope lay in the approach of Mr. Irrian; he is dead, but I hold his son, and he shall speak." And now he pressed his hand on Cumberland's forehead, saying gently, 'You have been on a journey, lad?"

" Yes."

"You tried to escape that hand?"—and Doctor Arnold pointed to the cold hand lying in its deathly whiteness on the rock beside him.

"Yes; I fled to the sea, but it was too late. Before I left Trame his hand had passed over brain and heart; it was in my

spirit now, and I went where it pointed."

With a heavy sigh Cumberland ceased to speak, and then suddenly flung himself on his knees by his father's side. Again Harold would have seized him, but, with a gesture for silence, Doctor Arnold waved him back. He was right, for Cumberland began to speak again, addressing Mr. Irrian as though he were in life.

"Have I failed, father, or has your hand lost its skill? Oh, it was heavy on me-it lay like ice on my heart! And will you keep your promise? Is this the last time that horrible touch shall chill my blood, and change me from my true self into a creature without will, without thought, without conscience? Ah, ves-I remember your words! It will pass-all pass-and no recollection of this will blacken my soul when I awake to my own life. But do you know there is a dark shadow stays with me-a shape indefinable and dreadful that haunts me when I return to sense-a something that I loathe, though I strive to grasp and understand it? Father, as I live I will leave your home, your name, your presence for ever when my spirit returns to me!" He half rose with a shudder as of fear or hate, but in rising touched his father's dead hand, and sank upon his knees again, talking now rapidly-"Yes, yes, I confess it-I tried to escape. I would have gone to the coast of France, but the Captain declared I ordered him to sail to Langarth. I half awoke when I saw those dark cliffs again, and I commanded him to let

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no one come aboard and no one go ashore. It did not avail—your hand was on me. I rowed ashore alone; and when I would have gone back, seeking again to flee, you had taken the boat away. Then I hid in a cave; I plunged into deep darkness, saying, 'Surely here I shall find a refuge till this tyranny is past!' But it was stronger—stronger than ever; and when she went by—the last of the race cursed by the dead hand—then I knew that she must die."

White with wrath and fear, Harold started forward, but Doctor Arnold caught him by the arm and held him back by main force, imploring silence by a whispered warning. But the commotion had distracted Cumberland's attention; he looked up, still with that strange fixed expression, and seemed to listen as if for some expected sound.

"The whistle broke through a roar of waves; I answered, but I had not obeyed," he said, dropping his voice to a whisper, as though fearing his dead father would hear his words. "No, I could not—she was so beautiful, so innocent. The light shone upon her as she passed my hiding-place; and I—yes, I fled again. I rushed onward through thick darkness till I reached a ladder, and, when I had mounted it, I drew it up to put a barrier between her and me, for I could not hurt her. Oh, father, you wring my heart—I could not! So she is safe within the cave, and you—oh, my father, I have killed you!" With a cry as if his heart was breaking, Cumberland fell forward with his head on Mr. Irrian's breast, and, save for a choking sob, he lay there as still as though himself bereft of life.

Doctor Arnold released his hold of Harold's arm.

"This is a pitiful case indeed," he said—"the strangest, sor rowfullest case of hypnotism that has ever come across my experience. Night after night that man stole to his son's room and mesmerised him in sleep; but who put him into the hypnotic state? Ah, there lies the mystery that can never be fathomed!"

All his interest lay with his strange patient; he had forgotten Estrild till he perceived that Harold, not listening to him, was speaking with pale lips to Prior, and both their faces were an expression of horror.

"What ails you? he asked. "You have heard the girl is safe—safe within some cave—a place you know, doubtless."

"Safe!" repeated Prior. "If she be there, sir, she is dead by this time—drowned!"

Harold interrupted him with an imploring cry to follow him, for he was already at a distance, making his way with desperate speed over the rocks and boulders that lay in the path. Prior, with eyes full of despair, followed him quickly. Doctor Arnold was left alone in the dark glen with the dead man and his son. Harold rushed onwards, sometimes falling over a rock, but, heedless of pain—not even feeling it—rising again to redouble his efforts. The ravine itself ended only at the sea with an abrupt rent in the great cliff; and hear it was that the stream—as Harold remembered—rushed over it in a wild waterfall It was dry now.

Harold stood a moment in bitter despair; this proof of Prior's assertion, that during a great storm in the past winter the rivulet had sunk into the cave and found a new way to the sea, paralysed him with fear. As Prior reached him, he seized him by the arm in agony.

"The ladder, Prior—where is the ladder? Oh, the time lost—the time lost with those men! Why did I not break away from them?"

"Tis best as it is, sir," said Prior. "You know where to look now. And as I've been coming up the rift I've took heart, for you've beat the Black Rider, and I feel sure Miss Estrild is safe."

Down on the ground, groping here and there besides big rocks and beneath thorn and furze, both had been searching as they spoke. The moon had risen high and shed a soft light upon them, gleams of light came tremblingly from the troubled searchese helped them in their search of agony.

"It is here!" said Harold suddenly. "Help me, Prior!"

His voice had sunk to a whisper—all his anguish, all his dread had clutched him by the throat. He had to face now the horror that he feared, and its ghastly reality. The beating of his heart stayed the breath upon his lips as with grip of iron he lowered the ladder through the fissure in the cave's roof down into its dim darkness. It touched water, and for an instant there was risk, through the flood's strength, of its floating away out of their hands; but by main force they held it down. Both men grew deadly pale as they fought thus with the death beneath.

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Prior strove to obey, but the ladder had no grip on the rock beneath, and the water, rushing around and beneath, constantly swayed it to and fro. It was impossible to gain a footing on it

"I shall leap down!" Harold said, stripping off his coat as he spoke.

"Stay sir, for pity's sake! Here is help at hand!"

But Harold had no thought of staying. He got up on the swaying ladder, and in a moment had disappeared within the darkness of the cavern.

Prior, holding the ladder with both hands, bent over the brink; but the appalling din that met him made him draw back,

and his heart quivered and his hands shook.

"She cannot be there in life," he whispered; "and in finding her dead he too will loose his life." He spoke with shaking lips, looking up at the little crowd around him, whose approach he had seen.

It was Tom and Carrie; Pleasance was with them, and three or four men-servants; and in a moment strong hands were on the ladder and Tom was over the edge and down in the darkness.

Carrie's eyes gleamed through her tears.

"He is always brave—always ready. Do not fear!" she said,

clinging to Pleasance. "I am sure all is well."

Pleasance was very pale. She had returned with the messenger whom Carrie had sent to her, and it was from her they learned that Estrild had entered the cave with Daniel; but they fancied she must long since have left it, yet they were come in a sort of forlorn hope to search for her.

"Prior, are you sure she is there?" Pleasance said, with white

lips.

A shout from below answered her. It was a cry for help. One of the men descended the ladder, and as he disappeared all hearts went with him, and breath was held on parted lips.

Save for the dull roar of the pent-up waves, which, like the horrible journey of an earthquake, sent the roll of their power upwards through the trembling ground, not a sound broke the quivering silence of heart and lip.

Another moment or two of terrible suspense, and then, drenched and pale, Tom's face and figure appeared above the brink. He did not speak, but throwing himself prone on the



rocks, he stretched his arms downwards and grasped a hand that needed help. One instant more and Harold, bearing Estrild in his arms, rose from the depth and din, and stood safe beneath the free sky. The figure he bore looked so pale, so lifeless, so forlorn that no one dared to speak; a dreadful thought choked utterance.

"Do not fear!" Harold said, smoothing the long wet hair back from Estrild's forehead. "She is only faint. I found her singing a little hymn learnt in her childhood; I might never have found her but for that. Her dear voice reached me as I fought through the water. Oh, she has had courage! It was only when I held her—when she felt my arms around her—that she fainted.

He held her closely, he bent his face to hers and kissed her. A long tress of her hair swept tears away that, man as he was, trembled on his eyelids.

As his kiss fell on her white cheek the men's hearts swelled, and a cheer broke from their lips that rang down the ravine and startled the stillness of the two watchers by the dead.

CHAPTER LV.

There is no sunshine without shadow, and the shadow that fell on Harold was the thought of Mary Armstrong. Sending men on before him to the gorge, he waited only to see Estrild tended carefully by her cousin and Carrie, and then he hurried back to the ravine to rejoin Doctor Arnold. He could think of Cumberland with pitying wonder, with bewildered curiosity, and with the hope that, freed from the strange and dreadful power that had so cruelly held and influenced him, he and Mary might yet be happy.

On his way he met the bearers carrying Mr. Irrian to Langarth. He stopped an instant to look down upon his face. A solemn awe filled his soul as he looked; a sense of the inexplicable mystery which linked this man with the house whither strangers' hand were now taking him darkened his mind with thoughts of the dreadful unseen powers which environ us, and at times can seize possession of our faculties, and cause us to work their will, and not our own. Was he indeed haunted; and was

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Harold glanced from the pale face of the dead to the starstudded sky above him, and felt that, as in the vast expanse of the great universe there were transcended truths beyond his ken, so on this earth, within the radius, of the limited human vision, there lay mysteries which the mind could not unravel. Was Mr. Irrian at peace? The expression of his face had greatly changed; it was calm and beautiful.

Harold waved silently to the man to go on with their burden, while with a sigh of relief he continued his hurried walk to the ravine. He entered it by an easy descent on the side farthest from the sea, and at an abrupt turn was met suddenly by Doctor

Arnold

"I have come to meet you," he said, "to give you a word of warning. I have partially restored young I: "In from the hypnotic state, and I must tell you that when he has completely recovered he will know nothing of what occurred to him during that state."

"Is that possible?" asked Harold.

"It is a fact well known to medical men and to others who have witnessed such cases. A person hypnotised may be said to possess two individualities, in which are often developed very opposite characters and faculties; and one individual is totally unconscious of the acts and feelings of the other."

"So you mean that when restored to himself young Irrian will be ignorant of all that has happened since the terrible hand was passed over him? He will not be aware even of his father's

-death ?"

"He will be totally unconscious of it; his mind will be a blank with regard to all the period of time since he quitted Trame; he will take up his life from the evening you last saw him there. You perceive in this my reason for warning you. I feared you might express surprise and argue with him; I feared you might speak of his father's death too abruptly. It must be broken to him gently; we must be very careful—his nerves are highly strung."

"I leave it all to you, Arnold. But I must say one word for myself. I cannot rid my own nerves of the repulsion and horror



that I feel. Innocent or guilty, this young man would have caused Estrild's death—a slow torturing death—but for the Providence that took his father's life and thus saved hers. I believe that by his hand Tristram died. I cannot ask Estrild to meet him—I cannot let her invite him to her house, although his father lies there; he must go to the inn."

"He shall go to his yacht to-morrow; I shall send him for a

long sea-voyage."

They had walked on in talking, and came close now upon the lonely figure of young Irrian. He stood with his elbow leaning on a rock and the moonlight falling on his blond head, his fair youthful face. There was something inexpressibly forlorn in his aspect—something so touching, so worthy of pity in the thought that, gay, young, happy as he would be, his hand had been used to deal death, to make desolate the lives of others, and to wreck his own should the veil ever be lifted that hid these things from him, that, as he gazed on him, Harold's resentment fell. Compassion took its place, and he stood silent while Doctor Arnold bent ever the young passive figure, smoothing his forehead often with soothing hand. Suddenly he brushed away the touch impatiently, saying, in his old gay voice—

"What are you doing, Doctor? I believe you have been putting me to sleep. I feel as though I had slept long and had been walking in a dream. Yes, I surely have! What am I doing here? What trick have you two been playing on me? Olver, is this your mystification?" He gazed around him in a bewildered way, and passed his hands across his still half-dazed eyes. "This is the strangest, wildest place I ever saw. It is like an Indian pass. I did not know there was such a place near Trame. In what direction does Trame lies! I am not well;

I must get home."

"Trame is a long way off, Cumberland," said Harold, address-

ing him by the old best-known name.

"Yes, yes; I am always 'Cumberland' to you. But you have not answered me. How did I get here to this outlandish place? It is night. Have I been walking in my sleep, and have you two followed me?"

"Yes, you have been sleeping," said Doctor Arnold, putting his fingers on his wrist, "and you are only half awake now, and your pulse is high. You must come with me and go to rest."

"No, no!" returned Cumberland, wrenching his wrist from

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the Doctor's grasp, and his face flushed suddenly. "I must—I will know first what has happened. Only an hour ago I wished you good night at Trame, and now I am here, and I see you here, and with faces sad as death. You are treating me as if I were a child. Do you think I cannot bear ill news like a man?" He turned in speaking, and saw the sea; a change came over his face—it grew pale to ghastliness. "I am not near Trame," he said; "and I knew now what has happened. Some one is dead!"

"You are right, Cumberland," returned Harold, in deep pity.
'A sad death has occurred here, close by us through an accident....."

"Stay!" cried Cumberland, shuddering. "Do not tell me—do not explain—I cannot bear it! There is a cloud of horror on brain, and I see and feel things too dimly to understand them." He looked down on his hands, and then suddenly dashed his right hand cruelly against a rock, making blood stream from the bruised flesh. "Such things—such cruel things hands can do!" he said in a low voice. "Was I not right in India in striving to die? Olver, we are haunted—we Irrians—a fiend possesses us at times."

"I wish you would tell me where we are!" he said irritably. "I have a dim memory of the bay. Yes, I was here in the Alert three years ago." He spoke very slowly, his voice trembled and fell, his face grew wan as a man's in deadly sickness. "And you told me there was an accident, and some one dead," he continued. "Well, I can bear to hear it now, for it will never happen again—never! Good-bye, Olver! You and I were friends once—that was in India long ago. You will not save my life again," he added, holding out his hand with a wistful smile.

Harold could not refuse the outstretched hand; he wrung it and turned away sorrowfully.

"Tell him now - it is best to tell him that it is his father who has perished," Harold said in a low voice to Doctor Arnold, as





the latter accompanied him a few steps down the gorge. "And, when you have broken the truth to him, take him down quietly to the village inn."

"I will do so at once," returned the Doctor; "but I cannot follow your other advice. I will, if possible, give him a night's rest first. In his present state I dread the result of such news."

"You must act according to your own judgment," Harold answered; "but I confess mine does not agree with yours. I

believe the result would be good."

They parted with this, and, as Harold returned to Langarth, he felt more and more assured that he was right. His experience with Cumberland in India gave him an uneasy feeling of foreboding. He could not forget how the dim memory of the past, groping beneath the shadow of some haunting horror, had made him seek passionately for death. But later on in that eventful night he felt relieved when a note reached him from Doctor Arnold, saying that his patient was sleeping tranqilly, and he should remain at the inn to watch him. He added that he was writing to Mary to apprise her of Mr. Irrian's death, and to entreat her to join them at once.

"If Mary comes, all will be well with Cumberland," Harold

said hopefully.

But the morning brought strange news. Cumberland was missing! He had fled while Doctor Arnord, reassured by his apparent calm, had snatched an hour's sleep. The country was scoured and searched in vain, and at last only one hope was left. The yacht in the bay had disappeared. Was it not possible that by some means the unhappy son of Mr. Irrian had reached her, and had set sail in the darkness, fleeing from the hand that had touched his brain?

Yet even upon this hope a dread shadow fell. On the morning of the second day of suspense Daniel returned from his seacruise, having intercepted the Curlew and changed her destination to another port, and he had a strange story to tell. He had landed in a lonely bay, and here he met Michael, who had come thus far in his search for carts and horses. They walked home together, choosing a solitary wild cliff path. Here, at the sudden angle in the narrow precipitious road, they came upon a group of men, with hair and clothes dripping wet, standing motionless, and looking out to sea. They—Daniel and Michael—waited a moment, thinking the men would move to let them

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pass, but they neither turned nor stirred. And just at the instant when Daniel was stepping forward to ask them to make way, there rose a voice from the sea, hailing the men by their names. As each man answered, he seemed to fade away over the cliff and sink into the darkness, where the surge sounded and the breakers fell. Then Michael and Daniel sank upon their knees, for they knew they were hearing the "the calling of the dead," and the drowned sailors were answering to their names.

"Leonard Irrian!" cried the voice, coming softly to the ear

like the fall of a spent wave.

"Here, father!" was the answer; and a fair young face flitted

by and vanished beyond the cliff.

There was only one name more, and, as it was called out, and the drowned man turned one look inland ere he faded into the sea, Michael fell upon his face, clutching Daniel by the hand. When he rose, he was trembling from head to foot. He strove to speak, but his voice was gone, and many seconds passed ere he could utter a word.

"Uncle, I saw that last man in the schooner-yacht at Langarth. He is the one that gave me ill words when he ordered me to keep off. Till I saw him I thought we were in a dream like, or maybe 'twas some trick of the sea and the mist. Now I know better, and I shall never be the same man again."

"You'll be a wiser one, my son," returned Daniel, in an awed voice. "This is not the first time such things have come to me. That ship is wrecked, and all hands have perished. Let us press onwards."

The place where the men had stood was empty, all the path was bare; not a sound broke the night-stillness save the fall of the waves on the sands, as, whispering of death and the life to come, the two men went on their way. Upon the sea nothing was visible except the pale gleam of the moon and the phosphorescent flash of light that followed the roll of the surf.

This was the story Daniel brough to Langarth.

Doctor Arnold, who believed in all wonders and all miracles that were rooted in science, had no faith in any outside his creed, not thinking that these also might belong to the mighty realm of truth, though just beyond the circle his ken had reached. Yet the story oppressed his heart as it did the others', and they all redoubled their efforts to find Leonard Irrian till Mary came; and then, at her sorrowful desire, they desisted,





"If he be living, he will come to me," she said; and in this

hope they rested.

On Mr. Irrian's will been opened, it was found he had made provision for the disappearance of his son; in this case or in case of his death, all he possessed was left to Mary. He seemed also to have had a prescience of the manner of his death, for he desired that when he died, there he might be buried; then followed the strange request that, if his death took place at Langarth, he should be laid, if possible, in the grave of the Cruader—his ancestor who had died in the darkness, chains, and anguish of a Langarth dungeon.

This request startled Estrild greatly, as did also the assertion that the Irrians were descended from the same stock as herself. Then Mary told her the traditions preserved at Trame, and, piecing these with the story filtering through the centuries at Langarth, they grew together into a history of cruelty, wrong,

and wrath.

Dividing the abysmal past from all its surge and froth, it appeared that the prisoner of tradition, before joining the Crusades, had been with the king in the North fighting the Scotch. Here he had loved a girl of the yoeman class, and, hiding his real rank, wedded her under the name of Irrian, or, "Wanderer," and had departed for the Holy War without divulging the secret of his marriage. Years passed; news from Palestine was scant; but pilgrims returning reported him dead, and his brother held his lands. Suddenly, alone and at night, the Crusader arrived at Langarth, claiming his home, and told the story of his marriage and that he had a son.

This sealed his fate. The usurper might have born his return, but could not endure the prospect of his own children being dispossessed of home and lands, and thrust into poverty without hope of inheritance. The Wanderer had ridden alone to Langarth; none knew of his coming; he was flung in a dungeon secretly, and the story of his wrongs, his sufferings, and his death floated in the air around Langarth with whispers of the vengence he had threatened and fortold. From the sea-coast, through days and nights of weariness, he had taken horse from post to post, and, looking for love, had ridden alone to Langarth to find cruelty, suffering, and death. Well, again and again for ever he would take that lonely ride to Langarth and bring death with him.

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It was said that his daily pittance of bread was placed outside a small grating in his dungeon wall, and he passed his hand through this to reach it. Year by year the goaler saw this hand grow thinner and whiter, till it seemed the hand of a dead man. And, when the prisoner died, it was he who whispered of the dread oath he had heard him utter—that the starved hand, which had suffered such cruelties and had thrust itself through a grating to beg for bread, should fall in vengence on his brother and his house.

In mockery of this oath and the curse that was spoken with it, the hand, it is said, was cut off from his corpse and sent to the disowned wife and heir. She never claimed his name or her son's inheritance—for the days were those when might was right; but, whenever an Irrian and a Carbonellis met, the latter died. In the Wars of the Roses, when English met English in battle, the pale hand guided the arrow that flew or the spear that was hurled at a Carbonellis breast.

When quieter days arose, and the old yoeman-house of Trame had grown to be a mansion endowed with wealth and lands, the Irrians still were wanderers. Again and again father and son disappeared on unknown journeys, to return haggard and worn and silent, unable to speak of the pilgrimage. But it shadowed their lives with a strange and secret woe, felt, not uttered; and the sons grew up in dread of their father's hand, and fled from it often to foreign lands.

Thus the curse—as all curses do—struck the greatest blow on its own home, and, though it wreaked death on others, it wrought

madness in its own blood.

"And the hand of the Crusader is said to haunt Trame; and when it appears," said Mary, "the master of Trame grows restless; and neither locked doors nor barred windows can stay him from his strange wanderings. An awful change came over his mind."

She stopped, and held up her clasped hands passionately.

"Oh, how can I tell you—how explain the difference between the real, the good, the true Mr. Irrian, and the haunted man who feels, or imagines he feels, the influence of a ghostly hand?"

"I understand it," said the Doctor; it is hypnotism, a strange state of trance or walking sleep which occurs oftener among excitable Southern races than among the English. I have seen cases in France which have defied all medical skill to expound; there are mysteries, my dear, in this human frame of ours which, dissect and pull them to pieces as we may, we cannot discover. It is where spirit and flesh join that we doctors are baffled. If I dare go back so far, I would say, Some young mother of the Irrian race was shown that dead hand and told of its curse, and her child when born had the fear and power of the hand in its Now, passing all this traditionary lore, let us get at some shred of truth. To obey Mr. Irrian's request, we must make a search which will prove at least that a man died and was buried."

But in this matter tradition was the only clue to go by, and tradition said that "without bell or book" the prisoner was buried at dead of night beneath the floor of his dungeon. stones of the old disused forgotten place of horror were removed, and beneath was found a human skeleton-proof that under the black shade of its damp vaulted roof some living man had agonised and died. There he lay, compassed murkily about with the the twisted tangle of legend and of fear that the centuries had wound about him; and from out the murkiness could be dragged only these bleached bones.

From such a poor, sad, helpless heap as this was it possible such a history of sorrow, death, and vengeance could arise? It seemed so, for, though the flesh dies, the spirit lives.

With a doctor's eye and surgeon's touch Doctor Arnold handled

and looked at these poor remnants.

"It is odd," he said; "but the right hand is certainly missing." They all retraced their steps up the dark winding stairs and through the maze of old dark passages, contrived for sin, into the living sunshine and the day; then Estrild turned to Harold with a sigh of relief, and both felt life was very fair, and light was lovely, and God's earth very good.

"He was shut out from all these," Estrild said softly; "and we realize now the cruelty of it, and guess dimly at the suffering. But surely now he will be at rest, for the prophecy written on his portrait is fulfilled to the letter!" Then she repeated the lines known at Trame, which Mary had given to Gilbert. "If you had not risked your life in that dreadful leap," continued Estrild, clinging closer to her lover's arm, "I must have diedthe water was very near."

They had strolled into the garden and were alone, and Harold's answer was pressed upon her lips,

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"Poor Mary," he said pityingly—"she is sorely tried! I trust Cumberland will return to her soon."

"Harold, I fear he never will. A thought is haunting me, and I must tell it to you. When we were in the cavern, he certainly heard Daniel speak of the great rifts in the rocks beneath the pool. 'A man lost there,' he said, 'would never be found.' Harold, I fear he remembered it, and he is there."

"Do not say so to Mary. When she is gone we will have the

pools dragged."

Mary stayed on till inquest and funeral was over. When Mr. Irrian was laid in his last rest, she bade them all good-bye—hopefully, for Leonard, she said, would surely return to her.

Daniel's story had not impressed her as it had the others; she had heard he was a man who saw such sights, and was a dreamer of dreams; such men believed in visions created by mists and

darkness and the fancies of a quick brain.

No; Leonard was living, and, now that the curse had ceased, she would yet soothe him back to happiness. In this hope she bade Langarth farewell, and saw its shores and its wide bay no more.

There was a great crowd at Mr. Irrian's funeral, for it was whispered among the people that he was the Black Rider; and, as, in the sweet Cornish way, they sang as he was borne to the grave, a hymn was chanted softly also for that other who was laid at last in holy ground.

Doctor Arnold went away with Mary. His heart was very sore for her and for himself; for he felt he was at fault as a physician. He should have told Leonard, when he half awaked him from that strange trance, of his father's death, that the shadow under which he lived might have been lifted. Now, in the dread of it perhaps, he had chosen death rather than life.

Harold and Estrild had the pool searched and dragged, but without avail; though, as Daniel justly said, this proved little, for fifty drowned men might lie jammed within the rents and rifts of the rocks, and never be dragged forth by mortal hands.

"I believe he is there," Daniel said, "though he chose to stand among the drowned crew on the cliff, when the great voice called the dead; even then the old fear was on him, and he fancied it was his father's voice."

Far and near at every port inquiries were made for the schooner-yacht, but she was never seen—never heard of again.

Yet in Estrild's and in Harold's minds there ever lurked a hope that Leonard Irrian was living, for Mary sold Trame and all its lands, and sailed away beyond the seas, and in her far-off unknown home they loved to think she was not alone.

Carrie and Tom were married at Langarth church with great rejoicing, and Mr. Vicat came down to the wedding. It was then she told them that she had again seen the ghost of the Crusader, and his visit had scared her greatly and caused her illness.

"He was so sad," she said, "and had warned her that sorrow was approaching; and he believed she would see his face no more."

This visit of Mr. Irrian's accounted now to Harold for Mr Vicat's queer remark respecting undertakers, and their non-existence in the East in olden times.

Carrie was a good daughter, and Tom, unlike the husband of many daughters, was a kind son to his wife's mother. When Mr. Vicat died, she lived with then, and her old age has rest and comfort.

Daniel was made Captain of the Venture, and Michael was his first mate. She proved a lucky venture, for she was never without a good freight. So the ship that was to have caused Estrild's death brought her wealth, and reimbursed her for Mr. Vicat's reckless waste of her fortune.

Is there anything more to tell? The history of Estrild's marriage may be briefly passed over. How the people feasted and the bells were rung, Daniel and Michael and Joe—happiest of sailors home on leave—and all the crew of the Venture coming to the church in best sailor-rig, and sending forth, when the bride and the bridegroom came forth man and wife, three ringing cheers over the sea and up the sky such as only British tars can give!

THE END.