



FLAG OF
DISTRESS





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THE
FLAG OF DISTRESS:

A TALE OF THE SOUTH SEA.

BY

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SEMINOLE CHIEF," "AFLOAT IN THE FOREST," "THE GIRAFFE
HUNTERS," "THE DESERT HOME," ETC.

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MESSRS. FIELDS, OSBORN, & Co.:—

I accept the terms offered, and hereby concede to you the exclusive right of publication, in the United States, of all my juvenile Tales of Adventure, known as Boys' Novels.

MAYNE REID.

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THE FLAG OF DISTRESS.

A STORY OF THE SOUTH SEA.

CHAPTER I.

A CHASE.

IN mid-ocean, — the Pacific. Two ships are within sight of one another, less than a league apart. Both are sailing before the wind, running dead down it, with full canvas spread; not side by side, but one in the wake of the other.

Is it a chase? To all appearance it is; a probability strengthened by the relative size and character of the ships. One is a bark, polacca-masted, her masts raking back with the acute shark's-fin set supposed to be characteristic of the pirate. The other is a ship, square rigged and full sized; a row of real, not painted ports, with a gun grinning out of each, proclaiming her a man-of-war. She is one, — a frigate, as any seaman would say, after giving her a glance. And any landsman might name her nationality. The flag at her peak is one known all over the world: it is the "Union Jack" of England.

If it be a chase, she is the pursuer. Her colors

might be accepted as surety of this, without regard to the relative position of the vessels, which show the frigate astern, the polacca leading.

The latter also carries a flag, of nationality not so easily determined. Still is it the ensign of a naval power, though one of little note. The five-pointed white star, solitary in a blue field, proclaims it the standard of Chili.

Why should an English frigate be chasing a Chilian bark? There is no war between Great Britain and Chili, the most prosperous of the South American republics; instead, peace-treaties, with relations of the most amicable kind. Were the polacca flying a flag of blood-red or black, with death's-head and cross-bones, the chase would be intelligible. But the bit of bunting at her masthead shows nothing on its field, either of menace or defiance. On the contrary, it appeals to pity, and asks for aid; for it is an ensign reversed, — in short, a *signal of distress*.

And yet the ship showing it is scudding before a stiff breeze, with all sail set, stays taut, not a rope out of place! Strange this. Just the thought of every one aboard the man-of-war, from the captain commanding to the latest joined “lubber of a landsman,” — a thought that has been in their minds ever since the chase commenced.

For it *is* a chase; that is, the frigate has sighted a sail, and stood towards it. This without changing course, as, when first espied, the stranger, like herself, was running before the wind. If slowly, the frigate has been gradually forging nearer the pursued vessel; till at length the telescope tells her to be a bark, revealing, also, the ensign reversed.

Nothing strange in this, of itself — unfortunately, a

sight too common at sea. But that a vessel displaying signals of distress should be carrying all sail, and running away, or attempting to run away, from another making to relieve her, above all, from a ship bearing the British flag, — this *is* strange. And just thus has the polacca been acting, still is, — sailing on down the wind, without slacking halyards, or lessening her spread of canvas by a single inch. Certainly her behavior is unaccountable; more than strange: it is mysterious.

To this conclusion have they come on board the warship, and naturally enough; for there is that which has imbued their thoughts with a tinge of superstition. In addition to what they see, they have something heard. Within the week they have spoken two vessels, both of which reported this same bark, or one answering her description, — “Polacca-masted, all sail set, ensign reversed.”

A British brig, which the frigate’s boat had boarded, said that such a craft had run across her bows so close, they could have thrown a rope to her; that at first no one was seen aboard, but, on being hailed, two men made appearance, both springing up to the main shrouds, thence answering the hail in a language altogether unintelligible, and with hoarse croaking voices that resembled the barking of muzzled mastiffs.

It was late twilight, almost night, when this occurred; but the brig’s people could make out the figures of the men as they clung on to the ratlines. And what surprised them equally with the odd speech, was, that both appeared to be clothed in skin-dresses, covering their bodies from head to foot. Seeing the signal of distress, the brig would have sent her boat aboard; but the bark gave no chance for this, keeping

on without slacking sail, or showing any other sign of a wish to communicate.

Standing by itself, the tale of the brig's crew might have been taken for a sailor's yarn; and, as they admitted it to be "almost night," the obscurity would account for the skin-clothing. But coupled with the report of another vessel, which the frigate had since spoken, — a whaler, — it seemed to receive full corroboration. The words sent through the whaler's trumpet were, "Bark sighted: latitude 10.22 S.; longitude 95 W. Polacca-masted. All sail set. Ensign reversed. Chilian. Men seen on board covered with red hair, supposed skin-dresses. Tried to come up, but could not. Bark a fast sailer. Went away down wind."

Already in receipt of such intelligence, it is no wonder that the frigate's crew feel something more than mere surprise at sight of a vessel corresponding to that about which these strange tales have been told. For they are now near enough the bark to see that she answers the description given: "Polacca-masted. All sail set. Ensign reversed. Chilian."

And her behavior is as reported, — sailing away from those who wish to answer her appealing signal, to all appearance endeavoring to shun them. Only now has the chase in reality commenced. Hitherto the frigate was but keeping her own course. But the signal of distress, just sighted through the telescope, has drawn her on; and, with canvas crowded, she steers straight for the polacca. The latter is unquestionably a fast sailer; but, although too swift for the whaler, she is not a match for the man-of-war. Still she is no tub; and the chase is likely to be a long one.

As it continues, and the distance does not appear very much, or very rapidly, diminishing, the frigate's

crew begin to doubt whether the strange craft will ever be overtaken. On the foredeck the tars stand in groups, mingled with marines, their eyes bent upon the retreating bark, pronouncing their comments in muttered tones, many of the men with brows o'ercast; for a fancy has sprung up around the fore-castle, that the chased ship is no ship at all, but a phantom. This fancy is gradually growing into a belief; faster as they draw nearer, and with naked eye note her correspondence with the reports of the spoken vessels.

They have not yet seen the skin-clad men — if men they be. More like, imagine some, they will prove to be spectres.

While on the quarter-deck there is no such superstitious fancy: a feeling almost as intense agitates the minds of those there assembled. The captain, surrounded by his officers, stands, glass in hand, gazing at the sail ahead. The frigate, though a fine vessel, is not one of the fastest sailers; else she might long ago have lapped upon the polacca. Still has she been gradually gaining, and is now less than a league astern. But the breeze has been also gradually declining, which is against her; and for the last half-hour she has barely preserved her distance from the bark.

To compensate for this, she runs out studding-sails on all her yards, even to the royals, and again makes an effort to bring the chase to a termination. But again is there disappointment.

“To no purpose, now,” says her commander, as he sees his last sail set. Then adding, as he casts a glance at the sky, sternwards, “The wind’s going down. In ten minutes more we’ll be becalmed.”

Those around need not to be told this. The youngest reefer there, looking at sky and sea, can forecast ‘he calm.

In five minutes after, the frigate's sails are flapping against the masts, and her flag hangs half folded.

In five more, the sails only show motion by an occasional clout; while the bunting droops dead downward.

Within the ten, ^{as} her captain predicted, the huge war-ship, despite her extended canvas, lies motionless on the sea.



CHAPTER

A CALL FOR BOARDERS.

THE frigate is becalmed: what of the bark? Has she been similarly checked in her course? The question is asked by all on board the war-ship, each seeking the answer for himself; for all are earnestly gazing at the strange sail, regardless of their own condition.

Forward, the superstitious thought has become intensified into something like fear. A calm coming on so suddenly, just when they had hopes of soon overhauling the chased vessel — what could that mean? Old sailors shake their heads, refusing to make answer; while young ones, less cautious of speech, boldly pronounce the polacca a spectre. The legends of the Phantom Ship and Flying Dutchman are in their thoughts and on their lips, as they stand straining their eyes after the still receding vessel; for beyond doubt does she sail on with waves rippling around her.

“As I told ye, mates!” remarks an old tar: “we’d never catch up with that craft — not if we stood after her till doomsday. And doomsday it might be for us, if we did.”

“I hope she’ll keep on, and leave us a good spell behind,” rejoins a second. “It was a foolish thing followin’ her; and, for my part, I’ll be glad if we never do catch up with her.”

“You need have no fear about that,” says the first

speaker. "Just look! She's making way yet! I believe she can sail as well without wind as with it."

Scarce are the words spoken, when, as if to contradict them, the sails of the chased vessel commence clouting against her masts; while her flag falls folded, and is no longer distinguishable as a signal of distress, or aught else. The breeze that failed the frigate is now also dead around the bark, which, in like manner, has been caught in the calm.

"What do you make her out, Mr. Black?" asks the frigate's captain of his first, as the two stand looking through their levelled glasses.

"Not any thing, sir," replies the lieutenant, "except that she should be Chilian from her colors. I can't see a soul aboard of her. Ah, yonder! Something shows over the taffrail! Looks like a man's head? It's ducked suddenly."

A short silence succeeds, the commanding officer busied with his binocular, endeavoring to catch sight of the thing seen by his subordinate. It does not show again.

"Odd," says the captain, resuming speech, "a ship running up signals of distress, at the same time refusing to be relieved — very odd! Isn't it, gentlemen?" He asks, addressing himself to the group of officers now gathered around.

Unanimous assent to his interrogatory.

"There must be something amiss," he continues. "Can any of you think what it is?"

To this there is a negative response. Lieutenants and midshipmen seem all as puzzled as himself, mystified by the strange bark, and more by her strange behavior.

There are two who have thoughts different from the

rest, — the third lieutenant, and one of the midshipmen, — less thoughts than imaginings, and these so vague, that neither communicates them to the captain, nor to one another. And, whatever their fancies, they do not appear pleasant ones, since on the faces of both is an expression of something like anxiety. Slight, and scarcely observable, it is not noticed by their comrades standing around. It seems to deepen while they continue to gaze at the becalmed bark, as though due to something seen there. Still they remain silent, keeping the dark thought, if such it be, to themselves.

“Well, gentlemen,” says the commanding officer to his assembled subordinates, “I must say this *is* singular. In all my experience at sea, I don’t remember any thing like it. What trick the Chilian bark — if she be Chilian — is up to, I can’t guess, not for the life of me. It cannot be a case of piracy. The craft has no guns; and, if she had, she appears without men to handle them. It’s a riddle all round: to get the reading of it, we’ll have to send a boat to her.”

“I don’t think we’ll get a very willing crew, sir,” says the first lieutenant suggestively. “Forward, they’re quite superstitious about the character of the chase. Some of them fancy her the Flying Dutchman. When the boatswain pipes for boarders, they’ll very likely feel as if his whistle were a signal for them to walk the plank.”

The remark causes the captain to smile, as the other officers; though two of the latter abstain from this exhibition of merriment. These are the third lieutenant and midshipman, — already mentioned, — on both of whose brows the cloud still sits, seeming darker than ever.

“Isn’t it strange,” continues the commander mus-

ingly, "that your genuine British tar, who will board an enemy's ship, crawling across the muzzle of a shotted gun; who has no fear of death in human shape — will act like a scared child when it threatens him in the guise of his satanic majesty? I have no doubt, as you say, Mr. Black, that those fellows by the fore-castle are a bit shy about boarding this strange vessel. But let me show you how to send their shyness adrift. I shall do that with a single word."

The captain steps forward, his subordinates following him. When within speaking-distance of the foredeck, he stops, and makes sign that he has something to say. The tars are all attention.

"My lads!" he exclaims, "you see that bark we've been chasing, and at her masthead a flag reversed, which you know to be a signal of distress? That is a call never to be disregarded by an English ship, much less an English man-of-war. Lieutenant, order a boat to be lowered, and let the boatswain pipe for boarders. Only volunteers will be taken. Those who wish to go will muster on the main-deck."

A loud "hurrah!" responds to the appeal; and, while its echoes are still resounding through the ship, the whole crew seems crowding towards the main-deck. Scores of volunteers present themselves, enough to man every boat aboard.

"Now, gentlemen," says the captain, turning to his officers with a proud expression on his countenance, "there's the British sailor for you! I've said he fears not man; and when humanity makes call, as you see, neither is he frightened at a fancied ghost."

A second cheer succeeds the speech, mingled with good-humored remarks, though not any loud laughter. The sailors simply acknowledge the compliment their

commanding officer has paid them, at the same time feeling that the moment is too solemn for merriment; for their instinct of humanity is yet under control of the weird feeling. As the captain turns aft to the quarter, many of them fall away toward the fore-deck, till the group of volunteers for boarding has got greatly diminished. Still are there enough to man the largest boat in the ship.

“What boat is it to be, sir?”

This question is asked by the first lieutenant, as he follows the captain aft.

“The cutter,” answers his superior, adding, “I think, Mr. Black, there’s no necessity for sending any other. The cutter’s crew will be sufficient. As to any hostility from those on board the stranger, that is absurd. We could blow them out of the water with a single broadside.”

“Who’s to command the cutter, sir?”

The captain reflects, with a look sent inquiringly around. His eye falls upon the third lieutenant, who stands near, seemingly courting the glance. It is short and decisive. The captain knows his third officer to be a thorough seaman; though young, capable of any duty, however delicate or dangerous. Without further hesitation, he assigns him to the command of the boarders.

The young officer enters upon the service with alacrity, — something more than the mere obedience due to discipline. He hastens to the ship’s side to superintend the lowering of the boat. He does not stand at rest, but is seen to help and hurry it, with a look of anxious impatience in his eye, and the cloud still observable on his brow. While thus occupied, he is accosted by another officer, one yet younger than himself, — the midshipman already mentioned.

“Can I go with you?” the latter asks.

“Certainly, my dear fellow,” responds the lieutenant in friendly familiar tone. “I shall be only too pleased to have you. But you must get the captain’s consent.”

The young officer glides aft, sees the frigate’s commander upon the quarter-deck, and, saluting, says, “Captain, may I go with the cutter?”

“Well, yes,” responds the chief. “I have no objection.” Then, after taking a survey of the youngster, he adds, “Why do you want it?”

The youth blushes, without replying. There is a cast upon his countenance that strikes the questioner, somewhat puzzling him. But there is no time either for further inquiry or reflection. The cutter is already lowered, and rests upon the water. Her crew is crowding into her; and she will soon be shoved off from the ship.

“You can go, lad,” assents the captain. “Report yourself to the third lieutenant, and tell him I’ve given you leave. You’re young, and, like all youngsters, ambitious of gaining glory. Well, in this affair you won’t have much chance, I take it. It’s simply boarding a ship in distress, where you’ll be more likely to be a spectator of scenes of suffering. However, that will be a lesson for you, and therefore you may go.”

Thus authorized, the young reefer glides away from the quarter-deck, drops down into the boat, and takes his seat alongside the lieutenant, already there.

The two ships still lie becalmed, in the same relative position to one another, having changed from it scarce a cable’s length, and stem to stern, just as the last breath of the breeze, blown gently against their sails, forsook them.

On both the canvas is still spread, though not bellied. It hangs limp and loose, giving an occasional flap, so feeble as to show that it proceeds, not from any stir in the air, but the mere balancing motion of the vessels; for there is now not enough breeze blowing to flout the long feathers in the tail of the tropic bird seen soaring aloft.

Both ships are motionless, their forms reflected in the water, so that each has its counterpart, keel to keel.

Between them, the sea is smooth as a mirror, — that tranquil calm which has given to the Pacific its distinctive appellation. It is now to be disturbed, furrowed by the bow of the cutter, with her stroke of ten oars, five on each side. Almost as soon as down from the davits, her crew seated on the thwarts, and her cockswain at the tiller, the lieutenant gives the command to “shove off.” Parting from the frigate’s beam, the boat is steered straight for the becalmed bark.

On board the man-of-war, all stand watching her, their eyes at intervals directed towards the strange vessel. From the frigate’s forward-deck, the men have an unobstructed view, especially those clustering around the head. Still there is nearly a league between; and with the naked eye this hinders minute observation. They can but see the white-spread sails, and the black hull underneath them. With a glass, the flag, now fallen, is just distinguishable from the mast, along which it clings closely. They can perceive that its color is crimson above, with blue and white underneath, — the reversed order of the Chilian ensign. Its single star is no longer visible, nor aught of its heraldry, that spoke so appealingly. But, if the sight fails

to furnish them with details, these are amply supplied by their excited imaginations. Some of them see men aboard the bark — scores, hundreds! After all, she may be a pirate, and the upside-down ensign a decoy. On a tack, she may be a swifter sailer than she has shown herself before the wind, and, knowing this, has been but playing with the frigate. If so, God help the cutter's crew!

Besides these conjectures of the common kind, there are those on the frigate's fore-deck, who, in truth, fancy the polacca a spectre. As they continue gazing, now at the boat, now at the bark, they expect every moment to see the one sink beneath the sea, and the other sail off, or melt into invisible air.

On the quarter, speculation is equally rife, though running in a different channel. There the captain still stands surrounded by his officers, each with glass to his eye, levelled upon the strange craft. But they see nought to give them a clew to her character; only the loose-spread sails, and the furled flag of distress. They continue gazing till the cutter is close to the bark's beam. Nor yet can they observe any head above the bulwarks, or face peering through the shrouds. The fancy of the fore-castle has crept aft among the officers. They, too, begin to feel something of superstitious fear, an awe of the uncanny.



CHAPTER III.

THE CUTTER'S CREW.

MANNED by ten stout tars, with as many oars propelling her, the cutter cleaves the water like a knife. The lieutenant, seated in the stern-sheets, with the mid by his side, directs the movements of the boat; while the glances of both are kept constantly upon the bark. In their eyes is an earnest expression, quite different from that of ordinary interrogation.

The men may not observe it: if they do, it is without comprehension of its meaning. They can but think of it as resembling their own, and proceeding from a like cause. For, although with backs turned towards the bark, they cast occasional glances over their shoulders, in which curiosity is commingled with apprehension.

Despite their natural courage, strengthened by the late appeal to their humanity, the awe is again upon them. Insidiously returning as they took their seats in the boat, it increases as they row farther from the ship, and nearer to the strange vessel. Less than half an hour has elapsed, and they are within a cable's length of the latter.

“Hold, now!” commands the lieutenant

The oar-stroke is instantly suspended, and the blades held aloft. The boat gradually loses way, and at length rests stationary on the tranquil water.

All eyes are bent upon the bark. Glances go search-

ingly along her bulwarks, from poop to prow. No preparations to receive them! No one appears on deck, — not a head seen over the rail!

“Bark, ahoy!” hails the lieutenant.

“Bark, ahoy!” is heard in fainter tone. It is no answer; only the echo of the officer’s voice, coming back from the hollow timbers of the becalmed vessel. There is again silence, more profound than ever; for the sailors in the boat have ceased talking, their awe, now intense, holding them speechless.

“Bark, ahoy!” again shouts the lieutenant, louder than before, but with like result. As before, he is only answered by echo. There is either nobody aboard, or no one who thinks it worth while to make rejoinder. The first supposition seems absurd, looking at the sail; the second, equally so, regarding the flag at the main royal masthead, and taking into account its character. A third hail from the officer, this time vociferated in loudest voice, with the interrogatory added, “Any one aboard?”

To the question no reply, any more than to the hail. Silence continues, — stillness intense, awe-inspiring. They in the boat begin to doubt the evidence of their senses. Is there a bark before their eyes? Or is it all an illusion? How can a vessel be under sail — full sail — without sailors? And, if any, why do they not show at her side? Why have they not answered the hail thrice shouted, the last time loud enough to be heard within her hold? It should have awakened her crew, even if asleep in the fore-castle.

“Give way again!” cries the lieutenant. “Bring up on the starboard side, cockswain, under the fore-chains.”

The oars are dipped, and the cutter moves on. But

scarce is she in motion, when once more the officer commands, "Hold!"

With his voice mingle others, coming from the bark. Her people seem at length to have become aroused from their sleep; or stupor. A noise is heard upon her deck, as of a scuffle, accompanied by cries of strange intonation. Soon two heads, apparently human, show above the bulwarks; two faces flesh colored, and thinly covered with hair. Then the whole bodies appear, also human like, save that they are hairy all over, — hair of a foxy red. They swarm up the shrouds, and, clutching the ratlines, shake them with quick violent jerks; at the same time uttering what appears angry speech, in an unknown tongue, and harsh voice, as if chiding off the intruders. Only a short way up the shrouds, just as far as they could spring from the deck, and only staying a little while there; then they drop down again, disappearing as abruptly as they had shown themselves.

The lieutenant's command was a word thrown away. Without it, the men would have discontinued their stroke. They have done so, and sit with bated breath, eyes strained, ears listening, and lips mute, as if all had been suddenly and simultaneously struck dumb. Silence throughout the boat, silence aboard the bark, silence everywhere; the only sound heard being the "drip-drop" of the water as it falls from the feathered oar-blades.

For a time the cutter's crew remain speechless, not one essaying to speak a word. They are so, less from surprise than sheer stark terror. It is depicted on their faces, and no wonder it should. What they have just seen is sufficient to terrify the stoutest hearts, even those of tried tars, as all of them are. A ship manned

by hairy men—a crew of veritable Orsons! Certainly, enough to startle the most phlegmatic mariner, and make him tremble as he tugs at the oar. But they have ceased tugging at their oars, and hold them, blades suspended, along with their breath. One alone musters sufficient courage to mutter out, “Gracious goodness! Shipmates, what can it mean?”

He receives no answer, though the silence comes to an end. It is broken by the voice of the lieutenant, and also that of the junior officer. They do not speak simultaneously, but one after the other. The superstitious fear pervading the minds of the men does not extend to them. They, too, have their fears, but of a different kind, and from a different cause. As yet, neither has communicated to the other what he himself has been thinking, the thoughts of both being hitherto vague, but every moment becoming more defined; and the appearance of the red men upon the ratlines—strange to the sailors—seems to have made things more intelligible to them. Judging by the expression upon their faces, they comprehend what has puzzled their companions, and with a sense of anxiety more than fear, more of doubt than dismay.

The lieutenant speaks first, shouting in command, “Give way! Quick! Pull in! Head on for the fore-chains!”

He acts in an excited manner, appearing nervously impatient. As if mechanically, the midshipman repeats the order, imitating the mien of his superior. The men execute it, but slowly, and with evident reluctance. They know their officers to be daring fellows both; but now they deem them rash, even to recklessness; for they cannot comprehend the motives urging them to action. Still they obey; and the prow of the boat strikes the bark abeam.

“ Grapple on ! ” sings out the senior officer, soon as touching. A boat-hook takes grip in the chains ; and the cutter, swinging round, lies at rest alongside. The lieutenant is already on his feet, as also the mid. Ordering only the cockswain to follow, they spring up to the chains, lay hold, and lift themselves aloft.

Obedient to orders, the men remain in the boat ; still keeping their seat on the thwarts, in wonder at the bold bearing of their officers, at the same time silently admiring it.

Balancing themselves on the rail, the latter look down upon the deck of the polacca. Their glances sweep it forward, aft, and amid-ships ; ranging from stem to stern, and back again. Nothing seen there to explain the strangeness of things, nothing heard. No sailor on deck, nor officer on the quarter ; only the two strange beings that had shown themselves on the shrouds. These are still visible, one of them standing by the mainmast, the other crouching near the caboose. Both again give out their jabbering speech, accompanying it with gestures of menace. Disregarding this, the lieutenant leaps down upon the deck, and makes towards them ; the mid and cockswain keeping close after.

At their approach, the hirsute monsters retreat, not scared-like, but with a show of defiance, as if disposed to contest possession of the place. They give back, however, bit by bit, till at length, ceasing to dispute, they shuffle towards the quarter, and then on to the poop. Neither of the two officers pays any attention to their demonstrations ; and the movement aft is not made for them. Both lieutenant and midshipman seem excited by other thoughts, some stronger impulse urging them on. Alone is the cockswain mystified by the

hairy men, and not a little alarmed; but, without speaking, he follows his superiors.

They continue on toward the quarter-deck, making for the cabin-door. Having boarded the bark by the fore-chains, they must pass the caboose, going aft. Its sliding panel is open; and, when opposite, all three come to a stand. They are brought to it by a faint cry issuing out of the cook's quarters. Looking in, they behold a spectacle sufficiently singular to detain them. It is more than singular: it is startling. On the bench in front of the galley-fire, which shows as if long extinguished, sits a man, bolt upright, his back against the bulkhead. Is it a man, or only the dead body of one? Certainly it is a human figure; or, speaking more precisely, a human skeleton with the skin still on, this as black as the coal-cinders in the grate in front of it.

It is a man, a negro, and still living; for, at sight of them, he betrays motion, and makes an attempt to speak.

Only the cockswain stays to listen, or hear what he has to say. The others hurry on aft, making direct for the door of the cabin, which, between decks, is approached by a stairway. Reaching this, they rush down, and stand before the door, which they find shut; only closed, not locked. It yields to the turning of the handle, and, opening, gives them admission. They enter hastily, one after the other, without ceremony or announcement. Once inside, they as quickly come to a stop, both looking aghast. The spectacle in the caboose was nought to what is now before their eyes. That was but startling: this is appalling.

It is the main-cabin they have entered, not a large one; for the polacca has not been intended to carry

passengers. Still, is it snug and roomy enough for a table six feet by four. Such a one stands in its centre, its legs fixed in the floor, with four chairs around it, similarly stanchioned.

On the table there are decanters and dishes, alongside glasses and plates. It is a dessert service, and on the dishes are fruits, cakes, and sweetmeats, with fragments of these upon the plates. The decanters contain wines of different sorts, and there are appearances as of wine having been in the glasses.

There are four sets, corresponding to the four chairs; and, to all appearance, this number of guests has been seated at the table. But two of the chairs are empty, as if their occupants had retired to an inner state-room. It is the side-seats that are unoccupied; and a fan lying on one, with a scarf over the back of that opposite, proclaim their last occupants to have been ladies.

Two guests are still at the table, — one at its head, the other at its foot, facing each other. And such guests! Both are men, though, unlike him in the caboose, they are white. But, like him, they, too, appear in the extreme of emaciation, — jaws with the skin drawn tightly over them, cheek-bones prominent, chins protruding, eyes sunken in their sockets.

Not dead, either; for their eyes, glancing and glaring, still show life; but there is little other evidence of it. Sitting stiff in the chairs, rigidly erect, they make no attempt to stir, no motion of either body or limbs, which seem as if from both all strength had departed, their famished figures denoting the last stages of starvation. And this in front of a table furnished with choice wines, fruits, and other comestibles, in short, loaded with delicacies! What can it all mean?

Not this question, but a cry, comes from the lips of the two officers, as they stand regarding the strange vessel. Only for an instant. Then the lieutenant, rushing back up the stair, and on to the side, calls out, "To the ship, and bring the doctor! Quick, quick!"

The boat's crew, obedient, row off with alacrity. They are but too glad to get away from the suspected spot. As they strain at their oars, with faces turned toward the bark, and eyes wonderingly bent upon her, they see nought to give them a clew to the conduct of their officers, or in any way elucidate the series of mysteries, now prolonged to a chain. One, imbued with a strong belief in the supernatural, shakes his head, saying, "Shipmates, we may never see that lieutenant again, nor the young reefer, nor the old cocks'n — never!"

During all this time, those on board the man-of-war have stood regarding the bark, at the same time watching the movements of the boat. Only they who have glasses can see what is passing with any distinctness; for the day is not a bright one, a haze over the sea hindering observation. It has arisen since the fall of the wind, perhaps caused by the calm; and, though but a mere film, at such far distance it interferes with the view through the telescopes. Those using them can just tell that the cutter has closed in upon the strange vessel, and is lying along under the foremast shrouds, while some of her crew appear to have swarmed up the chains. This cannot be told for certain. The haze around the bark is more dense than elsewhere, as if steam were passing off from her sides; and through this objects show only confusedly.

While the frigate's people are straining their eyes to

make out the movements of the cutter, an officer, of sharper sight than the rest, cries, "See! the boat is coming back."

All perceive this, and with some surprise. It is not ten minutes since the boat grappled on. Why returning so soon?

While they are conjecturing as to the cause, the same officer again observes something that has escaped the others. There are but *eight* oars, instead of ten, — the regulation strength of the cutter, — and ten men where before there were thirteen. Three of the boat's crew have remained behind.

This causes neither alarm nor uneasiness to the frigate's officers. They take it that the three have gone aboard the bark, and for some reason, whatever it be, elected to stay there. They know the third lieutenant to be not only brave, but a man of quick decision, and prompt to act. He has boarded the distressed vessel, discovered the cause of distress, and sent the cutter back to bring whatever may be needed for her relief. Thus reasons the quarter-deck.

It is different on the fore, where apprehensions are rife about their missing shipmates, fears that some misfortune has befallen them. True, no shots have been heard, nor flashes seen. Still they could have been killed without fire-arms; and savages might use other and less noisy weapons. The tale of the skin-clad crew gives color to this supposition. But then the crew of the cutter went armed; in addition to their cutlasses, being provided with pikes and boarding-pistols. Had they been attacked, they would not have retreated without discharging the last, less likely leaving three of their number behind. But there have been no signs of strife or struggle seen. All the

more mystery; and, pondering upon it, the frigate's crew are but strengthened in their superstitious faith.

Meanwhile, the cutter is making way across the stretch of calm sea that separates the two ships, and, although with reduced strength of rowers, cleaves the water quickly. The movements of the men indicate excitement. They pull as if rowing in a regatta.

Soon they are near enough to be individually recognized; when it is seen that neither of the two officers is in the boat, nor the cockswain, one of the oarsmen having taken his place at the tiller.

As the boat draws nearer, and the faces of the two men seated in the stern-sheets can be distinguished, there is observed upon them an expression which none can interpret. No one tries. All stand silently waiting till the cutter comes alongside, and, sweeping past the bows, brings up on the frigate's starboard beam, under the main-chains.

The officers move forward along the gangway, and stand looking over the bulwarks; while the men come crowding aft as far as permitted. The curiosity of all receives a check, an abrupt disappointment. There is no news from the bark, save the meagre scrap contained in the lieutenant's order, "Bring the doctor."

Beyond this, the cutter's crew only know that they have seen the hairy men,—seen and heard them, though without understanding a word of what they said. Two had sprung upon the shrouds, and shouted at the cutter's people, as if scolding them off.

The tale spreads through the frigate, fore and aft, quick as a train of powder ignited. It is everywhere talked of, and commented on. On the quarter, it is deemed strange enough; while forward, it further intensifies the belief in something supernatural.

The tars give credulous ear to their comrade, again repeating what he said in the boat, and in the selfsame words, "Shipmates, we may never see that lieutenant again, nor the young reefer, nor the old cocks'n—never!"

The boding speech seems a prophecy already realized. Scarce has it passed the sailor's lips, when a cry rings through the ship that startles all aboard, thrilling them more intensely than ever.

While the men have been commenting upon the message brought back from the bark, and the officers are taking steps to hasten its execution, — the doctor getting out his instruments, with such medicines as the occasion seems to call for, — the strange vessel has been for a time unthought of.

The cry just raised recalls her, causing them to rush towards the frigate's side, and once more bend their eyes on the bark.

No, not *on* her, only in the direction where she was last seen; for, to their astonishment, *the polacca has disappeared.*



CHAPTER IV.

A BLACK SQUALL.

THE surprise caused by the disappearance of the strange vessel is but short-lived. It is explained by a very natural phenomenon, — a fog; not the haze already spoken of, but a dense bank of dark vapor, that, drifting over the surface of the sea, has suddenly enveloped the bark within its floating folds. It threatens to do the same with the frigate, as every sailor aboard of her can perceive. But, though their surprise is at an end, a sense of undefined fear still holds possession of them. Nor is this on account of the coming fog. That could not frighten men who have dared every danger of the deep, and oft groped their way through icy seas shrouded in almost amorphous darkness.

Their fears spring from a fancy that the other phenomena are not natural. The fog of itself may be; but what brings it on, — just then, at a crisis, when they were speculating about the character of the chased vessel, some doubting her honesty, others sceptical of her reality, not a few boldly denouncing her as a phantom? If an accident of Nature, certainly a remarkable one; in truth, a strange phenomenon.

The reader may smile at credulity of this kind, but not he who has mixed among the men of the fore-castle, whatever the nationality of the ship, and whether merchantman or man-of-war. Not all the training of

naval schools, nor the boasted enlightenment of this our age, has fully eradicated from the mind of the canvas-clad mariner a belief in something more than he has seen, or can see,—something outside Nature. To suppose him emancipated from this would be to hold him of higher intelligence than his fellow-men who stay ashore ploughing the soil, as he does the sea. To thousands of these he can point, saying, “Behold the believers in supernatural existences, in spirit-rappings, ay, in very ghosts; this not only in days gone by, but now—now more than ever within memory of man!” Then let not landsmen scoff at such fancies, not a whit more absurd than their own credulous conceits.

Aside from this sort of feeling in the war-ship, there is soon a real and far more serious apprehension, in which all have a share, officers as well as men. A fog is before their eyes, apparently fast approaching. It has curtained the other vessel, spreading over her like a pall, and threatens to do the same with their own. They perceive, also, that it is not a fog of the ordinary kind, but one that portends storm, sudden and violent; for they are threatened by the *black squall* of the Pacific. Enough in the name to cause uneasiness about the safety of their ship; though not of her are they thinking. She is a staunch vessel, and can stand the sea’s buffetings. Their anxiety is for their absent shipmates, whose peril all comprehend. They know the danger of the two vessels getting separated in a fog. If they do, what will be the fate of those who have staid behind on the bark? The strange craft has been signalling distress. Is it scarcity of provisions, or the want of water? If so, in either case she will be worse off than ever. It cannot be shortness of

hands to work her sails, with these all set! Sickness, then? Some scourge afflicting her crew, — cholera, or yellow-fever? This made probable by the lieutenant sending back for the doctor, and the doctor only.

Conjecturing ends, and suddenly: the time for action has arrived. The dark cloud comes driving on, and is soon around the ship, lapping her in its damp, murky embrace. It clings to her bulwarks, pours over her canvas, still spread, wetting it till big drops rain down upon the deck. It is no longer a question of the surgeon starting forth on his errand of humanity, nor the cutter returning to the becalmed bark. Now there is no more chance of discovering the latter than of finding a needle in a truss of straw. In such a fog, the finest ship that ever sailed sea, with the smartest crew that ever manned vessel, would be helpless as a man groping his way in Cimmerian darkness. There is no more thought of the bark, and not so much about the absent officers. Out of sight, they are, for a time, almost out of mind; for on board the frigate every one has now enough to do looking after himself and his duties. Almost on the instant of her sails being enveloped in vapor, they are struck by a wind coming from a quarter directly opposite to that for which they have been hitherto set.

The voice of her commander, heard thundering through a trumpet, directs canvas to be instantly taken in. The order is executed with the promptness peculiar to men-of-war's men; and, soon after, the huge ship is tossing amid tempestuous waves, with only storm-sails set. A ship under storm-canvas is a sight always melancholy to the mariner: it tells of a struggle with winds and waves, a serious conflict with the elements, which may well cause anxiety.

Such is the situation of the British frigate soon as surrounded by the fog. The sea, lately tranquil, is now madly raging; the waves tempest lashed, their crests like the manes of white horses in headlong gallop. Amid them the huge war-vessel, — but a while before almost motionless, a leviathan, — apparently the sea's lord, is now its slave, and soon may be its victim. Dancing like a cork, she is buffeted from billow to billow, or thrown into the troughs between, as if cast there in scorn. Her crew are fully occupied taking care of her, without thought of any other vessel, even one flying a flag of distress. Ere long they may have to hoist the same signal themselves. But there are skilled seamen aboard, who well know what to do, who watch and ward every sea that comes sweeping along. Some of these tumble the big ship about till the steersmen feel her going almost regardless of the rudder.

There are but two courses left for safety; and her captain weighs the choice between them. He must "lie to," and ride out the gale, or "scud" before it. To do the latter might take him away from the strange vessel (now no longer seen); and she might never be sighted by them again. Ten chances to one if she ever would; for *she* may not elect to run down the wind. Even if she did, there would be but slight hope of overhauling her, supposing the storm to continue for any considerable time. The probabilities are that she will lie to. As the frigate's lieutenant will no doubt have control, he will order her sails to be taken in: he would scarce think of parting from that spot.

Thus reflecting, the captain determines to stay where he is. Every thing has been made snug, and the ship's head set close to wind.

Still, aboard of her, brave hearts are filled with sad

forebodings ; not from any fear for themselves, but the safety of their shipmates in the bark. Both of the absent officers are favorites with their comrades of the quarter, as with the crew. So, too, the coxswain who accompanies them. What will be their fate? All are thinking of it, though no one offers a surmise. No one can tell to what they have committed themselves. 'Tis only sure, that, in the tempest now raging, there must be danger to the strange craft, without counting that signalized by her reversed ensign, without thought of the mystery already inwrapping her. The heart of every man on board the war-ship is beating with humanity, and pulsing with pent-up fear. And while the waves are fiercely assaulting the strong ship, while winds are rattling loud amidst her rigging, a yet louder sound mingles with their monotone. It is given out at regularly measured intervals ; for it is the *minute-gun* which the frigate has commenced firing, not as a signal of distress, asking for assistance, but one of counsel and cheer, seeking to give it. Every sixty seconds, amidst the wild surging of waves, and the hoarse howling of winds, the louder boom of cannon breaks their harsh continuity.

The night comes down, adding to the darkness, though not much to the dilemma in which the frigate is placed. The fog and storm combined have already made her situation dangerous as might be : it could not well be worse. Both continue throughout the night ; and on through all the night she keeps discharging the signal-guns. No one aboard of her thinks of listening for a response. In all probability, there is no cannon, nothing, upon the bark, that could give it. Close upon the hour of morning, the storm begins to abate, and the clouds to dissipate. The fog seems to be lift-

ing, or drifting off to some other part of the ocean. With hope again dawning comes the dawn of day. The crew of the frigate — every man of them, officers and tars — are upon deck. They stand along the ship's sides, ranged in rows by the bulwarks, looking out across the sea.

There is no fog now, not the thinnest film. The sky is clear as crystal, and blue as a boat-race ribbon fresh unfolded; the sea the same, its big waves no longer showing sharp white crests, but rounded, and rolling gently along. Over these the sailors look, scanning the surface. Their gaze is sent to every quarter, every point of the compass. The officers sweep the horizon with their glasses, ranging around the circle where the two blues meet. But neither naked eye nor telescope can discover aught there. Only sea and sky; an albatross with pinions of grander spread, or a tropic bird, its long tail-feathers trailing, trainlike, behind it; no bark, polacca-rigged or otherwise, no ship of any kind, no sign of sail, no canvas, except a full set of "courses," which the frigate herself has now set. She is alone upon the ocean, — in the mighty Pacific, — a mere speck upon its far-stretching, illimitable expanse. Every man aboard of her feels this, and feels it with a sense of sadness. But they are silent, each inquiring of himself what has become of the bark, and what has been the fate of their shipmates.

One alone is heard speaking aloud, giving expression to a thought now common to all. It is the sailor who twice uttered the prediction, which he again repeats, only changing it to the assertion of a certainty. With a group gathered around him, he says, "Shipmates, we'll never see that lieutenant again, nor the young reefer, nor the old cocks'n — never!"

CHAPTER V.

A BRACE OF BRITISH OFFICERS.

SCENE, San Francisco, the capital of California. Time, the autumn of 1849, several weeks antecedent to the chase described.

A singular city the San Francisco of 1849, very different from what it is to-day, and equally unlike what it was twelve months before the aforesaid date, when the obscure village of Yerba Buena yielded up its name, along with its site, entering on what may be termed a second genesis.

The little village, port of the Mission Dolores, built of sun-dried bricks, — its petty commerce in hides and tallow represented by two or three small craft annually visiting it, — wakes up one morning to behold whole fleets of ships come crowding through the Golden Gate, and dropping their anchor in front of its wharfless strand. They come from all parts of the Pacific, from all the other oceans, from the ends of the earth, carrying every kind of flag known to the nations. The whaleman, late harpooning “fish” in the Arctic, with him who has been chasing “cachalot” in the Pacific and Indian; the merchantman standing towards Australia, China, or Japan; the trader among the South Sea Islands; the coaster of Mexico, Chili, and Peru; men-o’-war of every flag and fashion, — frigates, corvettes, and double-deckers; even Chinese junks and Malayan prahus — are seen sailing into San Francisco

Bay, and coming to beside the beach of Yerba Buena.

What has caused this grand spreading of canvas, and commingling of queer craft? What is still causing it, for still they come? The answer lies in a little word of four letters; the same that, from the beginning of man's activity on earth, has moved him to many things, too oft to deeds of evil, — *gold*. Some eighteen months before, the Swiss *émigré* Sutter, scouring out his mill-race on a tributary of the Sacramento River, observes shining particles among the mud. Taking them up, and holding them in the hollow of his hand, he feels that they are heavy, and sees them to be of golden sheen. And gold they prove, when submitted to the test of the alembic. The son of Helvetia discovers the precious metal in grains and nuggets, interspersed with the silt of a fluvial deposit. They are not the first found in California, but the first coming under the eyes of Saxon settlers, — men imbued with the energy to collect and carry them to the far-off outside world.

Less than two years have elapsed since the digging of Sutter's mill-race. Meantime, the specks that scintillated in its ooze have been transported over the ocean, and exhibited in the great cities, in the windows of brokers and bullion-merchants. The sight has proved sufficient to thicken people the banks of the Sacramento, — hitherto sparsely settled, — and cover San Francisco Bay with ships from every quarter of the globe. Not only is the harbor of Yerba Buena crowded with strange craft, but its streets with queer characters, — adventurers of every race and clime, among whom may be heard an exchange of tongues, the like never listened to since the abortive attempt at

building the Tower of Babel. The Mexican mud-walled dwellings disappear, swallowed up and lost amidst the modern surrounding of canvas tents and weather-board houses, that have risen as by magic around them. A like change has taken place in their occupancy. No longer the tranquil interiors, — the *tertulia*, with guests sipping aniseed, curaçoa, and Canario, munching sweet cakes and *confituras*. Instead, the houses inside now ring with boisterous revelry, smelling of mint and Monongahela; and, though the guitar still tinkles, it is almost inaudible amid the louder strains of clarinet, fiddle, and trombone.

What a change in the traffic of the streets! No more silent at certain hours, deserted for the *siesta*; at others, trodden by sandalled monks and shovel-hatted priests, both bold of gaze when passing the dark-eyed damsels in high shell combs and black silk mantillas, bolder still, saluting the brown-skinned daughter of the aboriginal, wrapped in her blue-gray *rebozo*; trodden, too, by garrison soldiers in uniforms of French cut and color, by officer glittering in gold lace, by townsman in cloak of broadcloth, the country gentleman (*haciendado*) on horseback, and the herdsmen, or small farmers (*rancheros*), in their splendid Californian costume. Some of these are still seen, but not, as of yore, swaggering and conspicuous. Amid the concourse of new-comers they move timidly, jostled by rough men in red flannel shirts, buckskin, and blanket coats, with pistols in their belts, and knives hanging handy along their hips; others equally formidable in Guernsey frocks, or wearing the dreadnought jacket of the sailor; not a few scarcely clothed at all, shrouding their nakedness in such rags as remain after a long journey overland, or a longer voyage by sea. In al

probability, since its beginning the world never witnessed so motley an assemblage of men tramping through the streets of a seaport town as those seen in Yerba Buena, just baptized San Francisco, 1849, A.D.; and perhaps never a more varied display of bunting in one bay.

In all certainty, harbor never had so large a number of ships with so few men to man them. At least one-half are crewless, and a large proportion of the remainder nearly so. Many have but their captain and mates, with, it may be, the carpenter and cook. The sailors are ashore, and but few of them intend returning aboard. They have either gone off to the gold-diggings, or are going. There has been a general *débandade* among the Jack-tars, leaving many a merry fore-castle in forlorn and silent solitude.

In this respect, there is a striking contrast between the streets of the town and the ships in its harbor. In the former, an eager throng, pushing, jostling, surging noisily along, with all the impatience of men half mad; in the latter, tranquillity, inaction, the torpor of lazy life, as if the ships — many of them splendid craft — were but hulks laid up for good, and never again going to sea. Some never did. Yet not all the vessels in San Francisco Bay are crewless. A few still have their complement of hands; these being mostly men-of-war. The strict naval discipline prevents desertion, though it needs strategy to assist. They ride at anchor far out beyond swimming-distance from the beach, and will not allow shore-boats to approach them. The tar who attempts to take French leave will have a severe swim for it, and perchance get a shot which will send him to the bottom of the sea. With this menace constantly before his mind, even California's gold does not tempt him to run the gantlet.

Among the craft keeping up this iron discipline is one that bears the British flag,—a man-of-war, conspicuous by her handsome hull, and clean, tapering spars. Her sails are stowed snug, lashed neatly along the yards: in her rigging, not a rope out of place. Down upon her decks, white as holystone can make them, the same regularity is observable. Every rope is coiled, or trimly turned upon its belaying-pin. It could not be otherwise with the frigate “*Crusader*,” commanded by Capt. Bracebridge, a sailor of the old school, who takes a pride in his ship. He still retains his crew, every one of them. There is not a name on the frigate’s books but has its representative in a live sailor, who can either be seen upon her decks, or at any moment summoned thither by the whistle of the boatswain. Though, even if left to themselves, but few of them would care to desert. Gold itself cannot lure them to leave a ship where things are so agreeable; for Capt. Bracebridge does all in his power to make matters pleasant, for men as well as officers. He takes care that the former get good grub, and plenty of it, including full rations of grog. He permits them to have amusements among themselves; while the officers treat them to *tableaux-vivants*, charades, and private theatricals. To crown all, a grand ball has been given aboard the ship in anticipation of her departure from the port, an event near at hand. This, in return for an entertainment of like kind, given by some citizens in honor of her officers, at which more than one of the latter made acquaintances they would wish to meet again, two of them desiring it with longings of a special kind. In other words, two of the frigate’s officers have fallen in love with a brace of shore damsels, with whom they have danced, and done some flirting.

It is the third day after the ball; and these two officers are standing upon the poop-deck, conversing about it. They are apart from their comrades, purposely, since their speech is confidential. They are both young men,—the elder of them, Crozier, being a year or two over twenty; while the younger, Cadwallader, is almost as much under it. Crozier has passed his term of probationary service, and is now a “mate;” while the other is still a “midshipmite.” And a type of this last, just as Marryat would have made him, is Willie Cadwallader, — bright face, light-colored hair, curling over cheeks ruddy as the bloom upon a ripe peach. He is Welsh, with those eyes of turquoise blue often observed in the descendants of the Cymri, and hair of a hue seen nowhere else, — threads of gold commingled with tissue of silver.

Quite different is Edward Crozier, who hails from an ancestral hall standing in the shire of Salop. His hair, also curling, is dark brown, his complexion corresponding; and a pair of mustaches, already well grown, lie like leeches along his lip, the tips turned upward. An aquiline nose and broad jaw-blades denote resolution, — a character borne out by the glance of an eye that never shows quailing. He is of medium size, with a figure denoting great strength, and capable of carrying out any resolve his mind may make; the shoulders square set, breast well bowed out, the arms and limbs in perfect proportion. In point of personal appearance, he is the superior; though both are handsome fellows, each in his own style. And as the styles are different, so are their dispositions, these rather contrasting. Crozier is of a serious, sedate turn, and, though any thing but morose, rarely given to mirth. From the face of Cadwallader the laugh is

scarcely ever absent; and the dimple on his cheek, to employ a printer's phrase, appears stereotyped. With the young Welshman, a joke might be carried to extremes; but he would only seek his *revanche* by a lark of like kind. With him of Salop, practical jesting would be dangerous, and might end in stern resentment, perhaps in a duel. Notwithstanding this difference in disposition, the two are fast friends, — a fact perhaps due to the dissimilitude of their natures. When not separated by their respective duties, they keep together aboard ship, and together go ashore, and now, for the first time in the lives of both, have commenced making love together. Fortune has favored them in this, that they are not in love with the same lady; still further, that their sweethearts do not dwell apart, but live under one roof, and belong to one family. They are not sisters, for all that; nor yet cousins, though standing in a certain relationship. One is the aunt of the other. Such kinship might augur inequality in their age. There is none, however, or only a very little; not so much as between the young officers themselves. The aunt is but a year or so the senior of her niece. And, as fate has willed, the lots of the lovers have been cast in the proper symmetry and proportion. Crozier is in love with the former; Cadwalader, with the latter.

Their sweethearts are both Spanish, of the purest blood, — the boasted *sangre azul*. They are respectively daughter and grand-daughter of Don Gregorio Montijo, whose house can be seen from the ship, — a mansion of imposing appearance, in the Mexican *hacienda* style, standing upon the summit of a hill, at some distance in shore, and southward from the town. While conversing, the young officers have their eyes upon it,

one of the two assisting his vision with a binocular. It is Cadwallader who uses the instrument.

Holding it to his eye, he says, "I think I can see them, Ned. At all events, there are two heads on the housetop, just showing over the parapet. I'll take odds it's them, the dear girls. I wonder if they see us."

"Not unless, like yourself, they are provided with telescopes."

"By Jove! I believe they've got them. I see something that glances in the hands of one; my Inez, I'll warrant."

"More likely it's my Carmen. Give me the glass. For all those blue eyes you're so proud of, I can sight a sail farther than you."

"A sail, yes; but not a pretty face, Ned. No, no: you're blind to beauty, else you'd never have taken on to that old aunt, leaving the niece to me. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Old, indeed! She's as young as yours, if not younger. One tress of her bright amber hair is worth a whole head of your sweetheart's black stuff. Look at this!" Crozier draws out a lock of hair, and, unfolding, shakes it tauntingly before the other's eyes. In the sun it gleams golden, with a radiance of red; for it is amber, as he has styled it.

"Look at this!" cries Cadwallader, also exhibiting a tress. "You thought nobody but yourself could show love-locks. There's a bit of hair, that, to yours, is as costly silk alongside cheap common cotton."

For an instant each stands caressing his particular tress; then both burst into laughter, as they stow away their separate favors.

Crozier, in turn taking the binocular, directs it on the house of Don Gregorio; after a time saying,

“About one thing you’re right, Will: those heads are the same from which we’ve got our love-locks. Ay, and they’re looking this way, through glâsses. They’ll be expecting us soon. Well, we’ll be with them, please God, before many minutes. Then you’ll see how much superior bright amber is to dull black—anywhere in the world, but especially in the light of a Californian sun.”

“Nowhere, under either sun or moon. Give me the girl with the raven hair!”

“For me, her with the golden bronze!”

“Well, *cada uno a su gusto* (‘every one to his liking’), as my sweetheart has taught me to say in her soft Andalusian. But now, Ned, talking seriously, do you think the governor will allow us to go ashore?”

“He must; and I know he will.”

“How do you know it?”

“Bah! *ma bohil*, as our Irish second would say. You’re the son of a poor Welsh squire, — good blood, I admit, — but I chance to be heir to twice ten thousand a year, with an uncle in the admiralty. I have asked leave for both of us: so don’t be uneasy about our getting it. Capt. Bracebridge is no snob; but he knows his own interests, and won’t refuse our fair request. See! There he is, coming this way. Now for his answer, — affirmative, you may rely upon it.”

“Gentlemen,” says the captain, approaching, “I give you leave to go ashore for the day. The gig will take you, landing wherever you wish. You are to send the boat back, and give the cocks-wain orders where and when he’s to await you on your return to the ship. Take my advice, and abstain from drink, which might get you into difficulties. As you know, just now San Francisco is full of all sorts of queer characters, a

very Pandemonium of a place. For the sake of the service, and the honor of the uniform you wear, steer clear of scrapes, and, above all, give a wide berth to women.”

After thus delivering himself, the captain turns on his heel, and retires, leaving the young officers to their meditations. They do not meditate long. The desired leave has been granted, and the order given for the gig to be got ready. The boat is in the water, her crew swarming over the side, and seating themselves upon the thwarts. The young officers only stay to give a finishing touch to their toilet, preparatory to appearing before eyes of whose critical glances both have more fear than they would from the fire from a broadside of great guns. This arranged, they drop down the man-ropes, and seat themselves in the stern-sheets; Crozier commanding the men to shove off. Soon the frigate's gig is gliding over the tranquil waters of San Francisco Bay, not in the direction of the landing-wharf, but towards a point on the shore to the south of, and some distance outside, the suburbs of the city; for the beacon towards which they steer is the house of Don Gregorio Montijo.



CHAPTER VI.

A PAIR OF SPANISH SEÑORITAS.

DON GREGORIO MONTIJO is a Spaniard, who, some ten years previous to the time of which we write, found his way into the republic of Mexico, afterwards moving on to Alta California. Settling by San Francisco Bay, he became a stock-farmer, the industry in those days chiefly followed by Californians. His grazing-estate gives proof that he has prospered. Its territory extends several miles along the bay, and several leagues backward, its boundary in this direction being the shore of the South Sea itself; while a thousand head of horses, and ten times the number of horned cattle, roam over its rich pastures. His house stands upon the summit of a hill that rises above the bay,—a sort of spur projected from higher ground behind, and trending at right angles to the beach, where it declines into a low-lying sand-spit. Across this runs the shore-road, southward from the city to San José, cutting the ridge midway between the walls of the house and the water's edge, at some three hundred yards' distance from each.

The dwelling, a massive quadrangular structure,—in that semi-moriscan style of architecture imported into New Spain by the Conquistadores—is but a single story in height, having a flat, terraced roof, and an inner court, approached through a grand gate entrance, centrally set in the front façade, with a double-winged

door, wide enough to admit the chariot of Sir Charles Grandison.

Around a Californian country-house there is rarely much in the way of ornamental grounds, even though it be a *hacienda* of the first class, and when the headquarters of a grazing-estate, still less; its enclosures consisting chiefly of "corrals" for the penning and branding of cattle, usually erected in the rear of the dwelling. To this almost universal nakedness, the grounds of Don Gregorio offer some exception. He has added a fence, which, separating them from the high-road, is penetrated by a portalled entrance, with an avenue that leads straight up to the house. This, strewn with snow-white sea-shells, is flanked on each side by a row of *manzanita* bushes, — a beautiful indigenous evergreen. Here and there, a clump of California bays, and some scattered peach-trees, show an attempt, however slight, at landscape-gardening.

Taking into account the grandeur of his house, and the broad acres attached to it, one may well say, that, in the New World, Don Gregorio has done well. And in truth so has he, — thriven to fulness. But he came not empty from the Old; having brought with him sufficient cash to purchase a large tract of land, as also the horses and horned cattle with which to stock it. No needy adventurer he, but a gentleman by birth, one of Biscay's bluest blood, — *hidalgos* since the days of the Cid.

In addition to his ready-money, he also brought with him a wife, — Biscayan as himself, — and a daughter, who at the time was but a child. His wife has been long ago buried; a tombstone in the cemetery of the old Dolores Mission commemorating her many virtues. Since, he has had an accession to his con-

tracted family circle; the added member being a grand-daughter, only a year younger than his daughter, but equally well grown, both having reached the ripest age of girlhood. It is not necessary to say that these young ladies, thus standing in the relationship of aunt and niece, are the two with whom Edward Crozier and Willie Cadwallader have respectively fallen in love.

While these young officers are on the way to pay them the promised visit, a word may be said about their personal appearance. Though so closely allied, and nearly of an age, in other respects the two girls differ so widely, that one unacquainted with the fact would not suspect the slightest kinship between them.

The aunt, Doña Carmen, is of pure Biscayan blood, both by her father's and mother's side. From this she derives her blonde complexion, with that color of hair so pleasing to the sight of Edward Crozier, with blue-gray eyes, known as "Irish;" the Basques and Celts being a kindred race. From it, also, she inherits a cheerful, smiling countenance, with just enough of roguery in the smile to cause a *soupçon* of coquettishness. Her Biscayan origin has endowed her with a figure of fine, full development, withal in perfect feminine proportion; while her mother has transmitted to her, what, in an eminent degree, she herself possessed, — facial beauty.

In the daughter, its quality has not deteriorated, but perhaps improved; for the benignant clime of California has this effect, the soft breezes of the South Sea fanning as fair cheeks as were ever kissed by Tuscan or Levantine wind. It is not necessary to describe Doña Carmen Montijo in detail. A chapter might be devoted to her many charms, and still not do them jus-

tice. Enough to say, that they are beyond cavil ; and that there are men in San Francisco who would dare death for her sake, if sure of a smile from her to show approval of the deed ; ay, one who would for as much do murder. And in that same city is one who would do the same for her niece, Iñez Alvarez ; though she has neither a blonde complexion, blue eyes, nor amber-colored hair. In all three different ; the first being *morena*, or brunette ; the second, black as jet ; the last as raven's plumes. But she has also beauty, — of the type immortalized by many bards, Byron among the number, when he wrote his rhapsody on the " Girl of Cadiz."

Iñez is herself a girl of Cadiz, of which city her father was a native. The Condé Alvarez, an officer in the Spanish army, serving with his regiment in Biscay, there saw a face that charmed him. It belonged to the daughter of Don Gregorio Montijo, his eldest and first-born, some eighteen years antecedent to the birth of Carmen, his last. The count wooed the Biscayan lady, won, and bore her away to his home in Andalusia. Both he and she have gone to their long account, leaving their only child, Iñez, inheritress of a handsome estate. From her father, in whose veins ran Moorish blood, she inherits her jet-black eyes, having lashes nearly half an inch in length, and above them, brows shaped like the moon in the middle of her first quarter. Though in figure more slender than her aunt, she is quite Carmen's equal in height ; and in this may yet excel, since she has not yet attained her full stature. The death of her parents accounts for her being in California, whither she has come to be under the protection of the father of her mother. She has been there but a short time ; and

although, all the while, "lovers have been sighing around her," she longs to return to her own Andalusia.

As already said, Don Gregorio's dwelling is flat-roofed, its top, in Spano-Mexican phrase, termed the *azotea*. This, surrounded by a parapet breast-high, is beset with plants and flowers in boxes and pots, thus forming a sort of aerial garden, reached by a stone stair, the *escalera*, which leads up out of the inner court, called *patio*. During certain hours of the day, the *azotea* is a favorite resort, being a pleasant place of dalliance, as also the finest for observation, commanding, as it does, a view of the country at back, and the broad bay in front. To look upon the last have the two *señoritas*, on this same morning, ascended soon after breakfast, — in all parts of Spanish America partaken at the somewhat late hour of eleven, A.M. .

That they do not intend staying there long is evident from the character of their dresses. Both are costumed and equipped for the saddle, having hats of vicuña wool on their heads, riding-whips in their hands, and spurs on their heels; while in the courtyard below stand four horses, saddled and bridled, champing their bits, and impatiently striking the pavement with their hoofs. Since all the saddles are such as should be ridden by men, it may be supposed only men are to be mounted, and that the ladies' horses have not yet been brought out of the stable. This would naturally be the conjecture of a stranger to Spanish California. But one *au fait* to its fashions would draw his deductions differently. Looking at the spurred damsels upon the housetop, and the saddled horses below, he would conclude that at least two of the latter were intended to be ridden by the former, in that style of equitation with which the famed Duchesse de Berri

was accustomed to astonish the people of Paris. The other two horses, having larger and somewhat coarser saddles, are evidently designed for gentlemen; so that the cavalcade will be symmetrically composed, — two and two of each sex. The gentlemen have not yet put in an appearance; but who they are may be learned by listening to the dialogue passing between the two *señoritas*. From their elevated position they can see the rapidly growing city of San Francisco, and the shipping in its harbor. This is north-east, and a little to their left. But there are several vessels riding at anchor just out in front of them; one, a war-ship, towards which the eyes of both keep continuously turning, as though in expectation to see a boat put off from her side. As yet, none such has been seen; and, withdrawing her gaze from the war-ship, Iñez opens the conversation by asking her aunt a question, “Is it really true that we’re going back to Spain?”

“Quite true; and I’m sorry for it.”

“Why should you be sorry?”

“Why! There are many reasons.”

“Give one,” challenges the niece.

“I could give twenty.”

“One will be sufficient, if good.”

“They’re all good,” gravely rejoins the aunt.

“Let me hear them, then.”

“First of all, I like California: I love it, — its fine climate, and bright blue skies.”

“Not a bit brighter or bluer than those of Spain.”

“Ten times brighter, and ten times bluer. The skies of the Old World are to those of the New as lead to *lapis lazuli*. In that respect, neither Spain nor Italy can compare with California. Its seas, too, are superior. Even the boasted Bay of Naples would be but a

little lake alongside this noble sheet of water, far stretching before our eyes. Look at it!"

"Looking at it through *your* eyes, I might think so; not through mine. For my part, I see nothing in it to be so much admired."

"But something *on* it; for instance, that grand ship out yonder. Come, now, confess the truth. Isn't that something to admire?"

"But that does not belong to the bay," replies the Andalusian.

"No matter: it's on it now, and in it (the ship, I mean), somebody who, if I mistake not, has very much interested somebody else, — a certain Andalusian damsel, by name Iñez Alvarez."

"Your words will answer as well for a Biscayan damsel, by name Carmèn Montijo."

"Suppose I admit it, and say yes? Well, I will. There *is* one in yonder ship who has very much interested me. Nay, more: I admire, ay, love him. You see I'm not ashamed to confess what the world seems to consider a woman's weakness. We Biscayans don't keep secrets as you Andalusians. For all, *sobri-
na*, you haven't kept yours, though you tried hard enough. I saw from the first you were smitten with that young English officer who has hair the exact color of a fox-squirrel."

"It isn't any thing of the kind. His hair is a thousand times of a prettier hue than that of the other English officer, who's taken your fancy, *tia*."

"Nothing to compare with it. Look at this! There's a curl, one of the handsomest that ever grew on the head of man, — dark and glossy, like the coat of a fur-seal; beautiful! I could kiss it over and over again."

While speaking, she does so.

“And look at this!” cries the other, also drawing forth a lock of hair, and displaying it in the sunlight. “See how it shines, like tissue of gold! Far prettier than that you’ve got, and better worth kissing.”

Saying which, she imitates the example her aunt has set her, by raising the tress to her lips, and repeatedly kissing it.

“So, so, my innocent!” exclaims Carmen, “you’ve been stealing too?”

“As yourself.”

“And I suppose you’ve given him a love-lock in exchange?”

“Have you?”

“I have. To you, Iñez, I make no secret of it. Come, now. Be equally candid with me. Have you done so?”

“I’ve done the same as yourself.”

“And has your heart gone with the gift? Tell the truth, *sobrina*.”

“Ask your own, *tia*, and take its answer for mine.”

“Enough then. We understand each other, and shall keep the secret to ourselves. Now, let’s talk of other things: go back to what we began with, about leaving California. You’re glad we’re going?”

“Indeed, yes! And I wonder you’re not the same. Dear old Spain! the finest country on earth, and Cadiz the finest city.”

“Well, *cada uno a su gusto* (‘every one to his liking’). But about that we two differ. Give me California for a country, and San Francisco for a home, though it’s not much of a city yet. It will be, ere long; and I should like to stay in it. But that’s not to be, and there’s an end of it. Father has determined on leaving. Indeed, he has already sold out; so that

this house and the lands around it are no longer ours. As the lawyers have made out the deed of transfer, and the money has been paid down, we're only here on sufferance, and must soon yield possession. Then we're to take ship for Panama, go across the Isthmus, and over the Atlantic Ocean, once more to renew the Old-World life, with all its stupid ceremonies. Oh! I shall sadly miss the free, wild ways of California, its rural sports, with their quaint originality and picturesque. I'm sure I shall die of *ennui* soon after reaching Spain. Your Cadiz will kill me."

"But, Carmen, surely you can't be happy here, now that every thing is so changed? Why, we can scarcely walk out in safety, or take a promenade through the streets of the town, crowded with those rude fellows in red shirts, who've come to search for gold,—Anglo-Saxons, as they call themselves."

"What! You speaking against Anglo-Saxons, and with that tress treasured in your bosom, so close to your heart."

"Oh! *he* is different. He's not Saxon, but Celtic, the same as you Biscayans. Besides, he isn't to be ranked with that rabble, even though he were of the same race. The Señor Cadwallader is a born *hidalgo*."

"Admitting him to be, I think you do wrong to these red-shirted gentry, in calling them a rabble. Rough as is their exterior, they have gentle hearts under their coarse homespun coats. Many of them are true bred and born gentlemen, and, what's better, behave as such. I've never received insult from them, not even disrespect, though I've been beside them scores of times. Father wrongs them too; for it is partly their presence here that's causing him to leave California, as so, also, many others of our old families.

Still, as we reside in the country, at a safe distance from town, we might enjoy immunity from meeting *los barbaros*, as our people are pleased contemptuously to style them. For my part, I love dear old California, and shall greatly regret leaving it. Only to think! I shall never more behold the gallant *vaquero*, mounted on his magnificent steed, careering across the plain, and launching his *lazo* over the horns of a fierce wild bull, ready to gore him if he but miss his aim. Ah! it's one of the finest sights in the world, so exciting in this dull, prosaic age! It recalls the heroic days and deeds of the great Condé, the Campeador, and Cid. Yes, Iñez, only in this modern Transatlantic land, out here, on the shores of the South Sea, do there still exist customs and manners to remind one of the old knight-errantry, and times of the troubadours."

"What an enthusiast you are! but, *apropos* of your knights-errant, yonder are two of them, if I mistake not, making this way. Now, fancy yourself on the donjon of an ancient Moorish castle, salute, and receive them accordingly. Ha, ha, ha!"

The clear, ringing laugh of the Andalusian is not echoed by the Biscayan. Instead, a shadow steals over her face, as her eyes become fixed upon two figures distinguishable as men on horseback.

"True types of your Californian *chivalry!*" adds Iñez ironically.

"True types of Californian *villany!* rejoins Carmen, in earnest.



CHAPTER VII.

A COUPLE OF CALIFORNIAN "CABALLEROS."

THE true types of Californian chivalry, or villany, have just emerged from the suburbs of San Francisco, taking the road which leads southward along shore.

Both are garbed in grand style, — in the national costume of California, which, in point of picturesqueness, is not exceeded by any other in the world.

They wear the wide trousers (*calzoneras*), along the outer seams lashed with gold-lace, and beset with filigree buttons, the snow-white drawers (*calzoncillas*) here and there puffing out; below, *botas* and spurs, the last with rowels several inches in diameter, that glitter like great stars behind their heels. They have tight-fitting jackets of velveteen, closed in front, and over the bosom elaborately embroidered; scarfs of China crape round their waists, the ends dangling adown the left hip, terminating in a fringe of gold cord; on their heads *sombreros* with broad brim, and band of bullion, the *toquilla*. In addition, each carries over his shoulders a *manga*, — the most magnificent of outside garments, with a drape graceful as a Roman *toga*. That of one is scarlet-colored, the other sky-blue. Their horses are not less grandly bedecked, — saddles of stamped leather, scintillating with silver studs, their cloths elaborately embroidered; bridles of plaited horse-hair, pointed with tags and tassels;

bits of the Mameluke pattern, with check-pieces and curbs powerful enough to break the jaw at a jerk.

The steeds thus splendidly caparisoned are worthy of it. Though small, they are of perfect shape;—pure blood of Arabian sires, transmitted through dams of Andalusia. They are descended from the stock transported to the New World by the *Conquistadores*; and the progenitor of one or other may have carried Alvarado, or Sandoval, perhaps Cortez himself.

The riders are both men of swarthy complexion, with traits that tell of the Latinic race. Their features are Spanish, in one a little more pronounced than in the other. He who wears the sky-colored cloak has all the appearance of being Mexican born. The blood in his veins, giving the brown tinge to his skin, is not Moorish, but more likely from the aborigines of California. For all that, he is not a *mestizo*, only one among whose remote ancestry an Indian woman may have played part; since the family-tree of many a proud Californian has sprung from such root. He is a man of medium size, with figure squat and somewhat spare, and sits his horse as though he were part of the animal. If seen afoot, his legs would appear bowed, almost banded, showing that he has spent the greater part of his life in the saddle. His face is flat, its outline rounded, the nose compressed, nostrils agape, and lips thick enough to suggest the idea of an African origin. But his hair contradicts this, being straight as needles, and black as the skin of a Colobus monkey. More likely he has it from the Malays, through the Californian Indian, some tribes of which are undoubtedly of Malayan descent. Whatever the mixture in his blood, the man is himself a native Californian, born by the side of San Francisco Bay, on a *ganaderia*,

or grazing-estate. He is some twenty six or seven years of age, his name Faustino Calderon, — “Don” by ancestral right, and ownership of the aforesaid *ganaderia*.

He in the scarlet *manga*, though but two or three years older, is altogether different in appearance, as otherwise; personally handsomer, and intellectually superior. His features, better formed, are more purely Spanish, their outline oval and regular. The jaws broad and balanced; the chin prominent; the nose high, without being hooked or beaked; the brow classically cut, and surmounted by a thick shock of hair, coal-black in color, and waved, rather than curling; heavy mustaches on the upper lip, with an imperial on the under one, the last extending below the point of the chin, all the rest of his face, throat, and cheeks, clean shaven, — such are the facial characteristics of Don Francisco de Lara, who is a much larger, and, to all appearance, stronger man, than his travelling-companion.

Calderon, as said, is a gentleman by birth, and a *ganadero*, or stock-farmer, by occupation. He inherits extensive pasture-lands left him by his father, — some time deceased, — along with the horses and horned cattle that browse upon them. An only son, he is now owner of all; but his ownership is not likely to continue. He is fast relinquishing it by the pursuit of evil courses, among them three of a special kind, — wine, women, and play, — which promise to make him bankrupt in purse, as they have in character. For around San Francisco, as in it, he is known as a *roué* and reveller, a debauchee in every form, and a silly fellow to boot. Naturally of weak intellect, indulgence in dissipation has rendered it weaker.

Of as much moral darkness, though different in kind, is the character of Don Francisco de Lara, — “Frank Lara,” as he is familiarly known in the streets and saloons. Though Spanish in features, and speaking the language, he can also talk English with perfect fluency, French too when called upon, with a little Portuguese and Italian; for, in truth, he is not a Spaniard, though of Spanish descent, — a Creole of New Orleans: hence his philological acquirements. He is one of those children of chance, wanderers who come into the world nobody knows how, when, or whence; only that they are in it; and, while there, performing a part in accordance with their mysterious origin, — living in luxury, and finding the means for it by ways that baffle conjecture.

Frank Lara is fully thirty years of age, the last ten of which he has spent on the shores of San Francisco Bay. Landing there from an American whaling-vessel, and in sailor-costume, he cast off his tarry “togs,” and took to land-life in California. Its easy idleness, as its lawlessness, exactly suited his natural inclinations, and, above all, his *penchant* for gaming. He soon became a noted character in the cockpit, as at the card-table, making money by both, — enough to keep him without the necessity of asking favors from any one.

Similar inclinings and pursuits at an early period brought him and Calderon in contact; and relations have been formed between them now firmly fixed. Of late more than ever; for since the breaking-out of the gold-fever, with its consequent Anglo-Saxon invasion, they have become united in a business partnership, — in a *bank*; not one of the ordinary kind, for discount and deposit, with desks and counters for the transaction

of affairs, but such as may be seen in any Californian town, — a drinking-saloon, containing tables covered with green cloth, and rows of chairs or benches around them : in short, the species known as a “*monté bank*.”

Since the discovery of the gold *placers*, the streets of San Francisco have become crowded with men mad after the precious metal, among them some who do not desire to undergo the toil of sifting it out of sand, washing it from river-mud, nor yet crushing it clear of quartz-rock. They prefer the easier and cleaner method of gathering it across the green baize of a gambling-table.

To accommodate such gentry, Don Francisco de Lara has established a *monté bank*, Don Faustino Calderon being his backer. But though the latter is the moneyed man, and has supplied most of the cash to start with, he does not show in the transaction. He has still some lingering ideas of respectability, and does not desire to appear as a professional gambler. He acts, therefore, as the sleeping partner ; while De Lara, with less reputation at stake, is the active and ostensible one.

Such are the two men, splendidly attired, and magnificently mounted, who have issued from the new-named town of San Francisco, and are riding along the shore of its bay. As they canter gently through the suburbs, they are seen by several, who know and recognize them. Many admire their grand style and picturesque habiliments, and notably the gold-diggers, and other late-comers to California, who have never before seen citizens in such shining array. Farther on, the gamesters encounter but few people, and fewer still who know them. For they are now straying beyond the range of red-shirts, and meet only the natives of

the country, *rancheros* riding townward. Of such as do recognize them, the greater number can tell where they are going. They would say that Calderon is on his way to the *hacienda* of Don Gregorio Montijo, and could guess his errand. About that of De Lara, they might not be so sure, though they would suppose him going there too.

Strange all this to one unacquainted with California and its ways, especially one acquainted with the character of the two individuals in question. He would naturally ask, Could men so tainted be on visiting-terms with the family of a gentleman among the first in California, ranking with its grandest *ricos*, and *familias principales*? By one knowing the country and its customs in the olden time, the answer would not be a negative; for there and then every second man met with was a gambler, either professionally or in practice, and not a few women as well. He who did not occasionally cast dice, or stake doubloons upon the turning of a card, was a *rara avis*. The keeper of a *monté* bank might not be deemed so respectable as a banker of the ordinary kind: not only was he not socially outlawed, but, if rich, "society" rather caressed him.

As yet, Don Faustino Calderon has not come under the category of the professional "sport;" and respectability does not repel him. His dissipated habits are far from exceptional; and his father's good name still continues to throw its *ægis* over him. Under it he is eligible to Californian society of the most select kind, and has the *entrée* of its best circles.

And so, also, Don Francisco de Lara—in a different way. Wealth has secured him this; for, although any thing but rich, he has the repute of being so, and bears

evidence of it about him. He is always stylishly and fashionably attired; his shirt of the finest linen, with diamond studs sparkling in its front. Free in dispensing gratuities, he gives to the poor and the priests; the last kind of largess being a speculation. He intends it as such, and it has well repaid the outlay; for in California, as in other Catholic countries, the dispenser of "Peter's Pence" is sure of being highly esteemed. Frank Lara has done this with a liberal hand, and is therefore styled Don Francisco de Lara, saluted as such by the sandalled monks and shovel-hatted priests who come in contact with him. In addition to all, he is good looking, and of graceful deportment, without being at all a dandy. On the contrary, he carries himself with earnest air, calm and cool, while in his eye may be read the expression, *noli me tangere*. A native of New Orleans, where duels occur almost daily, he is up in the *art d'escrime*. Since his arrival in California, he has twice called out his man, on the second occasion killing him.

Escroc as the French might call him, "blackleg" in the English vocabulary, "sport" in American phrase, Frank Lara is a man with whom no one who knows him would like to take liberties.

In the companionship of Calderon,—under his wing, as it were,—he has been admitted into the best houses, and, along with the latter, is now on the way to visit that of Don Gregorio Montijo. That their visit is of unique character, and for an important purpose, can be gleaned from the speech passing between them as they ride along the road.

"Well, Calderon," says De Lara, "from something you said before setting out, I take it you're going to Don Gregorio's on business very similar to my own. Come, comrade! declare your errand."

“Declare yours.”

“Certainly. I shall make no secret of it to you; nor need I. Why should there be any between us? We’ve now known one another long and intimately enough to exchange confidences of even the closest kind. To-day mine is, that I mean proposing to Don Gregorio’s daughter.”

“And I,” returns Calderon, “intend doing the same to his grand-daughter.”

“In that case, we’re both in the same boat. Well, as there’s no rivalry between us, we can pull pleasantly together. I’ve no objection to being your uncle, even admitting you to a share in the Spaniard’s property proportioned to your claims of kinship.”

“I don’t want a dollar of the old don’s money; only his grand-daughter. I’m deeply in love with her.

“And I,” continues De Lara, “am just as deeply in love with his daughter: it may be deeper.”

“You couldn’t. I’m half mad about Inez Alvarez. I could kill her — if she refuse me.”

“I *shall* kill Carmen Montijo — if she refuse *me*.”

The two men are talking seriously, or seem so. Their voices, the tone, the flashing of their eyes, the expression upon their faces, with their excited gesticulation, all show them to be in earnest. At the last outburst of passionate speech, they turn round in their saddles, and look each other in the face.

De Lara continues the dialogue: “Now, tell me, Faustino, what hope have you of success?”

“For that, fair enough. You remember the last *fandango* held at Don Gregorio’s, — on the day of the cattle-branding?”

“Certainly I do. I’ve good reason to remember it. But go on.”

“Well, that night,” proceeds Calderon, “I danced twice with Doña Iñez, and made many sweet speeches to her. Once I went farther, and squeezed her pretty hand. She wasn’t angry, or, at all events, didn’t say or show it. Surely after such encouragement, I may ask that hand in marriage with fair presumption of not being refused. What’s your opinion?”

“Your chances seem good. But what about Don Gregorio himself? He will have something to say in the matter.”

“Too much, I fear; and that’s just what I do fear. So long as his bit of grazing-land was worth only some thirty thousand dollars, he was amiable enough. Now that, by this gold discovery, it’s got to be good value for ten times the amount, he’ll be a different man, and, likely enough, will go dead against me.”

“Likely enough. It’s the way of the world; and therefore, on that account, you needn’t have a special spite against the Señor Montijo. You’re sure no one else stands between you and your sweetheart? Or is there something in the shape of a rival?”

“Of course there is, — a score of them, as you ought to know; same as with yourself, De Lara. Suitors have been coming and going with both, I suppose, ever since either was old enough to receive them. The last I’ve heard of as paying attentions to Iñez is a young naval officer, a midshipman on board a British man-of-war now lying in the harbor. Indeed, there are two of them spoken of; one said to be *your* rival, as the other is mine. Shall I tell you what’s been for some time the talk of the town? You may as well know it, if you don’t already.”

“What?” asks the Creole excitedly.

“Why, that the one represented as your competitor

has cut out all Carmen's other admirers, yourself among the rest."

Bitter words to the ear of Francisco de Lara, bringing the red color to his cheeks, as if they had been smitten by a switch. With eyes flashing, and full of jealous fire, he exclaims, "If that be so, I'll do as I've said."

"Do what?"

"*Kill Carmen Montijo*. I swear it. I'm in earnest, Calderon, and mean it. If it be as you've heard, I'll surely kill her. I've the right to her life by her giving me the right to her love."

"But did she do that? Has she confessed to loving you?"

"Not in words, I admit. But there are other signs of assent strong as speech, or the hand-squeezings you speak of. Carmen Montijo may be cunning. Some call her a coquette. All I know is, that she has led me to believe she loved me; and, if she's been playing a false game, she shall rue it, one way or the other. This day I'm determined to ascertain the truth, by offering her my hand in marriage. If she refuse it, then I'll know how things stand, and take steps for squaring accounts between us. She shall find that Frank Lara is not the sort of man to let one of woman-kind either laugh at, or play tricks with him."

"I admire your spirit, *amigo*. I catch courage from it, and will imitate your action. If it turn out that Iñez has been trifling with me, I'll — Well, we must first find what answer there is for us, which we shall, I suppose, soon after ascending yonder hill. One of us may be accepted, the other rejected. In that case, one will be happy, the other wretched. Or both may be accepted, and then we'll both be blessed. Taking

things at their worst,—and that we both get refused,—what then? Despair and a speedy end, I suppose?”

“The last if you like, but not the first. When despair comes to Frank Lara, death will come along with it, or soon after. But we waste time talking. Let us forward, and learn our fate!”

With stroke of spur, urging their horses into a gallop, the two *caballeros* keep on; in the countenances of both a cast showing them half hopeful, half doubting, such as may be seen when men are about to make some desperate attempt, with uncertainty as to the result. On Calderon's, notwithstanding his assumed levity, the expression is almost of despair: on that of De Lara, it is more of a demon.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ENCOUNTER INEVITABLE.

AFTER having delivered their speeches, so nearly alike in sound, yet so different in sense, the two ladies on the housetop stand for a short time silent, their eyes turned toward the approaching horsemen. These are still more than a mile off, and, to the ordinary eye, only distinguishable as mounted men wearing cloaks,—one of scarlet color, the other sky-blue. But, despite the distance, the young girls easily identify them, both simultaneously, and in tones somewhat contemptuous, pronouncing their names.

“Yes,” says Carmen, speaking in full assurance, with a lorgnette raised to her eyes, hitherto bent upon

the British war-ship. "No truer types of what I've called them than Francisco de Lara and Faustino Calderon."

The frown that came over her face at first sight of them remains upon it as she continues regarding them through the glass. After an interval, she adds interrogatively, and with a certain uneasiness of manner, "Think you they're coming to the house, Iñez?"

"That is very likely; I should say, almost certain."

"What can be bringing them?" mechanically queries Carmen, with an air of increased vexation.

"Their horses, aunt," rejoins the niece jestingly.

"Don't jest, Iñez. It's too serious."

"What's too serious?"

"Why, these fellows coming hither. I wonder what they can be wanting."

"You needn't wonder at that," says Iñez, still speaking jocularly. "I can tell you what one of them wants, and that's Don Francisco de Lara. He is desirous to have a look at the mistress of this mansion."

"And Don Faustino Calderon is no doubt equally desirous to have a look at her niece," retorts the aunt in like bantering tone.

"He's quite welcome. He may look at me till he strain his ugly eyes out. It won't make any impression."

"I'm sorry I can't say the same for Don Francisco. On me his looks *do* make an impression,—one far from being either pleasant or favorable."

"It wasn't always so, *tia*?"

"No, I admit. I only wish it had been."

"But why?"

"Because now I shouldn't need to be afraid of him.

“Afraid of him! Surely you’re not that?”

“Well, no — not exactly — still” —

She speaks hesitatingly, and in disjointed phrases, her head hung down, with a red spot upon her cheeks, as though she had some reason for reticence,— a secret she scarce likes to disclose. Then a quick change comes over her countenance; and, bending closer to the other, she asks, “Can I trust you with a confidence, *Iñez?*”

“Why need you ask that? You’ve already trusted me with one in telling me you love Don Eduardo Crozier.”

“Now I give you another: I once loved Don Francisco de Lara.”

“Indeed?”

“No, no!” rejoins Carmen quickly, and as if half repenting the avowal. “Not *loved* him: that’s not true. I only came near it.”

“And now?”

“I hate him.”

“Why, may I ask? What has changed you?”

“That’s easily answered. Listen, *Iñez*, and you shall have the explanation. When I first met him, I was much younger than now,— a mere girl, full of girlish fancies, romantic, as called. They may not be gone yet,— not all. But whatever of them remains no longer turns towards Francisco de Lara. I thought him handsome; and, in a sense, so is he. In person, you’ll admit, he’s all man may or need be,— a sort of Apollo or Hyperion. But in mind—ah, *Iñez*, that man is a very satyr, in heart and soul a Mephistopheles. I only discovered it when I became better acquainted with him. Then I *hated* him, and do so still.”

“But why should you be afraid of him?”

Carmen does not reply promptly. Clearly she has not yet given the whole of her confidence: there is something withheld.

Iñez, whose sympathies are now enlisted,—seeing that her aunt has some secret cause for suffering,—presses for the explanation. She does so entreatingly, in the language of sisterly affection.

“Carmen, dear Carmen! tell me what it is. Have you ever given Don Francisco a claim to call you his *novia*?”

“Never! Neither that, nor any thing of the kind. He has no claim, and I no compromise. The only thing I’ve reason to regret is having listened to certain flattering speeches without resenting them.”

“Pst! What does that signify? Why, Don Faustino has made flattering speeches to me (scores of them), called me all sorts of endearing names; does so whenever we two are together alone. I only laugh at him.”

“Ah! Faustino Calderon is not Francisco de Lara. They are men of very different characters. In the behavior of your admirer, there’s only a little of the ludicrous: in that of mine, there may be a great deal of danger. But let us cease discussing them. There’s no time for that now. The question is, Are they coming on to the house?”

“I think there can be no question about it. Like enough they’ve heard that we’re soon going away, and are about to honor us with a farewell visit.”

“Would it were only that! But, visit of whatever kind, ’tis extremely ill timed, and may be awkward.”

“How so?”

“Supposing they should stay till our English friends

arrive? You know 'tis near the hour they were invited to ride out with us. Twelve, father told them, he says. It's now half-past eleven; and, if the four should meet here, wouldn't we be in a dilemma? It's very vexatious — the coming of these two cavaliers."

"Let them come, who cares? I don't."

"But I do. If papa were at home, I mightn't so much mind it. But, just now, I've no desire to see De Lara alone, and still less while being visited by Don Eduardo. They're both *demonios*, though in a very different way; and, sure as fate, there'd be trouble, perhaps a fight between them. That wouldn't be at all pleasant. But let us hope our friends from the ship won't get here till our shore *friends*, or enemies I should rather style them, have done their *devoirs*, and gone away."

"But our ship-friends will be here before that. I declare they're on the way now. Look yonder."

Iñez points over the bay, in the direction of the British frigate, where a boat is in the water under the ship's beam. The sun, reflected from dripping oar-blades, shows that they are in motion. And, while the girls continue gazing, the boat is seen to separate from the ship's side, and put shoreward, straight towards the sand-spit which shoots out in front of Don Gregorio's dwelling. The rowers are all dressed alike; the measured stroke of their oars betokening that the boat belongs to the man-o'-war. But the young ladies do not conjecture about that; nor have they any doubt as to the identity of two of the figures seated in the stern-sheets. Those uniforms of dark blue, with the gold buttons, and yellow cap-bands, are too well known not to be recognizable at any distance to which love's glances could possibly penetrate. They

are the guests expected, for whom the spare horses stand saddled in the *patio*. For Don Gregorio, not displeased with certain delicate attentions which the young British officers have been paying to the female members of his family, has invited them to visit him, ride out along with the ladies, and, on return, stay to dinner. He knows that a treat of this kind will be pleasing to those he has asked, and, before leaving home, has given orders for the steeds to be saddled.

It is not the first time Crozier and Cadwallader have been to the Spaniard's house, nor the first to stretch their limbs under his dining-table. But it may be the last, at least while that table is spread in his present abode; for in truth it is to be a farewell visit. But along with this understanding another has been entered into. The acquaintance commenced in California is to be renewed at Cadiz, when "The Crusader" goes thither, which she is ere long expected to do. But for such expectation, Carmen Montijo and Iñez Alvarez would not be so high hearted at the prospect of a leave-taking so near. Less painful on this account, it might have been even pleasant, but for what they see on the opposite side, — the horsemen coming from the town. An encounter between the two pairs gives promise to mar the happy intercourse of the afternoon.

"They'll meet, they must!" says Carmen, speaking apprehensively.

"Let them," rejoins Iñez in a tone of nonchalance.

"What if they do?"

"What! They may quarrel. I'm almost sure they will."

"No fear for that; and, if they should, where's the danger? You, such a believer in the romantic, stickler for old knight-errantry, instead of regretting it, should

be glad. Look there! Lovers coming from all sides, —suits by land, and suits by sea! No lady of the troubadour times ever saw the like: none was ever honored by such a rivalry. Come, Carmen, be proud! Stand firm on your castle-keep. Show yourself worthy to receive this splendid adoration.”

“Iñez, you don’t know the danger.”

“There is none. If they should come into collision, and have a fight, let them. I’ve no fear for mine. If Willie Cadwallader isn’t a match for Faustino Calderon, then he’s not match or mate for me — never shall be.”

“*Sobrina*, you astonish me! I had no idea you were such a *demonio*. The Moorish blood, I suppose. Your words make me almost as wicked as yourself. It isn’t for that I’m afraid. I’ve as much confidence in my lover as you in yours. No fear that Señor Crozier will cower before Francisco de Lara. If he do, I shall take back my heart a second time, and carry it unscathed to Cadiz.”

Meanwhile, the man-o’-war’s boat has been drawing in towards the beach, heading for a little embayment, formed by the shore-line and the sand-bar already spoken of. The horsemen coming from the town-side do not see it; nor can the crew of the boat perceive them. The land-ridge is between the two parties, its crest concealing them from one another. They are approaching it at a like rate of speed; for, although the horses appear to be in a gallop, it is only a fancy gait fashionable among Spanish Californians, its purpose to exhibit equestrian skill. The two horsemen, looking up the hill, see two heads on the housetop, and know that ladies’ eyes are upon them. Surreptitiously goaded by the spur, their steeds plunge and

curvet, apparently advancing at a rapid pace, but in reality covering little ground. At length both parties disappear from the eyes of those on the *azotea*. They have gone under the brow of the hill, which, overhanging for a short distance, shuts out a view of the road, as also the strip of sandy shore.

Unseen from above, the man-o'-war's boat beaches; and the two officers spring out upon the strand. One of them, turning, says something to the cockswain, who has remained in the stern-sheets, with the tiller-ropes held in hand. It is an order, with instructions about where and when he is to attend them for their return to the ship.

“At the new wharf in the harbor,” Crozier is heard to say; for it is he who commands, on account of seniority in rank.

His order given, the boat shoves off, and is rowed back toward the ship; while the officers commence climbing the slope to get upon the shore-road. At the same time the horsemen are ascending from the opposite side. Soon both parties are again within view of those on the housetop; but neither as yet sees the other, or has any suspicion of their mutual proximity. The crest of the ridge is still between; and, in a few seconds more, they will sight one another. The men afoot are advancing at about the same rate of speed as those on horseback. The latter have ceased showing off, as if satisfied with the impression they must have already made, and are now approaching in tranquil gait, but with an air of subdued triumph,—the mock modesty of the *matador*, who, with blood-stained sword, bends meekly before the box where beauty sits smiling approbation. The two pedestrians climb the hill less ceremoniously. Glad to stretch their limbs upon land,

shake the knots out of them, as the junior gleefully remarks, they eagerly scale the steep; not silent either, but laughing and shouting like a couple of schoolboys abroad for an afternoon's holiday.

Suddenly coming within view of the house, they bring their boisterous humor under restraint at sight of two heads appearing above the roof; for they know to whom these belong, and note that the faces are turned towards them.

At the same instant the horsemen, also, see the heads, and observe that the faces are *not* turned towards them. On the contrary, they are averted, the ladies looking aslant in another direction.

Some chagrin in this, after all their grand caracoling and feats of equitation, that must have been witnessed by the fair spectators. At what are these now gazing? Is it a ship sailing up the bay, or something else on the water? No matter what, and whether on land or water; enough for the cavaliers to think they are being slightly received. Disconcerted, they seek an explanation, mutually questioning one another. Before either can make answer in speech, both have it before their eyes, in the shape of two British naval officers.

Like themselves, the latter have just reached the summit of the ridge, and are coming on towards Don Gregorio's gate. It is midway between; and, keeping on at the same rate of speed, they will meet directly in front of it.

Neither pair has ever set eyes on the other before for all this, there is an expression on the faces of all four that tells of mutual surmises of no friendly nature.

Calderon says to De Lara, *sotto voce*, "The English officers!"

Cadwallader whispers to Crozier, "The fellows we've heard about, — our rivals, Ned; like ourselves, I suppose, going to visit the girls."

De Lara makes no response to Calderon; neither does Crozier to Cadwallader; there is not time. They are all close up to the gate, and there is only its breadth between them.

They have arrived there at the same instant of time, and simultaneously make stop — face to face, silence on both sides; not a word offered in exchange. But looks are quite as expressive, — glances that speak the language of jealous rivalry, of rage with difficulty suppressed.

It is a question of precedence as to who shall first pass through the gate. Their hesitation is not from any courtesy, but the reverse. The men on horseback look down on those afoot contemptuously, scornfully, threateningly, too, as if they thought of riding over, and trampling them under the hoofs of their horses. No doubt they would like to do it, and might make trial, were the young officers unarmed. But they are not. Crozier carries a pistol; Cadwallader, his midshipman's dirk, both appearing outside their uniforms.

For a period of several seconds' duration, the rivals stand *vis-à-vis*, neither venturing to advance. Around them is a nimbus of angry electricity that needs but a spark to kindle it into furious flame. A single word would do it. This word spoken, and two of the four may never enter Don Gregorio's gate; at least, not alive.

It is not spoken. The only speech is one which passes from Crozier to Cadwallader, not in a whisper, but aloud, and without regard to the effect it may have on the Californians,

“Come along, Will! We’ve something better before us than stand shilly-shallying here. Heave after me, shipmate!”

Crozier’s speech cuts the Gordian knot; and the officers, gliding through the gateway, advance along the avenue. With faces now turned towards the house, they see the ladies still upon the *azotea*. Soon as near enough for Carmen to see it, Crozier draws out the treasured tress, and fastens it in his cap, behind the gold band. It falls over his shoulder like a cataract of liquid amber. Cadwallader does likewise; and from his cap also streams a tress black as the plumage of a raven. The two upon the housetop appear pleased by this display. They show their approval by imitating it. Each raises hand to her riding-hat; and, when these are withdrawn, a curl of hair is seen twining over their *toquillas*, — one chestnut-brown, the other golden-hued.

Scarcely is this love-telegraphy exchanged, when the two Californians come riding up the avenue at full speed. Though lingering at the gate, and still far off, De Lara has observed the affair of the tresses, and understood the symbolism of the act. Exasperated beyond bounds, he can no longer control himself, and cares not what may come. At his instigation, Calderon spurs on by his side, the two tearing furiously along. Their purpose is evident, — to force the pedestrians from the path, and so humble them in the eyes of their sweethearts. On his side, Crozier remains cool, admonishing Cadwallader to do the same. He feels the power of possession, assured by those smiles that the citadel is theirs. It is for the outsiders to make the assault.

“Give a clear gangway, Will,” he says, “and let

them pass. We can talk to the gentlemen afterwards.

Both step back among the *manzanita* bushes; and the *ginete* go galloping past; De Lara, on Crozier's side, scowling down, as if he would annihilate him with a look. The scowl is returned with interest, though the officer still reserves speech. On the other edge of the avenue, the action is a little different. The midshipman, full of youthful freak, determines on having his lark. He sees the chance, and cannot restrain himself. As Calderon sweeps past, he draws his dirk, and pricks the Californian's horse in the hip. The animal, maddened by the pain, bounds to one side, and then shoots off at increased speed, still further heightened by the fierce exclamations of his rider, and the mocking laugh sent after him by the mid. Under the walls, the two horsemen come to a halt, neither having made much by their bit of rude bravadoism. And they know they will have a reckoning to settle for it: at least, De Lara does; for on the brow of Crozier, coming up, he can read the determination to call him to account. He is not flurried about this. On the contrary, he has courted it, knowing himself a skilled swordsman, and dead shot. Remembering that he has already killed his man, he can await with equanimity the challenge he has provoked. It is not fear has brought the pallor to his cheeks, and set the dark seal upon his brow. Both spring from a different passion, observable in his eyes as he turns them towards the housetop; for the ladies are still there, looking down.

Saluting, he says, "Doña Carmen, can I have the honor of an interview?"

The lady does not make immediate answer. A spectator of all that has passed, she observes the hostile

attitude between the two sets of visitors. To receive both at the same time will be more than embarrassing. With their passions roused to such a pitch of anger, it must end in a personal encounter. Her duty is clear. She is mistress of the house, representing her father in his absence. The young officers are there by invitation. At thought of this, she no longer hesitates.

“Not now, Don Francisco de Lara,” she says, answering his question; “not to-day. We must beg of you to excuse us.”

“Indeed!” rejoins he sneeringly. “Will it be deemed discourteous in me to ask why we are denied?”

It is discourteous, and so Doña Carmen deems it. Though she does not tell him as much in words, he can understand it from her reply.

“You are quite welcome to know the reason. We have an engagement.”

“Oh, an engagement!”

“Yes, sir, an engagement,” she repeats, in a tone telling of irritation. “Those gentlemen you see are our guests. My father has invited them to spend the day with us.”

“Ah! your father has invited them! How very good of Don Gregorio Montijo giving his hospitality to *gringos*! And Doña Carmen has added her entreaties, no doubt?”

“Sir,” says Carmen, no longer able to conceal her indignation, “your speech is impertinent, insulting. I shall listen to it no longer.”

Saying this, she steps back, disappearing behind the parapet, where Inez has already concealed herself, at the close of a similar short but stormy dialogue with Calderon.

De Lara, a lurid look in his eyes, sits in his saddle

as if in a stupor. He is aroused from it by a voice, Crozier's, saying, "You appear anxious to make apology to the lady: you can make it to *me*."

"*Carrai!*" exclaims the Creole, starting, and glaring angrily at the speaker. "Who are you?"

"One who demands an apology for your rude behavior."

"You will not get it."

"Satisfaction, then?"

"That to your heart's content."

"I shall have it so. Your card, sir."

"There, take it. Yours?"

The bits of pasteboard are exchanged, after which De Lara, casting another glance up to the *azotea*, where he sees nothing but blank wall, turns his horse's head, and, spitefully plying the spur, gallops back down the avenue, his comrade closely following.

Calderon has not deemed it incumbent upon him to ask a card from Cadwallader; nor has the latter thought it necessary to demand one from him. The mid is quite contented with what he has done with his dirk.

The young officers enter the house in cheerful confidence that they have lost nothing by the encounter, and that those inside will still smilingly receive them.



CHAPTER IX.

A SHIP WITHOUT SAILORS.

AMONG the vessels lying in the harbor of San Francisco is one athwart whose stern may be read the name "El Condor."

She is a ship of small size, some five or six hundred tons; devoted to peaceful commerce, as can be told by certain peculiarities of rig and structure understood by seamen.

The name will suggest a South American nationality, — Ecuadorian, Peruvian, Bolivian, or Chilian, — since the bird after which she has been baptized is found in all these States. Columbia and the Argentine Confederation can also claim it.

But there is no need to guess at the particular country to which the craft in question belongs. The flag suspended over her taffrail declares it by a symbolism intelligible to those who take an interest in national insignia.

It is a tricolor, — the orthodox and almost universal red, white, and blue; not, as with the French, disposed vertically, but in two horizontal bands; the lower one, crimson red; the upper, half white, half blue, the last contiguous to the staff, with a single five-pointed star set centrally in its field; this, with the disposition of colors, proclaiming the ship that carries them to be of Chili.

She is not the only Chilian vessel in the harbor of

San Francisco. Several other craft are there that show the same colors, — brigs, barks, schooners, and ships; for the spirited little South American republic is as prosperous as enterprising, and its flag waves far and wide over the Pacific. With its population of skilled miners, it has been among the first of foreign States in sending a large representative force to cradle the gold of California. Not only are its ships lying in the bay, but its *guasos* and *gambusinos* in goodly number tread the streets of the town; while many of the dark-eyed damsels, who from piazzas and balconies salute the passer-by with seductive smiles, are those charming little Chileñas that make sad havoc with the heart of almost every Jack-tar who visits Valparaiso.

On the ship "El Condor" we meet not much that can be strictly called Chilean, — little besides the vessel herself, and the captain commanding her; not commanding her sailors, since there are none aboard, hailing from Chili or elsewhere. Those who brought her into San Francisco Bay have abandoned her, — gone off to the gold-diggings. Arriving in the heat of the placer-fever, they have preferred seeking fortune with pick, shovel, and pan, to handling tarry ropes at ten dollars a month. Almost on the instant of the "Condor's" dropping anchor, they deserted, to a man, leaving her skipper alone, with only the cook for a companion. Neither is the latter Chilean, but African, a native of Zanzibar. Neither are the two great non-keys observed gambolling about the deck; for the climate of Chili, lying outside the equatorial belt, is too cold for the *quadrumana*.

Not much appearing upon the "Condor" would proclaim her a South American ship; and nothing in her cargo, though a cargo she carries. She has just

arrived from a trading-voyage to the South Sea Isles, extending to the Indian Archipelago, whence her lading, — a varied assortment, consisting of tortoise-shell, spices, mother-of pearl, Manila cigars, and such other commodities as may be collected among the Oriental islands. Hence, also, two large *myas* monkeys, — better known as orang-outangs, — seen playing about her deck. These she has brought from Borneo.

Only a small portion of her freight had been consigned to San Francisco; and this has been long ago landed. The rest remains in her hold, awaiting transport to Valparaiso. How soon she may arrive there, or take departure from her present anchorage, is a question that even her captain cannot answer. If asked, he would most probably reply, "*Quien sabe?*" and, further pressed, might point to her deserted decks, offering that as an explanation of his inability to satisfy the inquirer. Her captain, Antonio Lantanas by name, is a sailor of the Spanish American type; and, being this, he takes crosses and disappointments coolly. Even the desertion of his crew seems scarcely to ruffle him: he bears it with a patient resignation that would be quite incomprehensible to either English or Yankee skipper. With a broad-brimmed *jipi-japa* hat, shading his thin, swarth features from the sun, he lounges all day long upon his quarter-deck, with elbows usually rested upon the capstan-head; his sole occupation being to roll paper cigarritos, one of which is usually either in his fingers, or between his lips. If he at any time varies this, it is to eat his meals, or take a turn at play with his pet monkeys. These are male and female, both full of fun in their uncouth fashion; and Capt. Lantanas takes it out of them by occasionally touching their snouts with the lighted end of his ciga-

rette, laughing to see them scamper off scared at the singular and somewhat painful effect of fire.

His meals are served regularly three times a day; and his cook, — a negro, black as the tar upon the rat-line ropes, — after having served them, returns to an idleness equalling his own. He, too, has his diversion with the oranges, approaching much nearer to them in physical appearance, and for this reason, perhaps, to them a more congenial playmate.

Once a day the skipper steps into his gig, and rows himself ashore, but not to search for sailors: he knows that would be an idle errand. True, there are plenty of them in San Francisco; scores parading its streets, and other scores seated or standing within its taverns and restaurants. But they are all on the spree; all rollicking, and, if not rich, hoping soon to be. Not a man of them could be coaxed to take service on board an out-bound ship for a wage less than would make the voyage unprofitable to her owners.

As the Chilian skipper is not only master, but proprietor, of his own craft, he has no intention to stir under the circumstances, but is contented to wait till times change, and tars become inclined again to go to sea. When this may be, and the "Condor" shall have spread her canvas wings for a further flight to Valparaiso, he has not the remotest idea. He enters the town, but to meet other skippers with ships crewless as his own, and exchange condolences on their common destitution. On a certain day, that on which we are introduced to him, he has not sculled himself ashore, but abides upon his vessel, awaiting the arrival of one who has sent him a message.

Although San Francisco is fast becoming transformed into an American city, and already has its several

newspapers, there is among them a small sheet printed in Spanish, by name "El Diario." In this Capt. Lantanas has advertised his vessel, open for freight or passage, bound for Valparaiso, and to call at intermediate ports, Panama among the number. The advertisement directs reference to be made to a shipping-agent, by name Don Tomas Silvestre. In answer to it, Capt. Lantanas has received a letter from a gentleman who has already communicated with his agent, and who has promised to present himself on board the "Condor" by twelve meridian of this day.

Although a stranger to the port of San Francisco, the Chilian skipper has some knowledge of his correspondent; for Don Tomas has the day before informed him that a gentleman, from whom he may expect to hear, — the same whose name is signed to the letter, — is a man of wealth, a large landed proprietor, whose acres lie contiguous to the rising city of San Francisco, and for this reason enormously increased in value by the influx of gold-seeking immigrants. What this important personage may want with him, Lantanas cannot tell; for Silvestre himself has not been made aware of it, the gentleman declining to state his business to any other than the captain of the ship.

On the morning of the appointed day, leaning, as usual, against his capstan, and puffing his paper cigar, the Chilian skipper is not in a mood for playing with his monkey pets. His mind is given to a more serious matter; his whole thoughts being absorbed in conjecturing for what purpose his unknown correspondent may be seeking the interview. He is not without surmises, in which he is assisted by something he has heard while mixing in Spanish circles ashore, — this, that the land-owner in question has lately sold his

land, realizing an immense sum, half a million dollars being rumored. Furthermore, that being a Spaniard, and neither Mexican nor Californian, he is about to return to Spain, taking with him his household gods, — Lares, Penates, and all. These could not be stowed in a single state-room, but would require a whole ship, or a goodly portion of one. The “Condor” has still plenty of room to spare. Her hold is not half full, and her cabin has accommodation for several passengers. It may be on this very business his correspondent is coming aboard. Capt. Lantanas so interrogates himself while standing upon his quarter-deck, and with the glowing coal of his cigarrito fending off his hairy familiars, who, in their play, at times intrude upon him. It pleases him to think he may have surmised correctly; and, while still indulging in conjecture, he sees something which puts an end to it. This is a shore-boat, with a single pair of rowers, and a gentleman, evidently a landsman, seated in the stern-sheets, to all appearance coming on for the “Condor.” Capt. Lantanas steps to the side of his ship, and, standing in her waist, awaits the arrival of his visitor. As the boat draws near, he makes out a man, dressed in semi-Californian costume, such as is worn by the higher class of *hacendados*. The skipper can have no question as to who it is: if he has, it is soon answered; for the boat, touching the ship’s side, is instantly made fast. The Californian mounts the man-ropes, and, stepping down upon the deck, hands Capt. Lantanas his card.

He who has presented himself on the quarter-deck of the “Condor” is a man in years well up to sixty, and somewhat above medium height, taller than he appears, through a slight stoop in the shoulders. His

step, though not tottering, shows vigor impaired ; and upon his countenance are the traces of recent illness, with strength not yet restored. His complexion is clear, rather rubicund, and in health might be more so ; while his hair, both on head and chin (the latter a long, flowing beard), is snow white. It could never have been very dark, but more likely of the color called sandy. This, with grayish-blue eyes, and features showing some points of Celtic conformation, would argue him either no Spaniard, or, if so, one belonging to the province of Biscay.

This last he is ; for the correspondent of Capt. Lantanas is Don Gregorio Montijo.

CHAPTER X.

A CHARTER-PARTY.

SOON as assured, by a glance at the card given him, that his visitor is the gentleman who has written to appoint an interview, Capt. Lantanas politely salutes, and, *jipi-japa* in hand, stands waiting to hear what the *haciendado* may have to say.

The latter, panting after the effort made in ascending the man-ropes, takes a moment's time to recover breath ; then, returning the skipper's bow, he interrogates, "Capt. Lantanas, I presume?"

"*Si, señor,*" responds the master of the "Condor," with a bow of becoming humility to a man reputed so rich ; then adding, "*A dispocion de V.*" ("At your service.")

“Well, captain,” rejoins Don Gregorio, “I shall take it for granted that you know who I am. Don Tomas Silvestre has informed you, has he not?”

“He has, *señor*.”

“And you’ve received my letter?”

“*Si, señor*.”

“That’s all right, then. And now to proceed to the business that has brought me aboard your ship. Having seen your advertisement in the “*Diario*,” I communicated with Don Tomas, but only so far as to get your correct address, with some trifling particulars. For the rest, I’ve thought it best to deal directly with yourself, as the matter I have in hand is too important to be altogether intrusted to an agent. In short, it requires confidence, if not secrecy; and from what I’ve heard of you, captain, I feel sure I can confide in you.”

“You compliment me, Señor Montijo.”

“No, no! nothing of the kind. I but speak from the impression Silvestre has given me of your character. But now to business. Your ship is advertised for freight, or passage?”

“Either, or both.”

“Bound for Valparaiso and intermediate ports?”

“Anywhere down the coast.”

“Have you any passengers already engaged?”

“Not any as yet.”

“How many can you take?”

“Well, *señor*, to speak truth, my craft is not intended to carry passengers. She’s a trading-vessel, as you see. But, if you’ll step down to the cabin, you can judge for yourself. There’s the saloon (not very large, it is true), and sleeping-accommodation for six, — two snug state-rooms, that will serve, if need be, for ladies.”

“That will do. Now about the freight. Don Tomas tells me you have some cargo aboard.”

“A portion of my ship is already occupied.”

“That won’t signify to me. I suppose there’s enough room left for something that weighs less than a ton, and isn’t of any great bulk. Say it will take half a score of cubic feet: you can find stowage for that?”

“Oh, yes! much more than that.”

“So far good. And you can accommodate three passengers, — a gentleman and two ladies? In short, myself and the female members of my family, — my daughter and grand-daughter?”

“Will the Señor Montijo step into the ‘Condor’s’ cabin, and see for himself?”

“By all means.”

Capt. Lantanas leads down the stairway, his visitor following. The saloon is inspected; after it the sleeping-rooms, right and left.

“Just the thing,” says Don Gregorio, speaking in soliloquy, and evidently satisfied. “It will do admirably,” he adds, addressing himself to the skipper. “And now, Capt. Lantanas, about terms. What are they to be?”

“That, *señor*, will depend on what is wanted. To what port do you wish me to take you?”

“Panama. ’Tis one of the ports mentioned in your advertisement?”

“It is, *señor*.”

“Well, for this freight — as I’ve told you, about a ton, with some trifling household effects — and the three passengers, how much?”

“The terms of freight, as you may be aware, are usually rated according to the class of goods. Is it gold, Don Gregorio? From your description, I suppose it is.”

The skipper has guessed aright. It is gold (nearly a ton of it) accruing to Don Gregorio from the sale of his land, for which he has been paid in dust and nuggets, at that time the only coin in California, indeed, the only circulating medium, since notes were not to be had. The *ex-haciendado* is by no means a niggardly man: still he would like to have his treasure transported at a rate not exorbitant. And yet he is anxious about its safety, and for this reason has resolved to ship it with secrecy, and in a private trading-vessel, instead of by one of the regular liners already commenced plying between San Francisco and Panama. He has heard that these are crowded with miners returning home, rough fellows; many of them queer characters, some little better than bandits. He dislikes the idea of trusting his gold among them, and equally his girls, since no other ladies are likely to be going that way. He has full faith in the integrity of Capt. Lantanas, and knows the Chilian skipper to be a man of gentle heart, in fact, a gentleman. Don Tomas has told him all this.

Under the circumstances, and with such a man, it will not do to drive too hard a bargain; and Don Gregorio, thus reflecting, confesses his freight to be gold, and asks the skipper to name his terms.

Lantanas, after a moment spent in mental calculation, says, "One thousand dollars for the freight, and a hundred each for the three passages. Will that suit you, *señor?*"

"It seems a large sum," rejoins the *ex-haciendado*. "But I am aware prices are high just now: so I agree to it. When will you be ready to sail?"

"I am ready now, *señor*; that is, if" —

"If what?"

The captain, remembering his crewless ship, does not make immediate answer.

“If,” says Don Gregorio, noticing his hesitation, and mistaking the reason — “if you’re calculating on any delay from me, you needn’t. I can have every thing on board in three or four days, — a week at the utmost.”

The skipper is still silent, thinking of excuses. He dislikes losing the chance of such a profitable cargo, and yet knows he cannot name any certain time of sailing for the want of hands to work his ship. There seems no help for it but to confess his shortcomings. Perhaps Don Gregorio will wait till the “Condor” can get a crew. The more likely, since almost every other vessel in port is in a similar predicament.

“*Señor*,” he says at length, “my ship is at your service; and I should be pleased and proud to have you and your ladies as my passengers. But there’s a little difficulty to be got over before I can leave San Francisco.”

“Clearance duties — port dues to be paid. You want the passage-money advanced, I presume? Well, I shall not object to prepaying it, in part. How much will you require?”

“*Mil gracias*, Señor Montijo. It’s not any thing of that kind. Although far from rich, thank Heaven! neither I nor my craft is under embargo. I could sail out of this harbor in half an hour, but for the want of” —

“Want of what?” asks the *ex-hacierendado*, in some surprise.

“Well, *señor* — sailors.”

“What! Have you no sailors?”

“I am sorry to say, not one.”

“Well, Capt. Lantanas, I thought it strange that I observed nobody aboard your ship, except that black fellow. But I supposed your sailors had gone ashore.”

“So have they, *señor* — and intend staying there. Alas! that’s the trouble. They’ve gone off to the gold-diggings, — every one of them, except my negro cook. Likely enough I should have lost him too, but he knows that California is now part of the United States, and fears that some speculating Yankee might make a slave of him, or that he might meet his old master; for he has had one already.”

“How vexatious all this!” says Don Gregorio. “I fear I shall have to look out for another ship.”

“I fear you’ll not find one much better provided than mine — as regards sailors. In that respect, to use a professional phrase, we’re all in the same boat.”

“You assure me of that?”

“I do, *señor*.”

“I can trust you, Capt. Lantanas. As I have told you, I’m not here without knowing something of yourself. You have a friend in Don Tomas Silvestre?”

“I believe I have the honor of Don Tomas’ friendship.”

“Well, he has recommended you in such terms, that I can thoroughly rely upon you: for that reason, I shall now make known why I wish to travel by your ship.”

The Chilian skipper bows thanks for the compliment, and silently awaits the proffered confidence.

“I have just sold my property here, receiving for it three hundred thousand dollars in gold-dust, — the same intended for your freight. It is now lying at my house, some three miles from town. As you must be aware, Capt. Lantanas, this place is at present the rendezvous of scoundrels collected from every country on the face

of the earth, but chiefly from the United States and Australia. They live and act almost without regard to law; such judges as they have being almost as great criminals as those brought before them. I feel impatient to get away from the place; which, under the circumstances, you won't wonder at. And I am naturally anxious about my gold-dust. At any hour, a band of these lawless ruffians may take it into their heads to strip me of it, or, at all events, attempt to do so. Therefore I wish to get it aboard a ship, — one where it will be safe, and in whose captain I can thoroughly confide. Now, captain, you understand me?"

"I do," is the simple response of the Chilian. He is about to add that Don Gregorio's gold, as also his secret, will be safe enough, so far as he can protect it, when the *ex-haciendado* interrupts him by continuing,—

"I may add that it is my intention to return to Spain, of which I am a native, — to Cadiz, where I possess some property. That, I intended doing anyhow; but now I want to take my departure at once. As a Spaniard, *señor*, I needn't point out to you, who are of the same race, that the society of California cannot be congenial, now that the rowdies of the United States have become its rulers. I am most anxious to get away from the place as soon as possible. It is exceedingly awkward you not having a crew. Can't something be done to procure one?"

"The only thing is to offer extra pay. There are plenty of sailors in San Francisco; for they've not all gone to gather gold: some are engaged in scattering it. Unfortunately, most are worthless, drunken fellows. Still it is possible that a few good men might be found, were the wages made sufficiently tempting. No doubt, an advertisement in the "Diario," offering double pay,

might procure me as many hands as should be needed for working my ship."

"How much would it all amount to?"

"Possibly an extra thousand dollars."

"Suppose I pay that: will you engage the whole ship to me; that is, take no other passengers, or wait for any more freight, but sail at once — soon as you've secured a crew? Do you agree to such terms?"

"*Si señor*: they are perfectly satisfactory."

"In that case I'll be answerable for the extra wages. Any thing to get away from this pandemonium of a place."

"I think we shall have no great difficulty in getting sailors. You authorize me to advertise for them?"

"I do," answers Don Gregorio.

"Enough!" rejoins the skipper. "And now, *señor*, you may make your preparations for embarking."

"I have not many to make. Nearly all has been done already. It's only to get our personal baggage aboard, with the freight safely stowed. By the way," adds the *ex-haciendado*, speaking *sotto voce*, "I wish to ship the gold as soon as possible, and without attracting any attention to it. You understand me, captain?"

"I do."

"I shall have it brought aboard at night, in a boat which belongs to Silvestre. It will be safer in your cabin than anywhere else, since no one need be the wiser about the place of deposit."

"No one shall, through me."

"That I feel certain of, *Señor Lantanas*. Don Tomas is your indorser, and would be willing to be your bondsman, were it needed; which it is not."

Again the "Condor's" captain bows in acknowledg-

ment of the confidence reposed in him ; and after some further exchange of speech respecting the shipment of the treasure, and the writing out an advertisement which Don Gregorio is to get inserted in the "Diario," the latter returns to his boat, and is rowed back to the shore ; while the Chilian skipper lights a fresh cigarrito, and, with elbows rested on the capstan-head, resumes the attitude of *insouciance* out of which he has been temporarily aroused.

CHAPTER XI.

IN SEARCH OF A SECOND.

JUST about the time Don Gregorio is taking leave of Capt. Lantanas, the two unreceived visitors are turning their backs upon his house. De Lara feels the discomfiture the keenest. His heart is harrowed with mingled emotions, — passions of varied complexion, all evil. His lips are livid with rage, his brow black with chagrin ; while his eyes fairly scintillate with unsatisfied vengeance. While returning along the avenue, he neither looks back nor up. Not a syllable escapes him. With glance upon the ground, he rides in sullen silence.

After clearing the entrance-gate, and again upon the outside road, he turns face toward the dwelling whose hospitality has been denied him. He sees nought there to soothe, but something which still further afflicts him. Four horses are filing out through the front-gate, conducted by grooms. They are saddled, bridled, ready

for being mounted. To his practised eye, their caparison tells that they are intended only for a short excursion, not a journey. And, though their saddles are nearly alike, he knows that only two of them are to be mounted by men, the other two to carry ladies. The *seuoritas* are going out for a ride, — a *paseo de campo*, — accompanied by their English guests. Simultaneously, as instinctively, the two Californians arrive at this conclusion. Now they know why they were not received; a knowledge, which, instead of tranquillizing their chafed spirits, but maddens them the more. The thought of their sweethearts being escorted by their rivals, riding along wild unfrequented paths, through trees overshadowing, away from the presence of spying domestics, or the interference of protecting relatives, beyond the eyes and ears of every one — the thought that Carmen Montijo and Iñez Alvarez are setting out on an excursion of this kind is to Frank Lara and Faustino Calderon bitter as deadliest poison. And reflection imbitters it the more. The excursionists will have every opportunity of wandering at will. They will become separated; and there can be no doubt as to how the partition will be made: the older of the two officers will pair off with Doña Carmen, the younger with Doña Iñez. Thus they will ride unmolested, unobserved; converse without fear of being overheard, clasp hands without danger of being seen — perhaps exchange kisses. Oh the dire, maddening jealousy! Even the dull brain and cold heart of Calderon are fired by these reflections. They sting him to the quick, but not as De Lara; for not as De Lara does he love.

After gazing for a while at the house, at the horses and grooms, at the preparations that are being made

for mounting, noting their magnificent style, with a last glance such as Satan gave when expelled from Paradise, the Creole drives the spur deep into his horse's side, and dashes off down the hill, Calderon keeping after. At its bottom they again halt, being now out of sight of the house. Facing toward his companion, De Lara says, "We're in for a fight, Faustino, both of us."

"Not both. I don't think I'm called upon to challenge that youngster. He's but a boy."

"He's been man enough to insult you; and, if I mistake not, you'll find him man enough to meet you."

"I don't see that he *did* insult me."

"Indeed! you don't? Sticking your horse, as if it were a pig, and sending him off in a stampede that well-nigh dismounted you, — all before the face of your lady-love, right under her eyes! You don't deem that an insult, eh?"

"But you must remember I gave him provocation. At your instigation, I nearly rode over him. Looking at it in that light, he's in a sense excusable for what he did. Besides, he only meant it as a joke: when it was all over, he laughed at it."

"Not at it, but at you: so did your sweetheart, *amigo*. As we reined up under the walls, I could see her long lashes drooping down, her eyes looking disdain at you, with her pretty lips pouting in scorn. You're evidently out of her good graces, and you'll have to do something ere you can reinstate yourself."

"Do you really think so?"

"I'm sure of it. Never surer of any thing in my life."

"But what would you have me do?"

"You ought to know without asking me. Call out."

the cub, and kill him — if you can. That's what I design doing with my gentleman."

"Ah! you're a dead shot; and that makes all the difference. These Anglo-Saxons always use pistols; and, if I challenge him, he'll have the choice of weapons."

"Quite true. With me it will be different. I took care to give the affront, and you should have done the same. Seeing you got the worst of it, you ought to have followed up your first dash at him by something besides, — a slap across the cheek, or a cut with your whip."

"I'm sorry now, I didn't do one or the other."

"Well, you may find an opportunity yet. For my quarrel, I don't care a toss whether it be settled with swords or pistols. We Creoles of Louisiana are accustomed to the use of either weapon. Thanks to old Gardalet of the Rue Royale, I've got the trick of both, and am equally ready to send a half-ounce of lead, or twelve inches of steel, through the body of this Britisher. By the way, what's his name?"

The speaker pulls out the card given him by the English officer, and, glancing at it, answers his own question: "Edward Crozier, H.M.S. 'Crusader.' Ha, Mr. Ned Crozier!" he exclaims, speaking in plain English, the sight of the card seemingly giving a fresh fillip to his spleen. "You've had your triumph to-day. It will be mine to-morrow; and, if my old fortune don't fail me, there'll be an empty seat at the mess-table of the ship 'Crusader.'"

"You really intend fighting him?"

"Now, Don Faustino Calderon, why do you ask that question?"

"Because, I think all might be arranged with out" —

“Without what? Speak out, man!”

“Why, without any spilling of blood.”

“You may arrange that way, if you like. Your quarrel is a distinct one, and I’ve nothing to do with it, having my own hands full. Indeed, if they were empty, I’m not so sure I should second your talking as you do. However, that’s not the purpose now. In answer to your first question, I can only say what I’ve said before, — I not only intend fighting this Crozier, but killing him. I may fail in this my intention: if so, there’s an end of it, and of *me*; for, once on the ground, I don’t leave it a living man if he does. One or both of us shall stay there till we’re carried off — dead.”

“*Carramba!* your talk gives me the trembles. It’s not pleasant to think of such a thing, let alone doing it.”

“Think your own way, and welcome. To me it would be less pleasant to leave it undone now, than ever in my life. After what I’ve gone through, I don’t care much for character; in truth, not a straw. That’s all stuff and pretension. Money makes the man; and without it he’s nothing, though he were a saint. Respectability — bah! I don’t value it a *claco*. But there’s a reputation of another kind I *do* value, and intend to preserve, because, in my world, it counts for something — has counted already.”

“What is that?”

“Courage. Losing it, I should lose every thing. And, in this very city of San Francisco, I’d be only a hound where I’m now a hunter, barked at by every cur, and kicked by every coward who chose to pick a quarrel with me.”

“There’s no danger of that, De Lara. All who

have had dealings with you know better. There's little fear of any one putting a slight upon *you*."

"There would be, if I refused to fight this fellow. Then you'd see the difference. Why, Faustino Calderon, I couldn't sit at a *monté* table, and keep the red-shirts from robbing us, if they didn't know 'twould be a dangerous game to play. However, it isn't their respect I value now, but that of one very different."

"Who?"

"Again you ask an idle question, — so idle, that I don't believe you care a straw for Iñez Alvarez, or know what love is."

"What has she to do with it?"

"She?—nothing. That's true enough. I don't care aught for her, or what she might think of me; but I do for Carmen Montijo and her good opinion; at least, so far that she sha'n't think me either fool or coward. She may be fancying me the first; but, if she does, she'll find herself mistaken. At all events, she'll get convinced that I'm not the last. And if it be as rumor reports, and as you say you've heard, that she's given her heart to this *gringo*, I'll take care she don't bestow her hand upon him — not while I live. When I'm dead, she can do as she likes."

"But, after what's passed, do you intend returning to propose to her?"

"I do; though not till we've finished this affair with the fellows who've interrupted us. Yes, I'll give her every chance to save herself. She shall say yea or nay in straight speech, and in so many words. After that, I'll understand how to act. But come! we're wasting time. A duel's a thing won't do to dally over. Do you intend to meet your man, or not?"

“I’d rather not,” replies the poltroon hesitatingly; “that is, if the thing can be arranged. Do you think it can, De Lara?”

“Of course, it can! your thing, as you call it, though not without disgrace to you. You should fight him, Faustino.”

“Well, if you say I should, why, I suppose I must. I never fired a pistol in my life, and am only second-rate with the sword. I can handle a *macheté*, or a *cuchilla*, when occasion calls for it; but these weapons won’t be admitted in a duel between gentlemen. I suppose the sailor-fellow claims to be one?”

“Undoubtedly he does, and with good reason. An officer belonging to a British man-of-war would call you out for questioning such a claim. But I think you underrate your skill with the small-sword. I’ve seen you doing very well with it at Roberto’s fencing-school.”

“Yes, I took lessons there. But fencing is very different from fighting.”

“Never mind. When you get on the duelling-ground, fancy yourself within the walls of Roberto’s shooting-gallery, and that you are about to take a fresh lesson in the *art d’escrime*. Above all, choose the sword for your weapon.”

“How can I, if I’m to be the challenger?”

“You needn’t be. There’s a way to get over that. The English officers are not going straight back to their ship; not likely before a late hour of the night. After returning from this ride, I take it they’ll stay to dinner at Don Gregorio’s, and, with wine to give them a start, they’ll be pretty sure to have a cruise, as they call it, through the town. There you may meet your man, and can insult him by giving him a cuff, spitting

in his face, any thing to put the onus of challenging upon him."

"*Por Dios!* I'll do as you say."

"That's right. Now let us think of what's before us. As we're both to be principals, we can't stand seconds to one another. I know who'll act for me. Have you got a friend you can call upon?"

"Don Manuel Diaz. He's the only one I can think of."

"Don Manuel will do. He's a cool hand, and knows all the regulations of the *duello*. But he's not at home to-day. As I chance to know, he's gone to a *funcion de gallos* at Punta Pedro, and by this time should be in the cockpit."

"Why can't we go there? Or had we better send?"

"Better send, I think. Time's precious, at least mine is. As you know, I must be at the *monté* table as soon as the lamps are lighted. If I'm not, the bank will go begging, and we may lose our customers. Besides, there's my own second to look up, which must be done this day before I lay a hand upon the cards. What hour is it? I've not brought my timepiece with me."

"Twelve o'clock, and a quarter past," answers Calderon, after consulting his watch.

"Only that! Then we'll have plenty of time to get to the cock-fight, and witness a main. Don Manuel has a big bet on his *pardo*. I'd like to stake a doubloon or two myself on that bird. Yes, on reflection, we'd better go ourselves. That will be the surest way to secure the services of Diaz. *Vamonos!*"

At this, the two intending duellists again set their steeds in motion, and, riding for a short distance along the shore-road, turn into another, which will

take them to Punta Pedro. Their jealous anger still unappeased, they urge their horses into a gallop, riding as if for life, on an errand whose upshot may be death — to one or both of them.

CHAPTER XII.

A "PASEO DE CABALLO."

THE promontory called Punta Pedro is not in San Francisco Bay, but on the outside coast of the Pacific. To reach it from the former, it is necessary to traverse the dividing ridge between the two waters, this a spur of the "Coast Range," which, running higher as it trends southward, is known to Spanish Californians as the San Bruno Mountains. Punta Pedro abuts from their base into the ocean; the coast in this quarter being bold and picturesque, but almost uninhabited. Here and there only the solitary hut of a seal-hunter or fisherman, with a small collection of the same near the Point itself, bearing its name, and a somewhat indifferent reputation. The Anglo-Saxon gold-seekers do not go there: it is only frequented by the natives. From San Francisco to Punta Pedro, the road runs past Dolores, an ancient mission of the Franciscan monks, whose port was, as already stated, Yerba Buena previous to becoming rechristened San Francisco. This route De Lara and Calderon have taken, getting into it by a cross-cut; and along it they continue to ride, still at a gallop, with faces set for Dolores. They are not the only equestrians upon that

road. The dust kicked up by their horses' hoofs has just settled down, when a second party appears, going in the same direction, though in a gentler gait; for it is a cavalcade composed partly of ladies. It is a quartet, two of each sex; and, as the horses are the same already seen standing saddled in the courtyard of Don Gregorio, it is not necessary to give the names of the riders. These can be guessed. Doña Carmen is carrying out the instructions left by her father, who, in Californian fashion, supposed he could give his sailor guests no greater treat than a *paseo de caballo*, including an excursion to the old Dolores Mission, without a visit to which no exploration of the country around San Francisco can be considered complete. It is not the least of the "lions."

Like most Californian damsels, Don Gregorio's daughter takes delight in the saddle, and spends some part of each day in it. An accomplished *equestrienne*, she could take a five-barred gate, or a bullfinch, with any of the hunting Dianas of England; and, if she has not ridden to hounds, she has chased wild horses, mounted on one but little less wild. That on which she now sits seems but half tamed. Fresh from the stable, he rears and pitches, at times standing erect on his hind-legs: for all, his rider has no fear of being unhorsed. She only smiles, pricks him with the spur, and regardlessly strikes him with her *cuarto*. Much after the same fashion acts Iñez; for she, too, has learned the Californian style of equitation. The two present a picture, that, to the eye unaccustomed to Mexican habits, might seem somewhat *bizarre*. Their mode of mount, as already said, *à la Duchesse de Berri*, their half male attire, hats of vicuña wool, *calzoncillas* lace fringed over their feet, buff boots, and large row-

elled spurs — all these give them an air of picturesqueness. And if appearing bold, still beautiful, as the South Sea wind flouts back the limp brims of their *sombreros*, and tosses their hair into dishevelment; while the excitement of the ride brings the color to their cheeks, with flashes as of fire from their eyes.

The young English officers regard them with glances of ardent admiration. If they have been but smitten before, they are getting fast fixed now; and both will soon be seriously in love. The *paseo de caballo* promises to terminate in a proposal for a longer journey together, — through life, in pairs. They are thus riding, — Crozier alongside Carmen, Cadwallader with Iñez. The officers are in their uniforms, a costume for equestrian exercise not quite ship-shape, as they would phrase it. On horseback in a naval uniform! It would not do on an English road: the veriest country lout would criticise it. But different in California, where all ride, gentle or simple, in dress of every conceivable cut and fashion, with no fear of ridicule therefor. None need attach to that of Edward Crozier. His rank has furnished him with a frockcoat, which, well fitting, gives a handsome contour to his person. Besides, he is a splendid horseman, has hunted in the shires before he ever set foot aboard a ship. Carmen Montijo perceives this. She can tell it with half a glance. And it pleases her to reflect that her escorting cavalier is equal to the occasion. She believes him equal to any thing.

With the other pair, the circumstances are slightly different. Willie Cadwallader is no rider, having had but scant practice, — a fact patent to all, Iñez as the others. Besides, the mid is dressed in a pea-jacket, which, although becoming aboard ship, looks a little

outré in a saddle, especially upon a prancing Californian steed. Does it make the young Welshman feel ridiculous? Not a bit. He is not the stuff to be humiliated on the score of an inappropriate costume; nor yet by his inferiority in horsemanship, of which he is himself well aware. He but laughs as his steed prances about, the louder when it comes near throwing him.

How does he appear in the eyes of Inez Alvarez? Does she think him ridiculous? No! On the contrary, she seems charmed, and laughs along with him, delighted with his *naïveté*, and the courage he displays in not caring for consequences. She knows he is out of his own element, the sea. She believes that *there* he would be brave, heroic; among ropes, the most skilled of reefers; and, if he cannot gracefully sit a horse, he could ride big billows, breasting them like an albatross.

Thus mutually taking each other's measure, the four equestrians canter on, and soon arrive at the Mission; but they do not design to stay there. The ride has been too short, the sweet moments have flown quickly; and the summit of a high hill, seen far beyond, induces them to continue the excursion. They only stop to give a glance at the old monastery, where Spanish monks once lorded it over their red-skinned neophytes; at the church, where erst ascended incense, and prayers were pattered in the ears of the aborigines, by them ill understood. A moment spent in the cemetery, where Carmen points out the tomb enclosing the remains of her mother, dropping a tear upon it, perhaps forced from her by the reflection that soon she will be far from that sacred spot, it may be, never more to behold it. Away from it now; and on to that hill from which they can descry the Pacific.

In another hour they have reined up on its top, and behold the great South Sea, stretching to far horizon's verge, to the limit of their vision. Before them all is azure and beautiful; only some specks in the dim distance, the low isles of the Farralones. More northerly, and not so far off, the "Seal" rock, and that called *de Campaña* from its arcade hollowed out by the wash of waves, bearing resemblance to the belfry of a church. Nearer, a long line of breakers, foam crested, and, nearer still, the strip of stony beach, backed by a broad reach of sand-dunes, there termed *medanos*.

Seated in the saddle, the excursionists contemplate this superb panorama. The four are now together, but soon again separate into pairs, as they have been riding along the road. Somehow or other, their horses have thus disposed them; that ridden by Crozier having drawn off with the one carrying Carmen, while the steed so ill managed by Cadwallader has elected to range itself alongside that of Iñez. Perhaps the pairing has not been altogether accidental; whether or no, it is done; and the conversation, hitherto general, is reduced to the simplicity of dialogue. To report it correctly, it is necessary to take the two pairs apart, giving priority to those who by their years have the right to it. Crozier, looking abroad over the ocean, says, "I shall ere long be upon it." He accompanies the speech with a sigh.

"And I too," rejoins Carmen, in a tone, and with accompaniment singularly similar.

"How soon do you think of leaving California?" queries the young officer.

"Oh, very soon! My father is already making arrangements, and expects we shall go away in a week,

if not less. Indeed, he has this day been to see about taking passage for us to Panama. That's why he was not at home to receive you ; leaving me to do the honors of the house, and apologize for his seeming rudeness."

For that, certes, no apology was needed ; and Crozier is silent, not knowing what next to say. Love, reputed eloquent, is often the reverse, and, though opening the lips of a landsman, will shut those of men who follow the sea. There is a modesty about the latter unfelt by the former, especially in the presence of women ; why, I cannot tell, only knowing, that, as a rule, it is so, and certainly in the case of Edward Crozier. In time he gets over his embarrassment so far as to venture, "I suppose, Doña Carmen, you are very happy at the prospect of returning to Spain?"

"No, indeed!" answers Don Gregorio's daughter. "On the contrary, it makes me rather melancholy. I like California, and could live in it all my life. Couldn't you?"

"Under certain circumstances, I could."

"But you like it, don't you?"

"I do now. In ten days from this time I shall no longer care for it."

"Why do you say that, Don Eduardo? There's an enigma in your words. Please explain them." While asking the question, her gray-blue eyes gaze into his with an expression of searching eagerness, almost anxiety.

"Shall I tell you why, *señorita?*"

"I have asked you, *señor.*"

"Well, then, I like California now, because it contains the fairest object on earth, to me the dearest, since it is the woman I love. In ten days, or less, by her own showing, she will be away from it: why should

I care for it then? Now, Doña Carmen, I've given you the key to what you have called an enigma."

"Not quite. But perhaps you will pardon a woman's curiosity, if I ask the name of the lady who thus controls your likes and dislikes as regard our dear California."

Crozier hesitates, a red spot starting out upon his cheek. He is about to pronounce a name, perhaps adding a speech the most important he has ever made in his life, because laden with his life's happiness, or leading to the reverse. What if it should be coldly received? But no: he cannot be mistaken. That question, asked so quaintly, yet so impressively — surely it courted the answer he intends giving it. And he gives it without further reflection, — her own name, not an added word, "Carmen Montijo."

"Eduardo," she asks after a pause, dropping the Don, "are you in earnest? Can I take this as true? Do not deceive me; in honor do not! To you, and I now tell you, I have surrendered all my heart. Say that I have yours!"

"I have said it, Carmen," he, too, adopting the familiar language of love. "Have I not?"

"Sincerely?"

"Look in my eyes for the answer."

She obeys; and both, coming closer, gaze into one another's eyes, the flashes from the blue crossing and commingling with those from the brown. Neither could mistake the meaning of the glance; for it is the true light of love, pure as passionate. Not another word passes between them. The confession, with its dreaded crisis, is past; and, with hearts quivering in sweet content, they turn their thoughts to the future, full of pleasant promise.

Near by are two other hearts, quite as happy as theirs, though after a scene less sentimental, and a dialogue, that, to a stranger overhearing it, might appear spoken in jest. For all, in real earnest, and so ending, as may be inferred from the young Welshman's final speech, with the reply of his Andalusian sweetheart: "Iñez, you're the dearest girl I've met in all my cruisings. Now, don't let us beat about any longer, but take in sail, and bring the ship to an anchor. Will you be mine, and marry me?"

"I will."

No need to stay longer there, no object in continuing to gaze over the ocean. The horses seem instinctively to understand this, and, turning together, set heads for home.

CHAPTER XIII.

A "GOLPE DE CABALLO."

THE bright Californian sun is declining towards the crest of the Coast Range, when two horsemen, coming from the Pacific side, commence ascending the ridge. As the sultry hours have passed, and a chill breeze blows from the outside ocean, they have thrust their heads through the central slits of their cloaks,—these being *mangas*,—leaving the circular skirts to droop down below their knees, while draping back, cavalry fashion, over the hips of their horses. The colors of these garments—one scarlet, the other sky-blue—enable us to identify the wearers as Don Francisco de Lara, and Don Faustino Calderon; for

in truth it is they, returning from the *pelea de gallos* at Punta Pedro. They have seen Diaz, and arranged every thing about the duel. Faustino has finally determined upon fight. Instigated by his more courageous confederate, and with further pressing on the part of Diaz, — a sort of Californian bravo, — his courage has been at length screwed up to the necessary pitch, and kept there by the potent spirit of Catalan brandy, found freely circulating around the cock-pit. A flask of this he has brought away with him, at intervals taking a pull from it as he rides along the road. Under its influence he has become quite valiant; and swears, that, if he can but again set eyes upon the English *guardia-marina*, he will affront him in such fashion as to leave him no loophole to escape from being the challenger. *Carrait!* he will do as De Lara has recommended, — cuff the young officer, kick him, spit in his face, any thing to provoke the *gringo* to a fight: that yellow-haired cub without a *bigoté* or beard! And, if the cur won't fight, then he shall apologize; get down upon his knees, acknowledge him, Faustino Calderon, the better man, and forever after surrender all claim to the smiles, as to the hand, of Iñez Alvarez.

With this swaggering talk he entertains his companion as the two are returning to town. De Lara, less noisy, is, nevertheless, also excited. The fiery Catalonian spirit has affected him too; not to strengthen his courage, for of this he has already enough, but to remove the weight from off his soul, which, after the scene at Don Gregorio's, had been pressing heavily upon it. Six hours have since elapsed, and for the first three he has been brooding over his humiliation, his spirit prostrate in the dust. But the alcohol has again raised it to a pitch of exaltation, especially

when he reflects upon the prospect of the sure and speedy vengeance he is determined to take. It does not occur to him to doubt of success. With thorough reliance on his skill as a swordsman, he feels sure of it. Though, also, a good shot, he prefers the steel for his weapon, like most men of the Southern Latinic race, who believe Northerners to be very bunglers at sword-play, though admitting their superiority in the handling of the pistol. As things stand, unlike his comrade Calderon, he will have the choice of weapons. His intended antagonist was the first to demand the card, and must needs be challenger.

As the two ride on, they talk alternately, both giving vent to their spleen, the man of courage as the coward. If not so loud or boastingly as his companion, De Lara expresses himself with a more spiteful and earnest determination, repeating much of what he has already said at an earlier hour, but with added emphasis. Once he has the English officer at his rapier's point, he will show him no mercy, but run him through without the slightest compunction: In vain may his adversary cry, "Quarter!" There can be none conceded, after what has that day passed between them. "*Maldita!* It shall be a duel to the death!" he exclaims, after having given way to a series of threats, the words pronounced with an *empressement* that shows him truly, terribly, in earnest. They have been carrying on this excited dialogue as their horses climbed the slope from the Pacific side, its steepness hindering them from going at their usual gait,—a gallop. On rising the ridge's crest, and catching sight of San Francisco, with its newly-painted white walls, and shining roofs, reflected red in the rays of the setting sun, De Lara, suddenly remembering the pressure

upon him as to time, strikes the spur sharp against his horse's ribs, and puts the animal to speed. The other imitating his example, they dash on towards Dolores. They have no intention to make stop at the Mission. But, on reaching it, they draw up, obedient to the hail of a man seen standing in the door of a little tavern, or *tinacal*, frequented by the lower class of native Californians, — a rough, swarthy-skinned fellow, in a garb that proclaims his calling to have connection with the sea, though not that of a sailor. He may be a shore boatman, perhaps a *pescador*; though judging by his general appearance, and the sinister cast of his countenance, he might well pass for a pirate.

Stepping a few paces out from the *tinacal*, he salutes the two horsemen, who have halted in the middle of the road to await his approach. Despite his coarse, brutal aspect, and common habiliments, he is evidently on terms of familiarity with both; the style of his salutation showing it. It is with De Lara, however, his business lies, as signified by his saying, "I want a word with you, Don Francisco."

"What is it, Rocas? Any thing about seal-skins?" asks the Creole, laying a significant emphasis on the last word.

"*Carramba!* No: something of more importance than that."

"Money, then?"

"Money."

"Do you wish our speech to be private?"

"Just now, yes. Perhaps, in time, Don Faustino" —

"Oh!" interrupts the *ganadero*, "don't let me stand in the way. I'll ride slowly on: you can overtake me, Don Francisco."

“Do,” says De Lara, at the same time stooping down in his saddle, and continuing the conversation with Rocas, in tone so low as to prevent their speech being overheard by two queer-looking customers, who have just stepped out of the *tinacal*, and stand loitering at its door.

Whatever Rocas may have said, it appears to make a vivid impression on the gambler. His eyes kindle up with a strange light, in which surprise is succeeded by an expression of cupidity; while his manner proclaims that the revelation made to him is not only important, as he has been forewarned, but also very pleasing. Their muttered dialogue is of brief duration, but ends with a speech which shows it to be only preliminary to a further conference.

“I shall be with you to-morrow, by mid-day.”

It is De Lara who has said this; after which, adding, “*Adios, Don Rafael! Hasta mañana!*” he gives his horse the spur, and gallops to overtake his travelling-companion; Rocas sauntering back towards the tavern.

On coming up with the *ganadero*, De Lara rides on silently by his side, without showing any desire to satisfy Calderon’s curiosity. He but piques it by saying that Rocas has made a communication of an intensely interesting kind, which he will impart to him, Faustino, in due time; but now there are other matters of quite as much importance to be attended to. The fighting is before them; and that cannot be set aside. Calderon wishes it could; for the flask has been some time forgotten, and the spirit has been getting cold within him.

“Take another pull,” counsels his companion: “you may need it. We’ll soon be in the town, and perhaps

the first man we meet will be your yellow-haired rival."

Scarcely have the words passed De Lara's lips, when something in front fixes their attention. At some distance along the road, a cloud of dust is ascending; in its midst a darker nucleus, distinguishable as the forms of horses with riders on their backs. There appear to be four of them, filed two and two. Plying their spurs, and galloping closer, the gamblers perceive that this equestrian party is proceeding in the same direction as themselves,—towards the town. But they are soon near enough to know that such is not their destination; for, despite the enshrouding dust, they have no difficulty in identifying those who are before them. The horses are the same seen that morning, saddled and bridled, in front of Don Gregorio's house. Two of the riders are Carmen Montijo and Iñez Alvarez: the other two— At this point conjecture terminates. De Lara, certain, and no longer able to control himself, cries out, "*Carajo!* it's they returning from their excursion; paired off as I supposed they would be. Now, Calderon, you have your chance—sooner than you expected—and without seeking; a lucky omen. There's your rival riding by the side of your sweetheart, and pouring soft speech into her ear. Now's your time to set things straight: insult him to your heart's content. I feel like giving fresh affront to mine."

He draws rein, bringing his horse to a halt. Calderon does the same. Scanning the equestrians ahead, they see them two and two, the pairs some ten or twelve paces apart. Crozier and Carmen are in the advance; Cadwallader and Iñez behind. De Lara looks not at the latter couple: his eyes are all upon

the former, staring with fixed intensity, full of jealous fire, with a glare such as only a tiger might give, as he sees Carmen turn towards her escorting cavalier, and bend over, he to her, till their heads are close together, and their lips seem to meet.

“*Carrai!* they are kissing!” exclaims the Creole, in a tone of bitter exasperation. He can bear it no longer. With a shout, half angry, half anguished, he digs his spur deep, and dashes forward.

The clattering of hoofs behind first warns Cadwallader, who is nearest to the noise; for, up to this time, the lovers, absorbed in sweet converse, dream not of danger behind. The young Welshman, glancing back, sees what it is, at the same time hears De Lara’s wild cry. Intuitively he understands that some outrage is intended, — a repetition of the morning’s work, with, doubtless, something more. Quickly he draws his dirk, not now to be used in sport, for the mere pricking a horse, but in earnest, to be buried in the body of a man, if need be. This resolve can be read in his attitude, in his eyes, in his features; these no longer bent in a laugh of reckless boyhood, but in the rigid, resolute determination of manhood. Badly as he sits his horse, it will not do now to dash against him. The collision might cost life, in all likelihood, that of the aggressor.

De Lara sweeps past him without a word, without even taking notice of him. His affair is with one farther on.

But now Calderon is coming up, clearly with the intent to assault, as shown in his eyes. Suddenly, however, their expression changes at sight of the bared blade, — that diabolical dirk. Despite the pull he has just taken from the flask, his courage fails him; and

crestfallen, as a knight compelled to lower his plume, he, too, passes Cadwallader, without a word, riding on after De Lara. He overtakes the latter in time to be spectator of a scene in its commencement somewhat similar to that enacted by himself, but with very different termination.

Crozier, whose ear has also caught the sounds from behind, draws bridle, and looks back. He sees De Lara making towards him, and, at a glance, divines the intent. It is a *golpe de caballo*, or collision of horses, — a common mode of assault among Spanish Californians. Instead of turning aside to avoid it, he of Shropshire determines on a different course. He knows he is upon a strong horse, and feels confident he can stay there. With this confidence, he faces towards the advancing enemy, and, after taking true bearing, spurs straight at him. Breast to breast the horses meet; shoulder to shoulder the men. Not a word between these themselves, both too maddened to speak. Only a cry from Carmen Montijo, a shriek from Iñez Alvarez, heard simultaneously with the shock. When it is over, Don Francisco de Lara is seen rolling upon the road, his horse kicking and floundering in the dust beside him. Regaining his feet, the Californian rushes to get hold of a pistol, whose butt protrudes from his saddle-holster. He is too late: Cadwallader has come up, and dropping down out of his saddle, as if from a ship's shrouds, makes himself master of the weapon and its companion. Disarmed, his glittering attire dust-bedaubed, De Lara stands in the middle of the road, irresolute, discomfited, conquered. He can do nothing now, save storm and threaten, interlarding his threats with curses — “*Carajos!*” — spitefully pronounced.

The ladies, at Crozier's request, have ridden on ahead, so that their ears are not offended.

After listening to the ebullition of his impotent spleen, — Cadwallader all the while loudly laughing at it, — Crozier, in serious tone, says, “Mr. De Lara, — for your card tells me that is your name, — take a sailor's advice: go quietly to your quarters; stow yourself out of sight; and stay there till your temper cools down. We don't want you to walk. You shall have your horse, though not your shooting-irons. These I shall take care of myself, and may return them to you when next we meet. — The same advice to you, sir,” he adds, addressing Calderon, who stands near, equally cowed and crestfallen.

After dictating these humiliating conditions, — which, *nolens, volens*, the defeated bravos are obliged to accept, — the young officers remount their horses, and trot off to rejoin the ladies.

Having overtaken these, they continue their homeward ride, with no fear of its being again interrupted by a *golpe de caballo*.



CHAPTER XIV.

"HASTA CADIZ!"

ON leaving Capt. Lantanas, Don Gregorio returns to his house, though not direct. He has business to transact in the town, which stays him. He has to see Don Tomas Silvestre, the shipping-agent, and give directions about inserting the advertisement for sailors. That is an affair that will occupy only a few minutes. But he has another with the agent, of a more important kind. He is intimately acquainted with Silvestre, who is, like himself, a Peninsular Spaniard, and a Biscayan. Don Gregorio knows he can trust him, and does, telling him all he has told Lantanas, making further known the arrangement he has entered into for passages to Panama, and instructing him to assist the Chilian skipper in procuring a crew. The more confidential matter relates to the shipment of his gold-dust. He trembles to think of the risk he runs of losing it. San Francisco is filled with queer characters, — men who would stick at nothing. Don Tomas knows this without being told. The thought haunts the *haciendado* like a spectre, that he will have his treasure taken from him by theft, burglary, or bold, open robbery. He has good reason for so thinking. Among the latest accessions to the population of San Francisco all three classes of criminals are represented, and in no stinted numbers. There are ticket-of-leave men from Australia, jail-birds from the penitentiaries

of the States, 'scape-the-gallows customers from every quarter of the globe, to say nothing of the native bandits, of which California has its share. If known to these that gold-dust to the value of three hundred thousand dollars was lying unguarded in the house of Don Gregorio Montijo, it would not be there many days or nights. Its owner has done what he could to keep it a secret; but the sale and transfer of his land have leaked out, as, also, the handsome price obtained and paid over to him: hence the natural inference being that the cash must be deposited somewhere. And every one well knows it must be in gold-dust, since banks have not yet been established, and there are not obtainable notes enough in San Francisco to cover a tenth part of the amount. He has tried to convert it thus, — as more convenient for carriage and safety, — but failed. In fine, after confiding his fears to Silvestre, and taking counsel from him, he decides upon the plan — already in part communicated to Capt. Lantanas — of having the endangered gold-dust secretly conveyed to the "Condor" as soon as possible. Don Tomas will provide the boat, with a trusty sailor-servant he has attached to his establishment, to assist in the removal and rowing. They can take it aboard without passing through the town, or at all touching at the port. The boat can be brought to the beach below Don Gregorio's house, and the gold quietly carried down to it. Thence they can transport it direct to the ship. Once there, Lantanas will know how to dispose of it; and surely it will be safe in his custody: at all events, safer there than anywhere else in San Francisco. So thinks Don Gregorio, the ship-agent agreeing with him.

Soon every thing is settled; for they spend not many minutes in discussing the matter. The *hacien-*

dado knows that by this time his house will be empty, excepting the servants; for the ride on which his girls have gone was arranged by himself to gratify his expected visitors. He thinks apprehensively of the unprotected treasure, and longs to be beside it. So, remounting the stout horse that brought him to town, he rides hastily home.

On arrival there, he retires to his sleeping-apartment, where he spends the remainder of the day, and gives orders not to be called till the party of equestrians come back. But, although confining himself to the chamber, he does not go to bed, nor otherwise take repose. On the contrary, he is busy throughout the whole afternoon, getting ready his treasure for the surreptitious transport; for it is there in the room — has been, ever since it came into his possession. Almost fearing to trust it out of his sight, he sleeps beside it. Some of it is in bags, some in boxes; and he now re-arranges it in the most convenient form for carriage to the “*Condor*,” and safe stowage in her cabin-lockers.

He has not yet completed his task when he hears the trampling of hoofs on the gravelled sweep outside. The riding-party has returned. The *saguan*-bell rings; the heavy door grates back on its hinges; and soon after the horses, with the riders still on their backs, stand panting in the *patio*.

The master of the house sallies forth to receive his guests. He sees them hastening to assist the ladies in dismounting. But, before either cavalier can come near them, both leap lightly out of their saddles, and, gliding into the corridor, fling their arms around Don Gregorio's neck; daughter and grand-daughter alike styling him “*papa*.” They are effusively affectionate,

more than usually so; for this night both have a favor to ask of him. And he knows, or can guess, what it is. He has not been blind to what has been passing between them and the young English officers. He suspects that vows have been exchanged, a double proposal made; and anticipates a demand upon himself to sanction it. In both cases, he is prepared to do so; for he is not unacquainted with the character and social standing of those seeking an alliance with him. He has been aboard the British frigate, and from Capt. Bracebridge obtained information on these points, satisfactory in every sense. Both the young officers bear an excellent character. Though differing in other respects, they are alike skilled in their profession; each "every inch a seaman," as their commander worded it. Besides, both are of good family; Cadwallader moderately rich, Crozier in prospect of great wealth; either of them fit mate for the proudest *señora* in Spain. His reason for supposing that on this day engagements have been entered into, is, that the young officers are about to take departure from the port. The "Crusader" is under admiralty orders to sail for the Sandwich Islands as soon as a corvette coming thence reaches San Francisco. Capt. Bracebridge has been commissioned by the British Government to transact some diplomatic business with King Kame-Kameha; that done, he is to look in at Mazatlan, Acapulco, and some other Mexican ports, as also Panama and Callao; then home; afterwards to join the Mediterranean squadron. As the "Crusader," on her way to the Mediterranean, will surely call at Cadiz, the vows this day exchanged on the shore of the Pacific can be conveniently renewed on the other side of the Atlantic.

At dinner, — which is served soon after, and in sump-

tuous style, — Don Gregorio makes his guests aware of the fact that he has secured passages for Panama, and may leave San Francisco as soon as they. He confides to them the secret of his having chartered the Chilian ship; in short, telling them all he has told her skipper, echoing the lament made by the latter about his difficulty in obtaining a crew.

“Perhaps,” rejoins Crozier, after hearing this, “I can help him to at least one good sailor. Do you think, Will,” he continues, addressing himself to the young Welshman, “that Harry Blew is still in San Francisco? Or has he gone off to the diggings?”

“I fancy he’s still here,” responds Cadwallader. “He was aboard the ‘Crusader’ only the day before yesterday, having a shake hands with his old comrades of the forecastle.”

“Who is the Señor Bloo?” asks the *hacendado*.

“A true British tar, — if you know what that means, Don Gregorio, — lately belonging to our ship, and one of the best sailors on her books. He’s off them now, as his time was out; and, like many another though not better man, has made up his mind to go gold-seeking on the Sacramento. Still, if he be not gone, I think I might persuade him to bear a hand on the craft you speak of. It was once Harry’s sinister luck to slip overboard in the harbor of Guaymas, dropping almost into the jaws of a *tintorero* shark, and my good fortune to be able to rescue him out of his perilous plight. He’s not the man to be ungrateful; and, if still in San Francisco, I think you may count upon him for taking service on board the Chilian ship. True, he’s only one, but worth two; ay, ten. He not only knows a ship, but, on a pinch, could take a lunar, and make good any port in the Pacific.”

“A most valuable man!” exclaims *Don Gregorio*: “would be worth his weight in gold to *Capt. Lantanas*. I’m sure the *Chilian skipper* would at once make him his mate. Do you suppose you can find him?”

“If in *San Francisco*, yes. We shall search for him this very night, and, if found, send him either to the *Chilian skipper*, or to the ship-agent you’ve spoken of, — *Silvestre*. By the way, what’s his address?”

“Here,” answers *Don Gregorio*, drawing forth a card, and handing it across the table to *Crozier*. “That’s the place where *Don Tomas* transacts business. It’s but a poor little shed on the *fringe*, near the new pier, lately constructed. Indeed, I believe he sleeps there; house-rent being at present something fabulous.”

“This will do,” says *Crozier*, putting the card into his pocket. “If *Harry Blew* can be found, he’ll not be far from *Silvestre’s* office, if not to-night, by early daybreak to-morrow morning.”

It is not the custom of either *Spaniards* or *Spanish Americans* to tarry long over the dinner-table. The cloth once removed, and the ladies gone, a glass or two of *Port*, *Xeres*, or *Pedro Ximenez*, and the gentlemen also retire; not for business, but recreation out of doors, so pleasant in southern climes.

Doña Carmen with her niece have ascended to the *azotea* to enjoy the sweet twilight of a *Californian* summer, whither they are soon followed by *Crozier* and *Cadwallader*. The master of the house has for a time parted with them, under the excuse of having affairs to attend to. It is to complete the packing of his gold-dust. But, while emptying their last glass together, he has been approached by the young officers on that

subject uppermost in their thoughts, and dearest to their hearts; asked if he be agreeable to become the father-in-law of one, and the — Cadwallader had difficulty in finding a word for it — grandfather-in-law of the other. To both he has given the same answer, “Yes.” No wonder, that, with bright faces and bounding step, they spring up to the housetop, there to rejoin the *señoritas*.

Their tale told to the latter — who have been awaiting them in anxious expectation — will save both a world of confusion and blushes. No need now for *them* to talk to “papa.” His consent has been obtained: they are aware he will keep his word.

Again the four, now formally betrothed, separate into twos, taking opposite sides of the *azotea*. They converse about the far future, — that awaiting them at Cadiz. But the ladies cannot overlook or forget some perils more proximate. The retrospect of the day throws a shadow over the morrow. The encounter with De Lara and Calderon cannot end without further action. Not likely; and both aunt and niece recall it, questioning their now affianced lovers, adjuring them to refrain from fighting. These reply, making light of the matter, — declaring confidence in their own strength and skill, whatever be the upshot, — so assuring to their sweethearts, that both believe them invincible, invulnerable. What woman is there who does not think the same of him who holds her heart?

Time passes: the last moments speed silently in the old, old ecstasy of all-absorbing, tale-telling love.

Then the inevitable “*Adios!*” though sounding less harshly by favor of the added phrase, “*Hasta Cadiz!*” [“Till we meet at Cadiz!”]

CHAPTER XV.

ON PLEASURE BENT.

THE clocks of San Francisco are striking the hour of ten. The moon has shot up over Monte Diablo, and sends her soft, mellow beams across the waters of the bay, imparting to their placid surface the sheen of silver. The forms of the ships anchored upon it are reflected as from a mirror, with masts upside down, every spar, stay, and brace, even to the most delicate rope of their rigging, having its duplicated representative in the fictitious counterfeit beneath. On none is there any canvas spread; and the unfurled flags do not display their fields, but hang motionless along masts, or droop dead down over taffrails. Stillness almost complete reigns throughout; scarce a sound proceeding either from the ships inshore, or those that ride at anchor in the offing, — not even the rattle of a chain dropping or heaving an anchor, the chant of a night-watch at the windlass, or the song of some jovial tar entertaining his messmates as they sit squatted around the fore-castle stair. Unusual this silence at such an early hour, though easily accounted for. That there are but few noises from the ships in San Francisco Bay is explained by the fact of their having but few men to make them; in many cases there being not a single soul aboard. All have deserted, — either for good, and are gone off to the “digging;” or only for the night, to take part in the pleasures and dissipations of the

town. Now and then a boat may be seen putting off from or returning to the side of some of those better manned, by its laborious movement, and the unmeasured stroke of oars, telling that even it lacks a full complement of crew.

Inside the town every thing is different. There, there are noises enough, with plenty of people, crowded streets, flashing lights, and a Babel-like confusion of voices. It is now the hour when iniquity has commenced its nightly career, or, rather, reached its full flush; since in San Francisco certain kinds of it are carried on openly, and throughout all the hours of day. Business-houses are closed; but these are in small proportion to the places of pleasure, which keep their doors and windows wide open, and where dissipation of all kinds reigns paramount. Into the gambling-saloons go men laden with gold-dust, often coming out with their wallets lighter than when they went in, but their hearts a great deal heavier. After toiling for months up to their middle in the chill waters of streams that course down from the eternal snows of the Sierra Nevada, working, washing, while so occupied, half starving, they return to San Francisco to scatter in a single night—oft in one hour—the hoarded gatherings of half a year.

Into this pandemonium of a city are about to enter two personages of very different appearance from those usually seen loitering in its saloons, or hastening through its streets; for they are the young officers belonging to the British frigate, —Edward Crozier and William Cadwallader, —returning to their ship; not directly, as they were rowed ashore, but through the town; Crozier having ordered the boat to be brought to one of the rough wooden wharves recently erected. They are

advancing along the shore-road afoot, having declined their host's offer of horses, both saying they would prefer to walk; Cadwallader adding, in sailor phrase, that he wished to "kick the knots out of his legs," — a remark but obscurely comprehensible to Don Gregorio. For some time after leaving his house, not a word passes between them. Each is occupied with his own thoughts, the sacredness of which keeps him silent, absorbed in reflections springing from that tender but painful parting with others, about what may be before them in the far uncertain future. For a time nothing intrudes upon their reverie, to disturb its natural course. The sough of the tidal surf breaking upon the beach, the occasional cry of a straying sea-bird, or the more continuous and monotonous note of the chuck-will's-widow, do not attract their attention. They are sounds in consonance with their reflections, still a little sad. As they draw nearer to the city, see its flashing lights, and hear its hum of voices, other and less doleful ideas come uppermost, leading to conversation. Crozier commences it.

"Well, Will, old fellow, we've made a day of it!"

"That we have, a rousing jolly day! I don't think I ever enjoyed one more in my life."

"Only for its drawbacks?"

"You mean our affair with those fellows? Why, that was the best part of it, so far as fun. To see the one in the sky-blue wrap, after I'd dirked his horse, go off like a ship in a gale, with nobody at the helm! By Jove! it was equal to old Billy Button in the circus. And then the other you bundled over in the road, as he got up, looking like a dog just out of a dust-bin. Oh! 'twas delicious; the best shore-adventure I've had since joining the 'Crusader,' — something to talk about when we get aboard."

“ Ay, and something to do besides talking. We’ve got a little writing to do : at least, I have, — a bit of a letter to this swaggerer, Mr. Francisco de Lara.”

“ But surely you don’t intend challenging him, after what’s happened? ”

“ Surely I do. Though, to say the truth, I’ve no great stomach for it, seeing the sort he is. It’s *infra dig.* having to fight one’s inferior, though it be with swords or pistols. It feels like getting into a row with roughs in some slum of a seaport.”

“ You’re right there ; and, as to calling this fellow out, I’d do nothing of the kind, Ned. He’s a bad lot : so is the other. Blackguards both, as their behavior has shown them : they don’t deserve to be treated as gentlemen.”

“ But we’re in California, Will, where the code of the duel takes in such as they. I suppose even here thieves and cut-throats talk about protecting their honor, as they term it ; ay, and often act up to their talk. I’ve been told of a duel that took place, not long since, between two professional gamblers, in which one of them was shot dead in his tracks. And only the other day a judge was called out by a man he had tried, and convicted of some misdemeanor, who not only went, but actually killed the fellow who’d stood before him as a criminal. All that seems very absurd ; but so it is. And if this scarlet-cloaked cavalier don’t show the white-feather, and back out, I’ll either have to kill or cripple him ; though, like enough, he may do one or the other for me.”

“ But don’t you think, Ned, you’ve had enough out of him? ”

“ In what way? ”

“ Why, in the way of *revanche* : for my part, I

should decidedly say you had far the best of it. After your first encounter in the morning, I thought differently, and would have so counselled you. Then the insult offered you was unpunished. The other has put a different face on the affair; and, now that he's got more than he gave, I think you should rest satisfied, and let things stand as they are, if he do. Certainly, after that knock and tumble, it's his place to sing out."

"There's something in what you say, Will. And now, on reflection, I'm not so sure that I'll take further trouble about the fellow, unless he insist on it, which he may not, seeing he's unquestionably base coin, — as you say, a blackguard. He appears a sort of Californian bravo; and, if we hadn't secured his pistols, I suppose he'd have done some shooting with them. Well, we'll see whether he comes to reclaim them. If he don't, I shall have to send them to him. Otherwise, he may have us up before one of these duelling justices on a charge of robbing him.

"Ha, ha, ha! That would be a rare joke, an appropriate ending to our day's fun."

"Quite the contrary. It might be serious, if it should reach the ears of Bracebridge. The old disciplinarian would never believe but that we'd been in the wrong, taken the fellow's pistols from him for a lark, or something of the sort. True, we could have the thing explained, both to the San Franciscan magistrate, and the frigate's captain, but not without an exposure of names and circumstances, that, though it might be appropriate enough, would be any thing but a pleasant *finale* to our day's fun, as you call it."

"Well, I know what will," rejoins Cadwallader, after listening patiently to his comrade's explanatory speech; "and that's a glass of something good. Those

sweet Spanish wines of Don Gregorio have made me thirsty as a fish. Besides, parting with my dear Iñez has got my heart down; and I need something to get it up again."

"All right, my hearty!" exclaims Crozier, for the jest's sake, talking sailor-slang. "I'm with you in that way. For this day, at least, we've had enough of war: therefore let's end it with another *w*, — wine."

"For my part," responds the young Welshman, "I'd prefer a different article, which has the other *w* for its initial letter: that's whiskey. If we could only get a glass of good Scotch or Irish malt in this mushroom city, it would make a new man of me; which just now I need making. As I tell you, Ned, my heart's down—dead down to the heels of my boots. I can't say why, but there it is; and there, I suppose, it'll stay, unless Dutch courage comes to the rescue."

"Well, you'll soon have an opportunity of getting that. As you see, we're in the suburbs of this grand city, partly constructed of canvas, where, though food may be scarce, and raiment scanty, there's liquor in abundance. In the Parker House, which is, I believe, its best hotel, we'll be sure of finding almost every beverage brewed upon the earth, among them your favorite whiskey, and mine, — 'Bass's Bitter.'"

"Again the Spanish saw, '*Cada uno a su gusto*,' as just now my sweetheart said. But let us step out."

"Don't be in such hot haste. You forget we've something to do, which must be done first, — before every thing else."

"What?"

"Look up Harry Blew; find him, if we can, and coax him to take service in this Chilian ship."

"He won't require much coaxing, once you say the

word. The old salt is any thing but ungrateful. Indeed, his regard for you, ever since you saved him from that shark, is more like real gratitude than any thing I ever saw. He fairly worships you, Ned. He told me the day before he left the 'Crusader,' that parting with you was the only thing that greatly grieved him. I saw the tears trickling down his cheeks as you shook hands with him over the side. Even then, if you'd said stay, I believe he'd have turned back into his old berth."

"I didn't because I wished him to do better. You know he'd have a splendid chance here in California to get rich by gold-digging, which no doubt he might, like a great many other humble sailors as himself. But now this other chance has turned up in his favor, which I should say is surer. Don Gregorio has told us he can get from the Chilian captain almost any pay he may please to ask, besides a fair likelihood of being made his first mate. That would suit Harry to a hair, besides, in my opinion, answering his purpose far better than any gold-seeking speculation. Though a man of first rating aboard ship, he's a mere child when ashore, and would be no more able to protect himself against the land-sharks of San Francisco than he was to get out of the way of that sea-skimmer at Guaynas. Even if he should succeed in growing rich up the rivers, I'd lay large odds he'd be back here in port, and poor as ever, within a week. We must save him from that, if we can. His natural element is the ocean. He has spent the greater part of his life on it; and here's a fine opportunity for him to return to and stay upon it—for life, if he likes, with better prospects than he could even have had on board a man-o'-war. The question is, how we shall be able to find him in this rookery of a

place. Did he say any thing, when you saw him, about where he was sojourning?"

"By Jove! he just did. Now I recall our conversation, I remember him telling me that he was staying at a sort of boarding-house, or restaurant, called the 'Sailor's Home;' though he made no mention of the street. But, if I mistake not, I know the place, and can steer pretty straight for it."

"Straight or crooked, let's set head for it at once. We've plenty of time, if that were all; for I told the cockswain not to come for us till well after eleven. I want to see something of this queer Californian life, of which I haven't had much experience yet."

"The same with myself."

"Well, we may never again get such a chance. Indeed, it's not likely we shall either of us be allowed another night ashore before the 'Crusader' sails; therefore, let us make hay while the sun shines, or, to speak less figuratively, a little merriment by the light of the moon. We've been either savage or sentimental all the day, and stand in need of changing our tune."

"You're right about that; but the music is not likely to be made by moonlight—not much of it. See those great clouds rolling up yonder! They'll be over the sky in ten minutes' time, making every thing black as a pot of pitch."

"No matter. For what we want, gas-light will serve as well; and there's plenty of that in San Francisco. Now for Harry Blew; after him, whiskey punches at the Parker."

"And after that?"

"The tables, if you feel so inclined."

"Surely, Ned, you don't want to go gambling?"

"I want to see life in San Francisco, as I've said;

and, as you know, gambling's an important part of it. Yes; I don't mind making an attempt to draw the teeth of the tiger. *Allons!* or, as I should say in the softer language of Andalusia, *Nos vamos!*"

Thus jocosely terminating the conversation, the young officers continue on at increased speed, and are soon threading the streets of San Francisco in search of the Sailor's Home.

CHAPTER XVI.

A TAR OF THE OLDEN TYPE.

HARRY BLEW is a tar of the true man-o'-war type, this of the olden time, when sailors were sailors, and ships were of oak, not iron. Such ships are scarce now; but scarcer still thê skilled men who handled their ropes, and kept every thing taut and trim: in short, the true sailors. Than Harry, a finer specimen of the foremast-man never reefed topsail, or took his glass of grog according to allowance. Of dark complexion naturally, exposure to sun, sea, and storm, has deepened it, till his cheeks and throat are almost copper-colored; of somewhat lighter tint on Sundays, after they have had their hebdomadal shave. His face 's round, with features fairly regular, and of a cheerful cast, their cheerfulness heightened by the sparkle of bright gray eyes, and two rows of sound white teeth, frequently, if not continuously, set in a smile. A thick shock of curling brown hair, with a well-greased ringlet drooping down over each eyebrow.

supports a round-rimmed, blue-ribboned hat, set well aback on his head. His shaven chin is pointed and prominent, with a dimple below the lip; while the beardless jaws curve smoothly down to a well-shaped neck, symmetrically set upon broad shoulders, that give token of strength almost herculean. Notwithstanding an amplitude of shirt-collar which falls back full seven inches, touching the shoulder-tips, the throat and a portion of the expansive chest are habitually exposed to view; while on the sun-browned skin of the latter may be seen a tattooed anchor. By its side, not so plainly exposed, is the figure of a damsel done in dark blue, — no doubt a souvenir, if not the exact similitude, of a sweetheart, — some Poll of past time, or perhaps far-off port. But there is a doubt whether Harry's heart has been true to her. Indeed, a suspicion of its having been false cannot fail to strike any one seeing him with his shirt-sleeves rolled up; since upon the flat of his right fore-arm is the image of another damsel, done more recently, in lighter blue; while on the left is a Cupid holding an unbent bow, and hovering above a pair of hearts his arrow has just pierced, impaling them through and through. All those amorous emblems would seem to argue our true tar inconstant as the wind with which he has so often to contend. But no, nothing of the kind. Those well acquainted with him and his history can vouch for it that he has never had a sweetheart, save one, — she represented in that lining of light blue; and to her was he true as steel up to the hour of her death, which occurred just as she was about to become Mrs. Blew. And that sad event has kept him a bachelor up to the present hour of his life. The girl on his breast in dark blue is a merely mythical personage, though

indelibly stained into his skin by a needle's point and a pinch of gunpowder, done by one of his man-o'-war shipmates while he was still only a sailor-lad. He is now forty years of age, nearly thirty of which he has passed upon the sea; being off it only in short spells, while his ship has been in port. And he has seen service on several ships, — corvettes, frigates, double and treble deckers, — all men-of-war, in which he has thrice circumnavigated the globe. For all, he is yet hale, hearty, and in the perfect plenitude of his strength, only with a slight stoop in the shoulders, as if caught from continually swarming up shrouds, or leaning over the yard while stowing sails. This gives him the appearance of being shorter than he really is; for when straightened up, with back well braced, he stands six feet in his stockings. And his limbs show symmetrical proportion. His duck trousers, fitting tightly over the hips, display a pair of limbs supple and sinewy, with thighs that seem all muscle from skin to bone.

In spite of his sterling qualities as a seaman, and noble character as a man, Harry has never risen to any rank in the service. With him has it been literally true, "Once a sailor, still a sailor;" and though long ago rated an A.B. of the first order, above this he has not ascended a single step. Were he to complain, which he rarely ever does, he would, in all probability, say that non-promotion has been due to independence of spirit, or, shaping it in his own phraseology, owing to his "not having boot-licked the swabs above him." And there is some truth in this, though another reason might be assigned by those disposed to speak slightingly of him, — that, although liking salt water, he has a decided antipathy to that which is fresh, unless when

taken with an admixture of rum; then he is too fond of it. It is his only fault, barring which, a better man than Harry Blew — and, when sober, a steadier — never trod the deck of a ship.

As already said, he has trod many, the latest being that of the “*Crusader* ;” in which vessel he has spent five years of his life. His engagement terminating almost on the very day she dropped anchor before San Francisco, he has been set free, either to stay in the ship, by entering his name upon her books for a fresh period of service, or step out of her, and go cruising on his own account whithersoever he may wish. Taking into consideration the state of things in San Francisco just at this very time, it is not strange that he elected to leave the ship. It would be stranger if he had even hesitated about it; though this he had indeed done, for some days lingering with mind only half made up. But the golden lure proved at length too temptingly attractive; and, yielding to it, he took a last leave of his old shipmates, was pulled ashore, and has since been sojourning at the Sailor’s Home; for he is still there, as Cadwallader rightly surmised.

The Sailor’s Home is a hostlery — half eating-house, half drinking-saloon — of somewhat unpretentious appearance; being a rough, weather-boarded house, without planing or paint, and only two stories in height. But if low in structure, it is high enough in its charges, as Harry Blew has learned; these being out of all proportion to the outside appearance of the place and its interior accommodation, though in keeping with the prices of all other like houses of entertainment in San Francisco. Harry’s original intention was to make only a short stay at the Sailor’s Home, — just long enough to put him through a bit of a spree, for

which twelve months' pay, received from the frigate's purser at leaving, had amply provided him. Then he would start for the Feather River, or some other tributary stream of the Sacramento. The first part of this programme has been already carried out, with something besides; that something being the complete expenditure of all his pay, — every shilling he received from the purser, — and in an incredibly short space of time. He has been scarcely six days ashore when he discovers his cash exchequer quite cleared out. As for credit, there is no such thing in San Francisco.

Since landing, Harry has not very carefully kept his dead reckoning, and is at first somewhat surprised to find himself so far out in it. He has plunged his hands into his pockets without encountering coin. He has searched in his sea-chest, and every other receptacle where he has been accustomed to carry cash, with similar disappointing result. What can have become of his twelve months' wage, drawn on the day he left the "Crusader"? It has all disappeared! No wonder he is unable to account for its disappearance; for, ever since that day, he has been any thing but himself: in short, he has given way to dissipation of longer continuance than ever before in his life. It has lasted six days, with most part of six nights, at the end of which time he has only pulled up for the want of cash to continue it; credit being declined him at the very counter over which he has passed all his pay.

Impecuniosity is an unpleasant predicament in any country, and at all times: but in the San Francisco of 1849 it was a positive danger, where six dollars were demanded and obtained for the most meagre of meals; the same for sleeping on a blanketless bed, in a chilly night, within a rough weather-boarded room, or under

the yet thinner shelter of a canvas tent. It was a boon to be allowed to lie on the lee-side of a wooden-walled stable, but cost money for the privilege of sleeping in a stall, with straw litter for couch, and the heat of the horses in lieu of coverlet.

In the necessity of seeking some such indifferent accommodation, Harry Blew finds himself, on the seventh night after having received his discharge from the "Crusader." And as he has now got somewhat sobered, with brain clear enough to think, it occurs to him that the time is come for carrying out the second part of his programme; that is, going to the gold-diggers. But how to get off, and then? These are separate questions, to neither of which can he give a satisfactory answer. Passage to Sacramento, by steamer, costs over a hundred dollars, and still more by stage. He has not a shilling, not a red cent; and his sea-kit sold would not realize a sum sufficient to pay his fare, even if it (the kit) were free. But it is not: on the contrary, embargoed, quodded, by the keeper of the Sailor's Home, against a couple of days of unpaid board and lodging, with sundry imbibings across the counter, still scored on the slate.

The discharged man-o'-war's-man sees himself in a dread dilemma, all the more from its having a double horn. He can neither go to the gold-diggings, nor stay in the Sailor's Home. Comparatively cheap as may be this humble hostelry, it is yet dear enough to demand ten dollars a day for indifferent bed and board. This has been bad enough for Harry Blew, even though but a foremast-man; but he is threatened with a still worse condition of things. Inappropriate the title bestowed on his house; for the owner of the "Home" has not the slightest hospitality in his heart.

He has discovered that his English guest is impecunious; this by the two days' board, and as many nights' bed, remaining unpaid. There is a notice conspicuously posted above the bar, that "scores must be settled daily." And Harry Blew, having disregarded this, has received private but positive notice of another kind, to the effect that he is forthwith to discontinue taking a seat at the *table-d'hôte*, as also to surrender up his share of the bed he has been occupying. At this, the discharged man-o'-war's-man has shown no anger; nor does he feel in any way affronted. He has that correct sense common to sailors, with most others who have seen travel in strange lands, and knows, that, when cash is not forthcoming, credit cannot be expected. In California, as elsewhere, such is the universal and rigorous custom, to which man must resign himself. The English sailor is only a bit sorry to think he has expended his cash so freely, a little repentant at having done it so foolishly, and, on the whole, a good deal down-hearted.

But there is a silver lining to the cloud. The "Crusader" is still in port, and not expected to sail for some days. He may once more place his name upon the frigate's books, and rejoin her. He knows he will not only be received back by her commander, but welcomed by all his old officers and shipmates. A word spoken to the first boat coming ashore, and all will be well. Shall he speak such word? That has become the question; for in this, as every other step in life, there is a *pro* and *contra*. Humiliating the thought of going back to service on the ship, after taking leave of everybody aboard; returning to a dingy fore-castle, to toil, and the handling of tarry ropes, after the bright dreams he has been indulging in; to forego the gathering of

gold-dust, and the exchanging it for doubloons or dollars: in short, turning his back upon fortune, the prospect of a life-competence, perhaps plenitude of wealth, with its resulting ease and idleness, and once more facing stormy seas, with only hard knocks and laborious work in store for him throughout the rest of his life.

While the sovereigns were still clinking in his pockets, this was the dark side of the picture; towards Sacramento, the bright one. Now that the pockets are empty, every thing seems changed, and the silver lining lies on the side of the ship. Still the sailor hesitates how to decide. Despite the pressure upon him, he ponders and reflects, as he does so, plunging his hands into his pockets, apparently searching for coin. It is merely mechanical; for he knows he has not a shilling.

While thus occupied, he is seated in the little sanded bar-room of the "Home," alone with the bar-keeper; the latter eying him with any thing but a sympathetic air; for the book is before him, showing that indebtedness for bed and board, to say nothing of the unsettled bar-score; and the record makes a bar-sinister between them. Another drink could not be added now, even though but a bottle of ginger-beer. The door of credit is closed; and only cash could procure an extension of a hospitality hitherto scant enough.

The sailor thinks. Must he surrender?—give up his dreams of fingering yellow gold, and return to handling black ropes? A glance at the grim, unrelaxed, and unrelenting visage of the bar-keeper, decides him. His decision is expressed in characteristic speech, not addressed to the drink-dispenser, nor aloud, but in low, sad soliloquy.

“Wi’ me, I see, the old sayin’s to stan’ good, —
‘Once a sailor, still a sailor.’ Harry, you’ll steer
back for the ‘Crusader.’ ”

CHAPTER XVII.

UNEXPECTED VISITORS.

HAVING resolved upon returning to his ship, and that very night if he can but get a boat, Harry Blew is about to sally forth into the street, when his egress is unexpectedly prevented. Not by the landlord of the Sailor’s Home, nor his representative, who would be only too glad to get rid of a guest with two days’ reckoning in arrear; for they have surreptitiously inspected his sea-chest, and found it to contain a full suit of “Sunday go-ashores,” with other effects, which they deem sufficient collateral security for the debt. And, as it has been already hypothecated for this, both Boniface and bar-keeper would rather rejoice to see their sailor-guest clear out of the “Home” for good, leaving the sea-chest behind him. On this condition they would be willing to wipe out the debt, both boarding and bar score.

Harry has no thought of thus parting with his kit. Now that he has made up his mind to return to the “Crusader,” a better prospect is opened up to him. He has hopes, that on his making appearance aboard, and again entering his name on the frigate’s books, the purser will advance him a sum sufficient to release the kit. Or he can, in all likelihood, collect the money

among his old messmates. Not for this reason only is he anxious to reach the ship that night, but because he has no other chance of having any place to sleep in, save the street. Both landlord and bar-keeper have notified him, in plain terms, that he must peremptorily leave; and he is about to act upon their notification, and take his departure, when prevented, as already said. What has hindered him from going out of the "Home" is a man coming into it; or, rather, two; since two shadows have suddenly darkened the door, and are projected across the sanded floor of the bar-room. Not like shadows in the eyes of Harry Blew, but streaks of brightest sunlight; for, in the individuals entering, he recognizes two of his officers,—one of them his best friend, and the preserver of his life. Crozier and Cadwallader have found him.

At sight of them, the discharged sailor salutes promptly, and with as much respect as if it were on the quarter-deck of the "Crusader," but with much more demonstration; for their well-timed appearance draws from him an exclamation of joy. Jerking off his straw hat, and giving a twitch to one of his browlocks, he bobs his head several times in succession, with a simultaneous backscrape of his foot upon the floor.

His obeisance ended, he stands silently awaiting whatever communication the young officers have to make. He is already aware that their business is with himself; for the bar-room is but dimly lighted; and Crozier, while crossing its threshold, not at once recognizing him, called out the question, "Is there a sailor staying here, by name Harry Blew?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" was the prompt response; the sailor himself giving it, along with the salutation described.

During the short interval of silence that succeeds, Harry's heart can be distinctly heard beating. Lately depressed, "down in the dumps," as he himself would word it, it is now up to his throat. The sight of his patron, the preserver of his life, is like having it saved a second time. Perhaps they have come to ask him to rejoin the ship? If so, 'tis the very thing he was thinking of. He will not anticipate, but waits for them to declare their errand.

"Well, Harry, old boy," says Crozier, after warmly shaking the sailor's hand, "I'm right glad to find you here. I was afraid you'd gone off to the diggings."

"True, Master Ed'ard. I did intend standin' on that tack, but hadn't been able to get under way, for want o' a wind."

"Want of a wind? I don't quite understand you."

"Why, you see sir, I've been a little bit spreish since comin' ashore, and my locker's got low; more'n that, it's total cleared out. Though I suppose there's plenty o' gold in the diggin's, it takes gold to get there; and, as I ha'n't any, I'm laid up here like an old hulk foul o' a mud-bank. That's just how it is, gentlemen."

"In which case, perhaps you mightn't feel indisposed to go to sea again?"

"Just the thing I war thinkin' o', Master Edward. I'd a'most made up my mind to it, sir, an' war 'bout startin' to try to get aboard the old 'Crusader,' and askin' your honor to ha' my name entered on her books again. I'm willin' to join for a fresh term, if they'll take me."

"They'd take and be glad to get you, Harry, you may be sure of that. Such a skilled sailor as you need never be without a ship, where there's a British

man-of-war within hailing-distance; but we don't want you to join the 'Crusader.' "

"How is that, sir?"

"Because we can help you to something a little better: at least, it will be more to your advantage in a pecuniary sense. You wouldn't mind shipping in a merchant-vessel, with wages three or four times as much as you can get in a man-of-war? How would you like that, Harry?"

"I'd like it amazin'ly, sir! And for the matter o' being a merchanter, that's neither here nor there, so long's *you* recommend it. I'll go as cook, if you tell me to."

"No, no, Harry, not that!" laughingly replies the young officer. "That would never do. I should pity those who had to eat the dishes you'd dress for them. Besides, I should be sorry to see you stewing your strength away in front of a galley-fire. You must do better than that; and it chances I'm authorized to offer you something better. It's a berth on board a trading-ship, and one with some special advantages. She's a Chilian vessel; and her captain is, I believe, either Chilian or Spanish. That won't make any difference to you?"

"Not a doit, sir! I don't care what the ship's colors be, nor what country her skipper, so long's he allows good wages an' plenty o' grub."

"And plenty of grog too, Harry?"

"Ay, ay, sir! I confess to a weakness for that, leastways three times a day."

"No doubt you'll get it as often as you've a mind. But, Harry, I have a word to say about that. Besides my interest in your own welfare, I've another and more selfish one in this Chilian ship. So has Mr.

Cadwallader. We both want you to be on your best behavior during the trip you're to take in her. On board will be two lady-passengers as far as Panama; for the ship is bound thither, and for other ports beyond, I believe as far as Valparaiso. But the ladies are to land at Panama; and, so long as they're with you, you must do every thing in your power to make things agreeable for them. If they should ever be in any danger, — from storm, shipwreck, or otherwise, — you'll stand by them?"

"Yes, Harry," adds Cadwallader: "you'll do that, won't you?"

"Lor, your honors!" replies the sailor, showing surprise. "Sure, ye needn't 'a put sich questin to me, a British man-o'-war's-man!. I'd do that much, anyhow, out o' sheer starn sense o' duty. But when it come to takin' care o' two ladies, to say nothin' about their bein' so young, an' so beautiful" —

"Avast, Harry! How do you know they are either one or the other?" asks Crozier, surprised; Cadwallader repeating the question.

"Lor love ye, masters! Do ye think a common sailor ha'n't no eyes in his head for any thin' but ropes an' tar? You forget I wur o' the boat's crew as rowed two sweet crecturs on board the 'Crusader,' the night o' the grand dancin', an' arterward took the same ashore, along wi' two young gentlemen as went to see 'em home. Sure, sirs, actin' cocks'n on that occasion, I couldn't help hearin' some o' the speeches as passed in the starn-sheets, though they wur spoke in the ears o' the saynoritas, soft as the breeze that fanned their fair cheeks, an' brought the color out on 'em red as Ribsting pippins."

"Avast again, you rascal! So you've been eaves-

dropping, have you? I quite forgot you understood Spanish."

"Only a trifle, Master Ed'ard."

"Too much for that occasion."

"Ah, well, your honor! it may stand me in stead aboard the ship you speak o'."

"Well, Harry, I'm not going to scold you, seeing that you couldn't help hearing what you did. And now I may as well tell you that the young ladies you saw that night in the boat *are* the same who are to be passengers in the Chilian ship. You'll take good care of them, I know."

"That you may depend on, sir. Any one as touches hair o' their heads, to do 'em any injury, 'll have to tear the whole o' his off the head o' Harry Blew. I'll see 'em safe to Panama, or never show there myself. I promise that; an' I think both your honors'll take the word o' a British man-o'-war's-man."

"That's enough. Now to give you the necessary directions about joining this ship. She's lying at anchor somewhere about in the bay; but you'll find her easily enough. And you needn't go in search of her till you've seen the gentleman whose name and address are upon this card. You see, 'Don Tomas Silvestre,' a ship-agent, whose office is down in one of the streets by the strand. Report yourself to him first thing in the morning. In all likelihood, he'll engage you on sight, make out your papers, and give you full directions for getting aboard the ship. It appears she's short of hands; indeed, even without a single sailor. And, by the way, Harry, if you apply soon enough, it's good as certain you'll be made first mate; all the more from your being able to speak Spanish. It's too late for you to do any thing about it to-night;

out don't oversleep yourself. Be at the ship-agent's to-morrow, betimes."

"Ye can trust me for that, sir. I'll show my figure-head there first thing in the mornin'; an' I an't afeerd o' no one gettin' aboard afore me, if they've not gone a'ready."

"I think no one will be before you: I hope not. Send us word how you have succeeded, as the 'Crusader' will likely be in port long enough for us to hear from you. Still, as she may sail on short notice, we may not see you again. Remember, then, what we've said about the *señoritas*. We shall rely upon your fidelity."

"Ay, well may ye, masters. You can both trust your lives to Harry Blew, an' those of them as is dear to you."

"All right, old boy!" exclaims Crozier, satisfied. "We must part; but let's hope we'll meet again. When you get back to England, you know where to find me. Now good-by. Give us a grip of your honest hand, and God bless you!"

Saying this, he grasps the horny hand of the sailor, and warmly presses it. The pressure is returned by a squeeze, that gives assurance of more than ordinary friendship. It is a grip of true gratitude; and the look which accompanies it tells of a devoted friendship bordering on adoration.

Cadwallader also exchanges a like parting salutation; after which, the young officers start off to continue their cruise through the streets.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN INHOSPITABLE HOME.

HARRY BLEW stands in the doorway of the Sailor's Home, watching the two gentlemen as they walk away, his eyes glowing with gratitude, and sparkling with joy. And no wonder, considering the change in his situation brought about by their influence. Ten minutes before, his spirits were at their lowest and darkest. But the prospect of treble or quadruple pay on board a snug ship, though it be a trading-vessel, with the additional chance of being mate instead of foremast-man, has given them a fillip, not only returning them to their ordinary condition, but raising them to their highest and brightest. The only damper is regret at parting with the fine young fellow who has done so much for him. But he has passed through that already, when separating from his ship, and can now better bear it under the reflection, that, though apart from his patron, he will have an opportunity of doing something to show his gratitude. He knows how much Crozier is interested in the well-being of Carmen Montijo,—for Harry has been made acquainted with her name, as also that of Iñez Alvarez; and to be intrusted with a sort of guardianship over the young girls is a proud thought to the ex-man-o'-war's-man.

To carry out the confidence reposed in him will be a labor of love; and he vows in his heart it shall be done, if need be at the risk of life. Indeed, the inter-

few just ended has made a new man of him in more senses than one: for upon the spot he registers a mental resolve to give up dram-drinking for life, or, at all events, till he has seen his charge — the two *señoritas* — safe landed at Panama, and the Chilian ship snug in the harbor of Valparaiso. After that, he is less sure that he may not again go upon a big spree.

Heaving a sigh as the young officers pass out of sight, he turns back into the bar-room. It is no longer a question of his going aboard the "Crusader." He must remain ashore, to be up betimes in the morning, so that he may be early at the office of the ship-agent. And now, again, a shadow, though only a slight one, comes over his spirit. He has still before him the undetermined question, where he is to sleep. Notwithstanding his fine prospects for the future, the present is yet unchanged. Unfortunately he did not think of this while the young officers were with him, else a word would have made all well. Either of them, he doubted not, would have relieved his necessities, had they been but told of them. Too late now: they are gone out of sight, out of hail, and whither he cannot tell or guess. To attempt searching for them in such crowded streets would be only a waste of time. While thus ruefully reflecting, he is confronted by the bar-keeper, whose countenance is now beset with smiles. The fellow has got it into his head that his sailor-guest is no longer impecunious. The navy gentlemen just gone have no doubt been to engage him for their ship, and perhaps made him an advance of wages.

"Well, my salt," says he, in a tone of jocular familiarity, "I guess you've got the shiners now, an' kin settle up your score?"

"No, indeed, sir!" answers Harry, more than ever taken aback. "I'm sorry to say I hain't."

“And what hev them gold-buttoned fellers been palaverin’ ye about?”

“Not about money, master. Them’s two o’ the officers belongin’ to my old ship, — the British frigate ‘Crusader.’ An’ fine young fellows they be too.”

“Much good their finikin fineness seem to hev done you! So they hain’t gin you nuthin’ better than their talk, hev they? Nuthin’ besides?”

“Nothing besides,” rejoins Bléw, restraining his temper, a little touched by the bar-keeper’s inquisitiveness, as also his impertinent manner.

“Nuthin’ but fine words, eh? Well, thar’s plenty o’ them ’bout hyar; but they won’t butter no parsnips. And let me tell you, my man, they won’t pay your board-bill.”

“I know that,” returns the sailor, still keeping his temper. “But I hope to have money soon.”

“Oh! that’s been your story for the last two days; but it won’t bamboozle me any longer. You get no more credit here.”

“Can’t I have supper and bed for another night?”

“No: that you can’t.”

“I’ll pay for them first thing in the mornin’.”

“You’ll pay for ’em this night — now, if you calc’late to get ’em. An’, if you’ve no cash, ’tain’t any use talkin’. What d’ye think we keep a tavern for? ’Twould soon be to let, — bars, beds, and all, — if we’d only such customers as you. So the sooner you walk off, the better the landlord’ll like it. He’s jest gin me orders to tell ye clear out.”

“It’s gallows hard, master,” says Harry, heaving a sigh, “the more so as I’ve got the promise of a good berth ’board a ship that’s down in the harbor. The gentlemen you seed have just been to tell me about it.”

“Then why didn't they give you the money to clear your kit?”

“They'd have done that, no doubt of it, if I'd only thought o' askin' them. I forgot all about it.”

“Ah, that's all very fine, a likely tale; but I don't believe a word of it. If they cared to have you in their ship, they'd have given you the wherewithal to get there. But, come! it's no use shillyshallyin' any longer. The landlord won't like it. He's given his orders sharp: Pay, or go.”

“Well, I suppose I must go.”

“You must; an,' as I've already said, the sooner you're off the better.”

After delivering this stern ultimatum, the bar-keeper jauntily returns behind his bar, to look more blandly on two guests who have presented themselves at it, called for “refreshments,” and tossed down a couple of dollars to pay for them.

Harry Blew turns towards the door, and, without saying another word, steps out into the street. Once there, he does not stop, or stand hesitating. The hospitality of the so-called “Home” has proved a sorry sham; and, indignant at the shabby treatment received, he is but too glad to get away from the place. All his life used to snug quarters in a fine ship's fore-castle, with every thing found for him, he has never before experienced the pang of having no place to sleep. He not only feels it now in all its unpleasantness, but fancies the passers-by can perceive his humiliation. Haunted by this fancy, urged on by it, he hurries his steps; nor stays them till out of sight of the Sailor's Home, out of the street in which the inhospitable tavern stands. He even dislikes the idea of having to go back for his chest, which, however, he must some time do.

Meanwhile, what is to become of him for the remainder of that night? Where is he to obtain supper and a bed? About the latter he cares the least; but, having had no dinner, he is hungry, — half-famished, — and could eat a pound or two of the saltest and toughest junk ever drawn out of a ship's cask. In this unhappy mood he strays on along the street. There is no lack of food before his eyes, almost within touching of his hand, but only to tantalize, and still further whet the edge of his appetite. Eating-houses are open all around him; and under their blazing gas-jets he can see steaming dishes, and savory joints, in the act of being set upon tables surrounded by guests seeming hungry as himself, but otherwise better off. He, too, might enter without fear of being challenged as an intruder; for among the men inside are many in coarse garb, some of them not so respectably appalled as himself. But what would be the use of his entering a restaurant without even a penny in his pockets? He could only gaze at dishes he may not eat, and dare not call for. He remembers his late discomfiture too keenly to risk having it repeated. Thus reflecting, he turns his back upon the tables so temptingly spread, and keeps on along the street. Still the double question recurs: Where is he to get supper? and where sleep? Now, as ever, is he out of sorts with himself for not having given his confidence to the young gentlemen, and told them of the "fix" he was in. Either would have relieved him on the instant, without a word. But it was too late now for regrets. By this time, in all likelihood, they have started back to their ship. How he wished himself aboard the "Crusader"! How happy he would feel in her fore-castle, among his old shipmates! It cannot be; and there-

fore it is idle to think of it. What on earth is he to do? A thought strikes him. He thinks of the ship-agent whose card Crozier left with him, and which he has thrust into his coat-pocket. He draws it out, and holds it up to a street-lamp, to make himself acquainted with the ship-agent's address. The name he remembers, and needs not that. Though but a common sailor, Harry is not altogether illiterate. The seaport town where he first saw the light had a public school for the poorer people, in which he was taught to read and write. By the former of these elementary branches, supplemented by a smattering of Spanish picked up in South American ports he is enabled to decipher the writing upon the card, for it is in writing, and so gets the correct address, both the street and number. Having returned it to his pocket, he buttons up his dreadnought, and, taking a fresh hitch at his duck trousers, starts off again, this time with fixed intent, — to find the office of Don Tomas Silvestre.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "BANK" EL DORADO.

A MONTÉ bank in the city of San Francisco, in the establishment cyleped "El Dorado," part drinking-house, the other part devoted to gambling on the grandest scale. The two are carried on simultaneously, and in the same room, — an oblong saloon big enough for both. The portion of it devoted to Bacchus is at one end, — that farthest from the entrance.

door, where the shrine of the jolly god is represented by a liquor-bar extending from side to side, and backed by an array of shining bottles, glittering glasses, and sparkling decanters ; his worship administered by half a dozen bar-keepers resplendent in white shirts with wrist-ruffles, and big diamond breast-pins, — real, not paste.

The altar of Fortuna is altogether of a different shape and pattern, occupying more space. It is not compact, but extended over the floor, in the form of five tables, large, as if for billiards ; though not one of them is of this kind. Billiards would be too slow a game for the frequenters of El Dorado. They could not patiently wait for the scoring of fifty points, even though the stake were a thousand dollars. “No, no ! *monté* for me !” would be the word of every one of them ; or a few might say, “*faro* !” And, of the five tables in the saloon, four are for the former game, the fifth furnished for the latter ; though there is but little apparent difference in the furniture of the two ; both having a simple cover of green baize or broad-cloth, with certain crossing-lines traced upon it ; that of the *faro* table having the full suit of thirteen cards arranged in two rows, face upwards, and fixed ; while on the *monté* tables but two cards appear thus, — the Queen and Knave ; or as designated in the game, purely Spanish and Spanish American, *Caballo* and *Soto*. They are essentially card-games, and altogether of chance, just as is the throwing of dice.

In the El Dorado there are other modes to get rid of money, or make it if chance so decides, — a rare eventuality, save in the case of the professional gamblers themselves. In one corner of the saloon may be seen a roulette-table ; in another, a backgammon-board,

with dice-boxes and cubes appertaining, not used for the simple, innocent game which the light leathern case with its checkered cover represents, but in the dead, naked casting of dice; doubloons or dollars changing hands at every throw. Other gambling contrivances have place in the El Dorado; for it is a "hell" of the most complete kind; but these are of slight importance compared with the great games, *monté* and *faro*, the real *pièces de résistance*; while the others are only side-dishes, indulged in by such saunterers about the saloon as do not contemplate serious play. Of all, *monté* is the main attraction, its convenient simplicity—for it is as simple as tossing "heads or tails"—making it possible for the veriest greenhorn to take part in it, with as much chance of success as the oldest *habitué*. Originally Mexican, in California and other Western States it has become thoroughly Americanized.

Of the visible insignia of the game, and in addition to the two cards with their faces turned up, there is a complete pack, with several stacks of circular-shaped and variously-colored pieces of ivory,—the "checks" or counters of the game. These rest upon the table to the right or left of the dealer, usually the "banker" himself, in charge of his croupier, who pays them out, or draws them in, as the bank loses or wins, along with such coin as may have been staked upon the cards. Around the table's edge, and in front of each player, is his own private pile, usually a mixture of doubloons, dollars, and ivory checks, with bags or packets of gold-dust and nuggets. Of bank-notes there are few or none, the currency of California being through the medium of metal; at this time (1849) most of it un-minted, and in its crude state, as it came out of the

mine, or the river mud. By the croupier's hand is a pair of scales with weights appertaining; their purpose, to ascertain the value of such little gold packages as are placed upon the cards, this only needed to be known when the bank is loser. Otherwise, they are ruthlessly raked in alongside the other deposits, without any note made of the amount.

The dealer sits centrally at the side of the table, in a grand chair, cards in hand. After shuffling, he turns their faces up, one by one, and with measured slowness. He interrupts himself at intervals, as the face of a card is exposed, making a point for or against him in the game. Calling this out in calm voice and long-drawn monotone, he waits for the croupier to square accounts, which he does by drawing in, or pushing out, the coins and checks, with the nimbleness of a prestidigitateur. Old bets are re-arranged, new ones made, and the dealing proceeds.

Around the tables sit or stand the players, exhibiting a variety of facial types and national costumes. For there you may see not only human specimens of every known nationality, but of every rank in the social scale, with the callings and professions that appertain to it, — an assemblage such as is rarely, if ever, seen elsewhere. Gentlemen who may have won university honors; officers wearing gold straps on their shoulders, or bands of lace around the rims of their caps; native Californians resplendent in slashed and buttoned velveteens; States' lawyers or doctors, in sober black; even judges, that same morning seated upon the bench, — may be all observed at the *monté* table, mingling with men in red flannel shirts, blanket-coats, and trousers tucked into the tops of mud-be-daubed boots, with sailors in pea-jackets of coarse

pilot, or Guernsey smocks, unwashed, unkempt, unshorn, not only mingling with, but jostled by them, rudely if occasion call. All are on equality here, no class distinction in the saloon *El Dorado*; for all are on the same errand, — to get rich by gambling. The gold gleaming over the table is reflected in their faces, not in smiles, or cheerfully, but an expression of hungry cupidity, fixed as if stamped into their features. No sign of hilarity or joyfulness, not a word of *badinage* passing about or between, scarce a syllable spoken, save the call-words of the game, or an occasional remark by the croupier, explanatory of some disputed point about the placing or payment of stakes. And if there be little light humor, neither is there much of ill manners. Strangely assorted as is the motley crowd, in part composed of the roughest specimens of humanity, noisy speech is exceptional, and rude or boisterous behavior rare. Either shown would be resented, and soon silenced, though, perhaps, not till after some noises of still louder nature, — the excited, angry clamor of a quarrel, succeeded by the cracking of pistols; then a man borne off wounded, in all likelihood to die, or already dead, and stretched along the sanded floor, to be taken unconcernedly up, and carried feet foremost out of the room.

And yet in an instant it will all be over. The gamblers, temporarily attracted from the tables, will return to them; the dealing of the cards will be resumed; and midst the chinking of coin, and the rattling of checks, the sanguinary drama will not only cease to be talked about, but thought of. Bowie-knives and pistols are the police that preserve order in the saloons of *San Francisco*.

Although the *El Dorado* is owned by a single indi-

vidual, that is only as regards the house itself, with the drinking-bar and its appurtenances. The gambling-tables are under separate and distinct proprietorship; each belonging to a "banker," who supplies the cash capital, and other necessaries for the game; in short, "runs" the table, to use a Californian phrase. As already stated, the owner of such a concern is himself generally the dealer, and usually, indeed almost universally, a distinguished "sportsman;" this being the appellation of the Western States' professional gambler, occasionally abbreviated to "sport." He is a man of peculiar characteristics, though not confined to California. His like may be met with all over the United States, but more frequently in those of the South and South-west. The Mississippi Valley is his congenial coursing-ground, and its two great metropolitan cities, New Orleans and St. Louis, his chief centres of operation; Natchez, Memphis, Vicksburg, Louisville, and Cincinnati being places provincial, which he only honors with an occasional visit. He is encountered aboard all the big steamboats, those called "crack," and carrying the wealthier class of passengers; while the others he leaves to the more timid and less noted practitioners of his calling. Wherever seen, the "sport" is resplendent in shirt-front, glittering studs, with a grand cluster of diamonds upon his finger that sparkles like a stalactite as he deals out the cards. He is, in truth, an *elegant* of the first water, apparelled and perfumed as a D'Orsay or Beau Brummell, and, although ranking socially lower than these, has a sense of honor quite as high, perhaps higher than had either.

CHAPTER XX.

A MONTÉ BANK IN FULL BLAST.

IN the saloon El Dorado, as already said, there are five gambling-tables side by side, but with wide spaces between for the players. Presiding over the one which stands central is a man of about thirty years of age, of good figure, and well-formed features, the latter denoting Spanish descent; his cheeks clean shaven; the upper lip mustached; the under having a pointed imperial, or "goatee," which extends below the extremity of his chin. He has his hat on (so has everybody in the room), — a white beaver, set upon a thick shock of black wavy hair, its brim shadowing a face that would be eminently handsome, but for the eyes, that show sullen, if not sinister. These, like his hair, are coal-black in color, though he rarely raises their lids; his gaze being habitually fixed on the cards held in his hands. Once only has he looked up and around, on hearing a name pronounced, — Montijo. Two native Californians standing close behind him are engaged in a dialogue, in which they incidentally speak of Don Gregorio. It is a matter of no moment, only a slight allusion; and, as their conversation is almost instantly over, the *monté* dealer again drops his long dark lashes, and goes on with the game, his features resuming their wonted impassibility.

Though to all appearance immobile as those of the sphinx, one watching him closely could see that there

is something in his mind besides *monté*. For although the play is running high, and large bets are being laid, he seems regardless about the result of the game — for this night only, since it has never been so before. His air is at times abstracted, more than ever after hearing that name; while he deals out the cards carelessly, once or twice making mistakes. But as these have been trifling, and readily rectified, the players around the table have taken no particular notice of them, nor yet of his abstraction. It is not sufficiently manifest to attract attention; and, with the wonderful command he has over himself, none of them suspect that he is at that moment a prey to reflections of the strongest and bitterest kind.

There is one, however, who is aware of it, knowing the cause; this, a man seated on the players' side of the table, and directly opposite the dealer. He is a personage of somewhat spare frame, a little below medium height, of swarth complexion, and straight black hair, to all appearance a *native* Californian, though not wearing the national costume, but simply a suit of black broadcloth. He lays his bets, staking large sums, apparently indifferent as to the result; while at the same time eying the deposits of the other players with eager, nervous anxiety, as though their losses and gains concerned him more than his own, — the former, to all appearance, gladdening him; the latter troubling him. His behavior might be deemed strange, and doubtless would, were there any one to observe it. But there is not: each player is absorbed in his own play, and the calculation of chances. In addition to watching his fellow-gamesters around the table, this eccentric individual ever and anon turns his eye upon the dealer; its expression at such times being

that of intense earnestness, with something that resembles reproof, as though annoyed by the latter handling his cards so carelessly, and would sharply rebuke him, if he could get the opportunity without being observed; the secret of the whole matter being, that he is a sleeping-partner in the *monté* bank, — the moneyed one, too, most of its capital having been supplied by him: hence his indifference to the fate of his own stakes (for winning or losing is all the same to him), and his anxiety about those of the general circle of players. His partnership is not suspected, or, if so, only by the initiated. Although sitting face to face with the dealer, no sign of recognition passes between them; nor is any speech exchanged. They seem to have no acquaintance with one another, beyond that begot out of the game. And so the play proceeds, amidst the clinking of coin, and clattering of ivory pieces; these monotonous sounds diversified by the calls, “*Soto*” this, and “*Caballo*” that, with now and then a “*Carajo!*” or, it may be, “Just my luck!” from the lips of some mortified loser. But, beyond such slight ebullition, ill temper does not show itself, or, at all events, does not lead to any altercation with the dealer. That would be dangerous, as all are aware. On the table, close to his right elbow, rests a double-barrelled pistol, both barrels of which are loaded. And though no one takes particular notice of it, any more than if it were a pair of snuffers on their tray, or one of the ordinary implements of the game, all know well enough that he who keeps this standing symbol of menace before their eyes is prepared to use it on provocation.

It is ten o'clock, and the bank is in full blast. Up to this hour, the players, in one thin row around the tables, were staking only a few dollars at a time, as

skirmishers in advance of the main army, firing stray shots from pieces of light calibre. Now the heavy artillery has come up, the ranks have filled, and the files become doubled around the different tables; two rows of players, in places three, engaging in the game. And instead of silver dollars, gold eagles and doubloons — the last being the great guns — are flung down upon the green baize with a rattle continuous as the firing of musketry. The battle of the night has begun.

But *monté* and *faro* are not the only attractions of the El Dorado. The shrine of Bacchus — its drinking-bar — has its worshippers as well; a score of them standing in front of it, with others constantly coming and going. Among the latest arrivals are two young men in the attire of navy officers. At a distance, it is not easy to distinguish the naval uniforms of nations, almost universally dark blue, with gold bands and buttons; more especially is it difficult when these are of the two cognate branches of the great Anglo-Saxon race, — English and American. While still upon the street, the officers in question might have been taken for either; but once within the saloon, and under the light of its numerous lamps, the special insignia on their caps proclaim them as belonging to a British man-of-war. And so do they, since they are Edward Crozier and Willie Cadwallader.

They have entered without any definite design, further than, as Crozier said, to “have a shot at the tiger.” Besides, as they have been told, a night in San Francisco would not be complete without a look in at El Dorado.

Soon as inside the saloon, they step towards its drinking-bar, Crozier saying, “Come, Cad, let’s do some sparkling.”

“All right,” responds the descendant of the Cymri, his face already a little flushed with what they have had at the Parker.

“Pint bottle of champagne!” calls Crozier.

“We’ve no pints here,” saucily responds the bar-keeper, a gentleman in shirt-sleeves, with gold buckles on his embroidered braces, too grand to append the courtesy of “sir.” “Nothing less than quarts,” he deigns to add.

“A quart bottle, then,” cries Crozier, tossing down a doubloon to pay for it, — “a gallon, if you’ll only have the goodness to give it us.”

The sight of the gold coin, with a closer inspection of his customers, and perhaps some dread of a second sharp rejoinder, secures the attention of the dignified Californian Ganymede, who, relaxing his *hauteur*, condescends to serve them.

While drinking the champagne, the young officers direct their eyes towards that part of the saloon occupied by the gamblers. They see several clusters of men collected around tables, some sitting, others standing. They know what it means, and that there is *monté* in their midst. Though Cadwallader has often heard of the game, he has never played it, or been a spectator to its play. Crozier, who has both seen and played it, promises to initiate him. Tossing off their glasses, and receiving the change (not much out of a doubloon), they approach one of the *monté* tables, — that in the centre of the saloon, around which there are players, standing and sitting, three deep. It is some time before they can squeeze through the two outside concentric rings, and get within betting distance of the table. Those already around it are not men to be pushed rudely apart, or make way for a

couple of youngsters, however fine their appearance, or impatient their manner. In the circle are officers of far higher rank than they, though belonging to a different service, — naval captains and commanders, and, of army men, majors, colonels, even generals. What care these for a pair of boisterous subalterns? Or what reck the rough gold-diggers and stalwart trappers seen around the table for any or all of them? It is a chain, however ill assorted in its links, not to be severed *sans cérémonie* ; and the young English officers must bide their time. A little patience, and their turn will come too.

Practising this, they wait for it with the best grace they can, and not very long. One after another, the infatuated gamblers get played out ; each, as he sees his last dollar swept away from him by the ruthless rake of the croupier, heaving a sigh, and retiring from the table ; most of them with seeming reluctance, and looking back, as a stripped traveller at the footpad who has turned his pockets inside out. Soon the outer ring is broken, leaving spaces between, into one of which slips Crozier, Cadwallader pressing in alongside of him. Gradually they squeeze nearer and nearer, till they are close to the table's edge. Having at length attained a position where they can conveniently place bets, they are about plunging their hands into their pockets for the necessary stakes, when all at once the act is interrupted. The two turn towards one another with eyes, attitude, every thing, expressing not only surprise, but stark, speech-depriving astonishment ; for on the opposite side of the table, seated in a grand chair, presiding over the game, and dealing out the cards, Crozier sees the man who has been making love to Carmen Montijo,

— his rival of the morning ; while at the same instant Cadwallader has caught sight of *his* rival, — the suitor of Inez Alvarez.

CHAPTER XXI.

FIGHTING THE TIGER.

AT sight of De Lara and Calderon, the young officers stand speechless, as if suddenly struck dumb ; for a pang has shot through their hearts, bitter as a poisoned shaft. Crozier feels it the keenest, since it is an affair that most concerns him. The suitor of Carmen Montijo a “sport,” a common gambler ! Favored, or not, still an aspirant to her hand ; though it were chagrin enough to think of such a man being even on terms of acquaintance with her. Cadwallader is less affected, though he, too, feels it. For although Calderon is in the circle of outside players, — apparently a simple wagerer, like the rest, — the companionship of the morning, with the relations existing between the two men, tell of their being socially the same. He already knows his rival to be a blackguard : in all likelihood, he is also a blackleg.

Quick as thought itself, these reflections pass through the minds of the English officers ; though for some time neither says a word, their looks alone communicating to each other what both bitterly feel. Fortunately, their surprise is not noticed by the players around the table. Each is engrossed in his own play, and gives but a glance at the new-comers, whose naval

uniforms are not the only ones there. But there are two who take note of them in a more particular manner: these, Faustino Calderon and Francisco de Lara. Calderon, looking along the table, — for he is on that same side, — regards them with glances furtive, almost timid. Very different is the manner of De Lara. At sight of Crozier, he suspends the deal, his face suddenly turning pale, while a spark of angry light flashes forth from his eyes. The passionate display is, to all appearance, unobserved; or, if so, it is attributed to some trifling cause, as annoyance at the game going against him. It is almost instantly over; and the disturbed features of the *monté* dealer resume their habitual expression of stern placidity.

The young officers, having recovered from their first shock of astonishment, also have restored to them the faculty of speech, and now exchange thoughts, though not about that which so disturbs them. By a sort of tacit understanding it is left to another time; Crozier only saying, “We’ll talk of it when we get aboard ship. That’s the place for sailors to take counsel together, with a clear head, such as we want. At this precious minute I feel like a fish out of water.”

“By Jove! so do I.”

“The thing we’re both thinking of has raised the devil in me. But let us not bother about it now. I’ve got something else in my mind. I’m half mad, and intend *fighting the tiger*.”

“Fighting the tiger! What do you mean by that, Ned?”

“You’ll soon see. But, if you insist upon it, I’ll give you a little preliminary explanation.”

“Yes, do. Perhaps I can help you.”

“No, you can’t. There’s only one who can.”

“ Who is he? ”

“ It’s not a he, but a she, — the Goddess of Fortune. I intend soliciting her favors. If she but grant them, I’ll smash Mr. De Lara’s *monté* bank.”

“ Impossible! There’s no probability of your being able to do that.”

“ Not much probability, I admit. Still there’s a possibility. I’ve seen such a thing done before now. Bold play and big luck combined will do it. I’m in for the first: whether I have the last remains to be seen. In any case, I’ll either break the bank, or lose all I’ve got on me, which, by chance, is a pretty big stake to begin with. So here goes!”

Up to this time, their conversation has been carried on in a low tone; no one hearing, or caring to listen to it, all being too much absorbed in their own calculations to take heed of the bets or combinations of others. If any one gives a glance at them, and sees them engaged in their *sotto-voce* dialogue, it is but to suppose they are discussing which card they had best bet upon, — whether the *Soto* or *Caballo*, and whether it would be prudent to risk a whole dollar, or limit their lay to the more modest sum of fifty cents. They who may have been thus conjecturing, with everybody else, are taken by surprise, in fact somewhat startled, when the older of the two officers, bending across the table, tosses a hundred-pound Bank-of-England note upon the *baize*, with as much nonchalance as if it were but a five-dollar bill.

“ Shall I give you checks for it? ” asks the croupier, after examining the crisp note, — current over all the earth, — and knowing it good as gold.

“ No,” answers Crozier, “ not yet. You can give that after the bet’s decided — if I win it. If not, you

can take the note. I place it on the Queen, against the Knave."

The croupier, simply nodding assent, places the note on the Queen.

During the interregnum in which this little incident occurs, the English officers, hitherto scarce noticed, are broadly stared at, and closely scrutinized, Crozier becoming the cynosure of every eye. He stands it with a placid tranquillity, which shows him as careless about what they may think him as he is of his cash. Meanwhile, the cards have had a fresh shuffle, and the deal begins anew; all eyes again turning upon the game in earnest expectancy; those who, like Crozier, have placed upon the Queen, wishing her to show her face first. And she does.

"*Caballo en la puerta mozo!*" ("The Queen in the door wins!") cries the dealer, the words drawled out with evident reluctance; while a flash of fierce anger is seen scintillating in his eyes.

"Will you take it in checks?" asks the croupier, addressing himself to Crozier, after settling the smaller bets. "Or shall I pay you in specie?"

"You needn't pay yet. Let the note lie. Only cover it with a like amount. I go it double, and again upon the Queen."

Stakes are relaid; some changed; others left standing or doubled, as Crozier's, which is now a bet for two hundred pounds. On goes the game, the pieces of smooth pasteboard slipping silently from the jewelled fingers of the dealer, whose eye is bent upon the cards, as if he saw through them, or would if he could. Whatever his wish, he has no power to change the chances. If he have any professional tricks, there is no opportunity for him to practise them. There are

too many eyes looking on, too many pistols and bowie-knives around, too many men ready to stop any attempt at cheating, and punish it if attempted.

Again he is compelled to call out, "*Caballo en la puerta mozo!*"

"Now, sir," says the croupier to Crozier, after settling other scores, "you want your money, I suppose?"

"Not yet. I'm not pressed; and I can afford to wait a little longer. I again go double, and am still contented with my Queen."

The dealing proceeds, with four hundred pounds lying on the *Caballo* to Crozier's account, and ten times as much belonging to other betters; for, now that the luck seems to be running with the English officer, most lay their stakes beside his.

Once again, "*Caballo en la puerta mozo!*" And again Crozier declines to take up his bet.

He has now sixteen hundred pounds sterling upon the card; while the others, thoroughly assured that his luck is on the run, double theirs, till the bets against the bank run up to many thousands.

De Lara begins to look anxious, and not a little down-hearted. Still more anxious, and lower in heart, appears one seated on the opposite side, — Calderon; for it is his money that is moving away from him. On the contrary, Crozier is as cool as ever, his features set in a rigid determination to do what he promised, — break the bank, or lose all he has got about him. The last not likely yet; for soon again comes the cry, "*The Queen winner!*"

There is a pause longer than usual for the settling of such a large score, and after it an interval of inaction. The dealer seems inclined to discontinue; for

still lying upon the Queen is Crozier's stake, once more doubled, and now counting three thousand two hundred pounds. Asked if he intends to let it remain, he replies sneeringly, "Of course I do: I insist upon it. And once more I go for the Queen. Let those who like the Knave better, back him!"

"Go on, go on!" is the cry around the table, from many voices speaking in tone of demand.

De Lara glances at Calderon furtively, but, to those observing it, with a look of interrogation. Whatever the sign, or answer, it decides him to go on dealing. The bets are again made; to his dismay, almost everybody laying upon the Queen, and, as before, increasing their stakes. And in like proportion is heightened the interest in the game. It is too intense for any display of noisy excitement now. And there is less throughout the saloon; for many from the other tables, as all the saunterers, have collected around, and, standing several deep, gaze over one another's shoulders with as much eager earnestness as if a man were expiring in their midst.

The ominous call at length comes; not in clear voice, or tone exultant, but feeble, and as if wrung reluctantly from the lips of the *monté* dealer; for it is again a verdict adverse to the bank: "*Caballo en la puerta mozo!*"

As De Lara utters the words, he dashes the cards down, scattering them all over the table; then, rising excitedly from his chair, adds in faltering tone, "Gentlemen, I'm sorry to tell you — *the bank's broke!*"



CHAPTER XXII.

A PLUCKY "SPORT."

THE BANK'S BROKE.

Three words that have oft, too oft, startled the ear, and made woe in many a heart.

At hearing them, the gamesters of the El Dorado, seated around the *monté* table, spring to their feet, as if their chairs had suddenly become converted into iron at a white-heat. They rise simultaneously, as though all were united in a chain, elbow and elbow together. But, while thus gesturing alike, very different, is the expression upon their faces. Some simply show surprise; others look incredulous; while not a few give evidence of anger. For an instant there is silence; the surprise, the incredulity, the anger, having suspended speech — this throughout the saloon; for all, bar-drinkers as well as gamesters, have caught the last three words spoken by De Lara, and thoroughly understand their import. No longer is heard the chink of ivory checks, or the metallic ring of doubloons and dollars; no longer the thudding-down of decanters, nor the jingle of glasses. Instead, a stillness so profound, that one entering at this moment might fancy it a Quaker's meeting, but for the symbols seen around; these, any thing but Quakerish. Easier to conceive it a grand gambling-hell represented in wax-work.

The silence is of the shortest, as also the immobility of the figures composing the different group, —

only for a half-score seconds; then there is noise enough, with no end of gesticulation. A roar arises that resounds through the room; while men rush about wildly, madly, as if in the court-yard of a lunatic asylum. Some show anger, — those who are losers by the breaking of the bank. Many have won large bets; the stakes still lying on the table, which they know will not be paid. The croupier has told them so, confessing his cash-box cleared out at the last settlement; even this having been effected with the now useless ivory checks.

Some gather up their gold or silver, and stow it in safety, growling, but satisfied that things are no worse. Others are not so lenient. They do not believe there is good cause for the suspension, and insist upon being paid in full. They rail at the proprietor of the bank, adding menace. De Lara is the man thus marked. They see him before them, grandly dressed, glittering with diamonds. They talk of stripping him of his *bijouterie*.

“No, gentlemen!” he protests, with a sardonic sneer; “not that, if you please — not yet. First hear me; and then ’twill be time for you to strike.”

“What have you to say?” demands one, with his fists full of ivory counters, — the protested checks.

“Only that I’m not the owner of this bank, and never have been.”

“Who is, then?” ask several at the same time.

“Well, that I can’t tell you just now; and, what’s more, I won’t. No, that I won’t!”

The gambler says this with emphasis, and an air of sullen determination, that has its effect upon his questioners, even the most importunate. For a time, it stays their talk, as well as action. Seeing this, he

follows it up with further speech, but more conciliatory. "As I've said, gentlemen, I'm not the owner of this concern, only the dealer of the cards. You ask who's proprietor of the smashed table. It's natural enough you should want to know; but it's just as natural, that it ain't my business to tell you. If I did, it would be a shabby trick; and I take it you're all men enough to see it in that light. If there's any who isn't, he can have my card, and call upon me at his convenience. My name's Francisco de Lara, or Frank Lara, if you like, for short. I can be found here, or anywhere else in San Francisco, at such time as may suit anxious inquirers. And if any wants me now, and can't wait, I'm good this minute for pistols across the table. Yes, gentlemen, any of you who'd like a little amusement of that kind, let him come on! It'll be a change from the *monté*. For my part, I'm tired of shuffling cards, and would like to rest my fingers on a trigger. Which of you feels disposed to give me the chance? Don't all speak at once!"

No one feels disposed, and no one speaks; at least in hostile tone, or to take up the challenge. Instead, half a score surround the "sport," and not only express their admiration of his pluck, but challenge him to an encounter of drinks, not pistols. Turning towards the bar, they vociferate, "Champagne!"

Contented with the turn things have taken, and proud at the volley of invitations, De Lara accepts; and soon the vintage of France is seen effervescing from a dozen tall glasses; and the *monté* dealer stands drinking in the midst of his admirers. Other groups draw up to the bar-counter; while twos and solitary tipplers fill the spaces between. The temple of Fortuna is for a time deserted; her worshippers transfer-

ring their devotion to the shrine of Bacchus. The losers drink to drown disappointment; while the winners quaff cups in the exhilaration of success. If a bad night for the bank, it is a good one for the bar. Decanters are quickly emptied, and bottles of many kinds go "down among the dead men."

The excitement in the saloon is soon over. Occurrences of like kind — often of more tragical termination — are too common in California to cause any long-sustained interest. Within the hour will arise some new event, equally stirring, leaving the old to live only in the recollection of those who have been active participants in it. So with the breaking of Frank Lara's bank. A stranger entering the saloon an hour after, from what he there sees, cannot tell that an incident of so serious nature has occurred; for in less than this time the same *monté* table is again surrounded by gamblers, as if its play had never been suspended. The only difference observable is, that quite another individual presides over it, dealing out the cards; while a new croupier has replaced him whose cash receipts so suddenly ran short of his needed disbursements. The explanation is simply, that there has been a change of owners; another celebrated "sport" taking up the abandoned bank, and opening it anew. With a few exceptions, the customers are the same; their number not sensibly diminished. Most of the old players have returned to it; while the places of those who have defected, and gone off to other gambling-resorts, are filled by fresh arrivals. A small number, who think they have had play enough for that night, have left the El Dorado for good. Among these are the English officers, whose visit proved so prejudicial to the interests of the place. De Lara too, and Calderon, with

other confederates, have forsaken the saloon. But whither gone no one knows, or seems to care; for the fortunes of a fallen man soon cease to interest men who are themselves madly struggling to mount up.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SUPPER CARTE-BLANCHE.

ON parting from the *El Dorado*, Crozier and Cadwallader do not go directly aboard the "Crusader." They know that their boat will be awaiting them at the place appointed; but the appointment is for a later hour: and as the breaking of the *monté* bank, with the incidents attendant, occupied but a short half-hour, there will be time for them to see a little more of San Franciscan life, — perhaps the last chance they may have during their stay in the port. They have fallen in with several other young officers, naval like themselves, though not of their own ship, nor yet their own navy or nation, but belonging to one cognate and kindred, — Americans. Through the freemasonry of their common profession, with these they have fraternized; and it is agreed they shall all sup together. Crozier has invited the Americans to a repast the most *recherché*, as it is the costliest, that can be obtained at the grandest hotel in San Francisco, the Parker House. He adds, humorously, that he is able to stand the treat. And well he may; since, besides the English money with which he entered the *El Dorado*, he has brought thousands of dollars out of it,

which would have been more, had all the ivory checks been honored. As it is, his pockets are filled with notes and gold, as also those of Cadwallader, who helps him to carry the coin. Part of the heavy metal he has been able to change into the more portable form of bank-notes. Yet the two are still heavily weighted, "laden like hucksters' donkeys," jokingly remarks Cadwallader, as they proceed towards the Parker.

A private room is engaged; and, according to promise, Crozier bespeaks a repast of the most sumptuous kind, with *carte-blanche* for the best wines, — champagne at three guineas a bottle, hock the same, and South-side Madeira still more. What difference to him? The supper, ordered in the double-quick, soon makes its appearance, — sooner in San Francisco than in any other city of the world, in better style too, and better worth the money; for the Golden City excels in the science of gastronomy. Even then, amidst her canvas sheds and weather-boarded houses, could be obtained dishes of every kind known to Christendom or Paganism, — the *cuisine* of France, Spain, and Italy; the roast beef of Old England, as the pork and beans of the New; the *gumbo* of Guinea, and *sauerkraut* of Germany, side by side with the swallow's-nest soup and the sea-slugs of China. Had Lucullus but lived in these days, he would have forsaken the banks of the Tiber, and made California his home.

The repast furnished by the Parker House, however splendid, has to be speedily despatched; for, unfortunately, time forbids the leisurely enjoyment of the viands, to a certain extent marring the pleasure of the occasion. All the officers, American as English, have to be on their respective ships at the stroke of twelve. Reluctantly breaking up their hilarious company, they

prepare to depart. They have forsaken the supper-room, and passed on to the outer saloon of the hotel, like all such, furnished with a drinking-bar. Before separating, and while buttoning up against the chill night-air, Crozier calls out, "Come, gentlemen, one more glass! The stirrup-cup!"

In San Francisco this is always the wind-up to a night of revelry. No matter how much wine has been quaffed, the carousal is not deemed complete without a last "statutory" drink, taken standing at the bar. Giving way to the Californian custom, the officers range themselves along the marble slab, bending over which, the polite bar-keeper asks, "What is it to be, gentlemen?"

There is a moment of hesitation: the gentlemen — already well wine-d — scarce know what to call for. Crozier cuts the Gordian knot by proposing, "A round of punches *à la Romaine!*"

Universal assent to this delectable drink; as all know, just the thing for a nightcap. Soon the cooling beverage, compounded with snow from the Sierra Nevada, appears upon the counter, in huge glasses, piled high with the sparkling crystals, a spoon surmounting each; for punch *à la Romaine* is not to be drunk, but eaten. Shovelling it down in haste, adieus are exchanged by a hearty shaking of hands, when the American officers go off, leaving Crozier and Cadwallader in the saloon. These only stay to settle the account.

While standing by the bar, waiting for it to be brought, they cast a glance around the room. At first careless, it soon becomes concentrated on a group seen at some distance off, near one of the doors leading out, of which there are several. There are also several other groups; for the saloon is of large dimensions,

besides being the most popular place of resort in San Francisco. And for San Francisco the hour is not yet late. Along the line of the drinking-bar, and over the white sanded floor, are some scores of people, of all qualities and kinds, in almost every variety of costume. They who compose the party that has attracted the attention of the English officers show nothing particular; that is, to the eye of one unacquainted with them. There are four of them; two wearing broad-cloth cloaks, the other two having their shoulders shrouded under *serapes*. Nothing in all that. The night is cold, indeed wet; and they are close to the door, to all appearance intending soon to step out. They have only paused to exchange a parting word, as if they designed to separate before issuing into the street.

Though the spot where they stand is in shadow, a folding screen separating it from the rest of the saloon, and it is not easy to get sight of their faces, — the difficulty increased by broad-brimmed hats set slouchingly on their heads, with their cloaks and *serapes* drawn up around their throats, — Crozier and Cadwallader have not only seen, but recognized them. A glance at their countenances, caught before the muffling was made, enabled the young officers to identify three of them as De Lara, Calderon, and the *ci-devant* croupier of the *monté* bank. The fourth, whose face they have also seen, is a personage not known to them, but, judging by his features, a suitable associate for the other three. Soon as catching sight of them, which he is the first to do, Crozier whispers to his companion, “See, Will! Look yonder! Our friends from the El Dorado!”

“By Jove! them, sure enough. Do you think they’re following us?”

“I shouldn’t wonder. I was only surprised they didn’t do something when they had us in their gambling den. After the heavy draw I made on Mr. Lara’s bank, I expected no less than that he’d try to renew his acquaintance with me, all the more from his having been so free of it in the morning. Instead, he and his friend seem to have studiously avoided coming near us, not even casting a look in our direction. That rather puzzles me.”

“It needn’t. After what you gave him, I should think he’d feel shy of another encounter.”

“No: that’s not it. Blackleg though the fellow be, he’s got game in him. He gave proof of it in the El Dorado, defying and backing everybody out. It was an exhibition of real courage, Will; and, to tell the truth, I couldn’t help admiring it — can’t now. When I saw him presiding over a gambling-table, and dealing out the cards, I at once made up my mind that it would never do to meet him, even if he challenged me. Now I’ve decided differently; and, if he call me out, I’ll give him a chance to recover a little of his lost reputation. I will, upon my honor!”

“But why should you? A ‘sport,’ a professional gambler! The thing would be simply ridiculous.”

“Nothing of the kind, — not here in California. On the contrary, I should cut a more ridiculous figure by refusing him satisfaction. It remains to be seen whether he’ll seek it according to the correct code.”

“That he won’t: at least, I don’t think he will. From the way the four have got their heads together, it looks as if they meant mischief now. They may have been watching their opportunity — to get us two alone. What a pity we didn’t see them before our friends went off! They’re good fellows, those Yankee officers, and would have stood by us.”

“No doubt they would. But it’s too late now. They’re beyond hailing-distance; and we must take care of ourselves. Get your dirk ready, Will, and have your hand close to the butt of one of Mr. De Lara’s shooting-irons.”

“I have it that way. Never fear. Wouldn’t it be a good joke if I have to give the fellow a pill out of one of his own pistols?”

“No joking matter to us, if they’re meditating an attack. Though we disarmed him in the morning, he’ll be freshly provided, and with weapons in plenty. I’ll warrant each of the four has a battery concealed under his cloak. They appear as if they’re concocting some scheme, which we’ll soon know all about—likely before leaving the room. Certainly they’re up to something.”

“Four hundred and ninety dollars, gentlemen!” The financial statement is made by the bar-keeper, presenting the bill.

“There!” cries Crozier, flinging down a five-hundred-dollar-bill. “Let that settle it. You can keep the change for yourself.”

“Thank ye,” dryly responds the Californian dispenser of drinks, taking the ten-dollar-tip with less show of gratitude than a London waiter would give for a fourpenny-piece—little as that may be.

Turning to take departure, the young officers again look across the saloon, to learn how the hostile party has disposed itself. To their surprise, the gamblers are gone, having disappeared while the account was being receipted.

“I don’t like the look of it,” says Crozier in a whisper; “less now than ever. No doubt we’ll find them outside. Well, we can’t stay here all night. If

they attack us, we must do our best. Take a firm grip of your pistol, with your finger close to the trigger, and, if any of them shows sign of shooting, see that you fire first. Follow me, and keep close!"

On the instant of delivering these injunctions, Crozier starts towards the door, his companion following, as directed. Both sally out, and for a while stand gazing around them. People they see in numbers, some lounging by the hotel porch, others passing along the street, but none in cloaks or *serapes*. The gamblers must have gone clear away.

"After all, we may have been wronging them," remarks Crozier, as, in his nature, giving way to a generous impulse. "I can hardly think that a fellow who's shown such courage would play the assassin. Maybe they were but putting their heads together about challenging us? If that's it, we may expect to hear from them in the morning. It looks all right. Anyhow, we can't stay dallying here. If we're not aboard by eight bells, old Bracebridge'll masthead us. Let's heave along, my hearty!"

So saying, the senior officer leads off, Cadwallader close on his quarter, both a little unsteady in their steps, partly from being loaded with the spoils of El Dorado, and partly from the effects of the Parker House wines, and *puaches à la Romaine*.



CHAPTER XXIV.

HARRY BLEW HOMELESS.

WHILE the exciting scene described as taking place in the El Dorado was at its height, Harry Blew went past the door. Could the sailor have seen through walls, he would have entered the saloon. The sight of his former officers would have attracted him inside, there to remain, for more reasons than one. Of one he had already thought. Conjecturing that the young gentleman might be going on a bit of a spree, and knowing the dangers of such in San Francisco, it had occurred to him to accompany, or keep close after them, in order that he might be at hand, should they come into collision with any of the roughs and rowdies thick upon the street. Unfortunately this idea, like that of asking them for a cash loan, had come too late; and they were out of sight ere he could take any steps towards its execution. A glance into the gambling-saloon would have brought both opportunities back again; and, instead of continuing to wander hungry through the streets, the sailor would have had a splendid supper, and after it a bed, either in some respectable hostelry, or his old bunk aboard the "Crusader." It was not to be. While passing the El Dorado, he could know nothing of the friends that were so near; and, thus unconscious, he leaves the glittering saloon behind, and a half-score others lighted with like brilliancy. For a while longer, he saunters

slowly about, in the hope of yet encountering the officers. Several times he sees men in uniform, and makes after them, only to find they are not English. At length, giving it up, he quickens his pace, and strikes for the office of the ship-agent, which he knows to be in the street fronting the water. As San Francisco is not like an old seaport, where house-room is cheap and abundant, but every foot of roof-shelter utilized by night as by day, there is a chance the office may still be open. In all probability the agent sleeps by the side of his ledger, or, if not, likely enough one of his clerks; in which case he, Harry Blew, may be allowed to lie along the floor, or get a shake-down in some adjoining shed. He would be but too glad to stretch himself on an old sack, a naked bench, or, for that matter, sit upright in a chair; for he is now fairly fagged out perambulating the unpaved streets of that inhospitable port.

Tacking from corner to corner, now and then hitching up his trousers to give freer play to his feet, he at length comes out upon the street which fronts towards the bay. In his week's cruising about the town, he has acquired some knowledge of its topography, and knows well enough where he is, but not the office of the shipping-agent. It takes him a considerable time to find it. Along the water's edge the houses are irregularly placed, and numbered with like irregularity. Besides, there is scarce any light. The night has become dark, with a sky densely clouded; and the street-lamps, burning whale-oil, are dim, and at long distances apart. It is with difficulty he can make out the figures upon the doors. However, he is at length successful, and deciphers on one the number he is in search of, as also the name "Silvestre" painted on a piece of tin attached to the side-post.

A survey of the house, indeed, a single glance at it, convinces him he has come thither to no purpose. It is a small wooden structure, not much bigger than a sentry-box, evidently only an office, with no capability of conversion to a bedroom. Still it has room enough to admit of a man's lying at full-length along its floor; and, as already said, he would be glad of so disposing himself for the night. There may be some one inside, though the one window, in size corresponding to the shanty itself, looks black and forbidding. With no very sanguine hope, he lays hold of the door-handle, and gives it a twist. Locked, as he might have expected! The test does not satisfy him, and he knocks, at first timidly, then a little bolder and louder; finally giving a good round rap with his knuckles, hard as horn. At the same time he hails, sailor-fashion, —

“Ahoy, there! Be there any one within?” This in English; but, remembering that the ship-agent is a Spaniard, he follows his first hail with another in the Spanish tongue, adding the usual formulary, —

“*Ambre la puerta!*” Neither to the question nor the demand is there any response; only the echo of his own voice reverberated along the line of houses, and dying away in the distance, as it mingles with the sough of the sea. No use speaking or knocking again. Undoubtedly Silvestre's office is closed for the night; and his clerks, if there be any, have their sleeping-quarters elsewhere. Forced to this conclusion, though sadly dissatisfied with it, the ex-man-o'-war's-man turns away from the door, and once more goes cruising along the streets. But now, with no definite point to steer for, he makes short tacks and turns, like a ship sailing under an unfavorable wind, or as one disregarding the guidance of the compass, without steersman at the wheel.

After beating about for nearly another hour, he discovers himself again contiguous to the water's edge. His instincts have conducted him thither, as the seal, after a short inland excursion, finds its way back to the beach. Ah, if he could only swim like a seal! This thought occurs to him as he stands looking over the sea in the direction of the "Crusader." Were it possible to reach the frigate, all his troubles would soon be forgotten in the cheerful companionship of his old chums of the forecastle. It can't be. The man-of-war is anchored more than two miles off. Strong swimmer though he knows himself to be, it is too far. Besides, a fog has suddenly sprung up, overspreading the bay; so that the ship is hidden from his sight. Even those lying close inshore can be but faintly discerned through its film, and only the larger spars; the smaller ones, with the rigging-ropes, looking like the threads of a spider's web.

Down-hearted, almost despairing, Harry Blew halts upon the beach. What is he to do? Lie down on the sand, and there go to sleep? There are times, when, on the shores of San Francisco Bay, this would not be much of a hardship; but now it is the season of winter, when the great Pacific current, coming from latitudes farther north, rolls in through the Golden Gate, bringing with it fogs that spread themselves over the estuary inside. Although not frosty, these are cold enough to be uncomfortable; and the haze now is accompanied by a chill, drizzling rain. Standing under it, Harry Blew feels he is fast getting wet. If he do not obtain shelter, he will soon be soaked to the skin. Looking around, his eye rests upon a boat which lies bottom upward on the beach. It is an old ship's launch that has bilged, and either been abandoned as

useless, or upturned to receive repairs. No matter what its history, it offers him the hospitality so scurvily refused by the Sailor's Home. If it cannot give him supper or bed, it will be some protection against the rain, that has now commenced coming down in big clouting drops. This deciding him, he creeps under the capsized launch, and lays himself at full-length along the shingle.

The spot upon which he has stretched himself is soft as a feather-bed. Still he does not fall asleep. The rain, filtering through the sand, soon finds its way under the boat, and, saturating his couch, makes it uncomfortable. This, with the cold night-air, keeps him awake. He lies listening to the sough of the sea, and the big drops pattering upon the planks above. Not long before other sounds salute his ear, distinguishable as human voices, — men engaged in conversation. As he continues to listen, the voices grow louder, those who converse evidently drawing nearer. In a few seconds they are by the boat's side, where they come to a stand. But, though they have paused in their steps, they continue to talk in an excited, earnest tone, so loud that he can hear every word they say, though the speakers are invisible to him. The capsized boat is not so flush with the sand as to prevent him from seeing the lower part of their legs, from below the knees downward. Of these there are four pairs, two of them in trousers of the ordinary kind, the other two in *calzoneras* of velveteen bordered at the bottom with black stamped leather. But that all four men are Californians or Spaniards, he can tell by the language in which they are conversing, — Spanish. A lucky chance that he understands something of this, if not for himself, for the friends who are dear to him.

The first intelligible speech that reaches his ear is an interrogatory, —

“ You’re sure, Calderon, they’ll come this way?”

“ Quite sure, De Lara. When I stood by them at the hotel-bar, I heard the younger of the two tell one of the American officers that their boat was to meet them at the wooden *muello*, the new pier, as you know. To reach that, they must pass by here: there’s no other way. And it can’t be long before they make appearance. They were leaving the hotel at the time we did; and where else should they go?”

“ No knowing ” — this from the voice of a third individual. “ They may stay to take another *copita*, or half a dozen. These Ingleses can drink like fish, and don’t seem to feel it.”

“ The more they drink, the better for us,” remarks a fourth. “ Our work will be the easier.”

“ It may not be so easy, Don Manuel,” puts in De Lara. “ Young as they are, they’re very devils both. Besides, they’re well armed, and will battle like grizzly bears. I tell you, *camarados*, we’ll have work to do before we get back our money.”

“ But do you intend killing them, De Lara?” asks Calderon.

“ Of course! We must, for our own sakes. ’Twould be madness not, even if we could get the money without it. The older, Crozier, is enormously rich, I’ve heard; could afford to buy up all the law there is in San Francisco. If we let them escape, he’d have the police after us like hounds upon a trail. Even if they shouldn’t recognize us now, they’d be sure to suspect who it was, and make the place too hot to hold us. *Caspita!* It’s not a question of choice, but a thing of necessity. *We must kill them!* ”

Harry Blew hears the cold-blooded determination, comprehending it in all its terrible significance. It tells him the young officers are still in the town, and that these four men are about to waylay, rob, and murder them. What they mean by "getting back the money" is the only thing he does not comprehend. It is made clear as the conversation continues.

"I'm sure there's nothing unfair in taking back our own. I, Frank Lara, say so. It was they who brought about the breaking of our bank, which was done in a mean, dastardly way. The Englishman had the luck; and all the others of his kind went with him. But for that, we could have held out. It's no use our whining about it. We've lost, and must make good our losses best way we can. We can't, and be safe ourselves, if we let these *gringos* go."

"*Chingara!* we'll stop their breath, and let there be no more words about it."

The merciless verdict is in the voice of Don Manuel.

"You're all agreed, then?" asks De Lara.

"*Si, si, si!*" is the simultaneous answer of assent, Calderon alone seeming to give it with some reluctance; though he hesitates from timidity, not mercy.

Harry Blew now knows all. The officers have been gaming, have won money; and the four fellows who talk so coolly of killing them are the banker and his confederates. What is he to do? How can he save the doomed men. Both are armed. Crozier has his sword; Cadwallader, his dirk. Besides, they have pistols, as he saw while they were talking to him at the Sailor's Home. But then they are to be taken unawares,—shot or struck down in the dark, without a chance of seeing the hand that strikes them! Even if warned and ready, it would be two against four: and

he is himself altogether unarmed ; for his jack-knife is gone — hypothecated to pay for his last jorum of grog. And the young officers have been drinking freely, as he gathers from what the ruffians have said. They may be inebriated, or enough so to put them off their guard. Who would be expecting assassination? Who ever is, save a Mexican himself? Altogether unlikely that they should be thinking of such a thing. On the contrary, disregarding danger, they will come carelessly on, to fall like ripe corn before the sickle of the reaper. The thought of such a fate for his friends fills the sailor with apprehension, and again he asks himself how it is to be averted.

The four conspirators are not more than as many feet from the boat. By stretching out his hands, he could grip them by the ankles, without altering his recumbent attitude one inch. By doing this, he might give the guilty plotters such a scare as would cause them to retreat, and so baffle their design. The thought flits across his brain, but is instantly abandoned. They are not of the stuff to be frightened at shadows. By their talk, at least two are desperadoes ; and to make known his presence would be only to add another victim to those already doomed to death. What is he to do? For the third time he asks himself this question, still unable to answer it. While painfully cogitating, his brain laboring to grasp some feasible plan of defence against the threatened danger, he is warned of a change. Some words spoken tell of it. It is De Lara who speaks them.

“By the way, *camarados*, we're not in a good position here. They may sight us too soon. To make things sure, we must drop on them before they can draw their weapons, else some of us may get dropped ourselves.”

“Where could we be better? I don’t see. The shadow of this old boat favors us.”

“Why not crawl under it?” asks Calderon. “There Argus himself couldn’t see us.”

Harry Blew’s heart beats at the double-quick. His time seems come; and he already fancies four pistols at his head, or the same number of poniards pointing to his ribs.

It is a moment of vivid anxiety, — a crisis, dread, terrible, almost agonizing. Fortunately, it is not of long duration, ending almost on the instant. He is relieved at hearing one of them say, “No; that won’t do: we’d have trouble in scrambling out again. While about it, they’d see or hear us, and take to their heels. You must remember, it’s but a step to where their boat will be waiting them, with some eight or ten of those big British tars in it. If they got there before we overtook them, the tables would be turned on us.”

“You’re right, Don Manuel,” rejoins De Lara. “It won’t do to go under the boat; and there’s no need for us to stay by it. *Mira!* yonder’s a better place, by that wall. In its shadow no one can see us; and the *gringos* must pass within twenty feet of it. It’s the very spot for our purpose. Come!”

No one objecting, the four figures start away from the side of the boat, and, gliding silently as spectres across the strip of sandy beach, disappear within the dark shadow of the wall.



CHAPTER XXV.

CRUSADERS TO THE RESCUE.

WHAT am I to do? It is the ex-man-o'-war's man, still lying under the launch, who thus interrogates himself for the fourth time, and more emphatically than ever, but also in less dubious accent, and less despairingly. True, the conspiring assassins have only stepped aside to a spot from which they may more conveniently descend upon their quarry, and be surer of striking it; but their changed position has left him free to change his, which he at length determines upon doing. Their talk has told him where the man-of-war's boat will be awaiting to take the officers back to their ship. He knows the new wharf referred to, the very stair at which the "Crusaders" have been accustomed to bring their boats to. It may be the cutter with her full crew of ten, or it may be but the gig: no matter which. There cannot be fewer than two oarsmen, and these will be sufficient. A brace of British tars, with himself to make three, and the officers to tot up five: that will be more than a match for four Spanish Californians. Four times four, thinks Harry Blew, even though the sailors, like himself, be unarmed, or with nothing but their knives and boat-hooks. He has no fear, if he can but bring it to an encounter of this kind. The question is, Can he do so? And, first, can he creep out from under the launch, and steal away unobserved? A glance from under his

sheltering boat towards the spot where the assassins have placed themselves in ambuscade satisfies him that he can. The fog favors him. Through it he cannot see them, and should be himself equally invisible. Another favorable circumstance,—on the soft, sandy beach his footsteps will make but slight noise, not enough to be heard above the continuous surging of the surf. All this passes in a moment; and he has made up his mind to start, but is stayed by a new apprehension. Will he be in time? The stair at which the boat should be is not over a quarter of a mile off, and will take but a few minutes to reach it. Even if he succeed in eluding the vigilance of the ambushed villains, will it be possible for him to get to the pier, communicate with the boat's crew, and bring them back before the officers reach the place of ambush? To this, the answer is doubtful; and the doubt appalls him. In his absence, the young gentlemen may arrive at the fatal spot. He may return to find their bodies lying lifeless along the sand, their pockets rifled, the plunderers and murderers gone.

The thought holds him irresolute, hesitating what course to take. Shall he remain till they are heard approaching, then rush out, and give them such warning as he may, throw himself by their side, and do his best to defend them? Unarmed, this would not be much. Against pistols and poniards, he would scarce count as a combatant. It might but end in all three being slaughtered together. And there is still a danger of his being discovered in his attempt to steal away from his place of concealment. He may be followed and overtaken, though he has little fear of this. Pursued he may be, but not overtaken. Despite his sea-legs, he knows himself a swift runner. Were he

assured of a fair start, he will hold his distance against any thing Spanish or Californian. In five minutes he can reach the pier; in five more, be back. If he but find the "Crusaders" there, a word will warn them. In all, it might take about ten minutes. But, meanwhile, Crozier and Cadwallader may get upon the ground; and one minute after that all would be over. A terrible struggle agitates the breast of the old man-o'-war's man: in his thoughts is a conflict agonizing. On either side are *pros* and *cons*, requiring calm deliberation; and there is no time for this. He must act.

But one more second spent in consideration. He has confidence in the young officers. Both are brave as lions, and, if attacked, will make a tough fight of it. Crozier has also caution, on which dependence may be placed; and at such a time of night, he will not be going unguardedly. The conflict, though unequal, might last long enough for him, Harry Blew, to bring the "Crusaders" at least near enough to cry out, and cheer their officers with the hope of help at hand. All this passes through his mind in a tenth part of the time it takes to tell it. And, having resolved how to act, he hastens to carry out his resolution; which is to proceed in quest of the boat's crew.

Sprawling like a lizard from beneath the launch, he glides off silently along the strand,—at first with slow, cautious steps, and crouchingly; but soon erect, in a rapid run, as if for the saving of his life; for it is to save the lives of others almost dear as his own. The five minutes are not up, when his footsteps patter along the planking of the hollow wooden wharf. In ten seconds after, he stands at the head of the sea-stairway, looking down. Below is a boat with men in it, half a score of them seated on the thwarts, some

lolling over against the gunwales, asleep. At a glance he can tell them to be "Crusaders." His hail startles them into activity, one and all recognizing the voice of their old shipmate. "Quick!" he cries; "quick, mates! Come along with me! Don't stay to ask questions. Enough for you to know that the lives of your officers are in danger."

It proves enough. The tars don't wait for a word more, but spring up from their recumbent attitude, and out of the boat. Rushing up the steps, they cluster around their comrade. They have not needed instructions to arm themselves. Harry's speech, with its tone, tells of some shore hostility; and they have instinctively made ready to meet it. Each has laid hold of the weapon nearest to his hand; some a knife, some an oar, others a boat-hook.

"Heave along with me, lads!" cries Blew; and they "heave at his heels, rushing after, as if to extinguish a fire in the fore-castle.

Soon they are coursing along the strand, towards the upturned boat, silently, and without asking explanation. If they did, they could not get it; for their leader is panting, breathless, almost unable to utter a word. But five issue from his throat, jerked out disjointedly, and in hoarse utterance. They are, "Crozier — Cadwallader — waylaid — robbers — murderers!"

Enough to spur the "Crusaders" to their best speed, if they had not been already at it. But they are; every man of them straining his strength to the utmost. As they rush on, clearing the thick fog, Harry, at their head, listens intently. As yet he hears no sound, only the monotonous swashing of the sea, and the murmur of distant voices in the streets of the town. But no

cries, no shouts, nor shots; nothing to tell of deadly strife.

“Thank the Lord!” says the brave sailor, half speaking to himself: “we’ll be in time to save them.” The words have scarce passed from his lips, when he comes in sight of the capsized launch; and simultaneously he sees two figures upon the beach beyond. They are of human shape, but through the fog looking large as giants. He is not beguiled by the deception: he knows them to be the forms of the two officers magnified by the mist. No others are likely to be coming that way, for he can perceive they are approaching; and as can be told by their careless, swaggering gait, unsuspecting of danger, little dreaming of an ambushade, that in ten seconds more may deprive them of existence.

To him, hurrying to prevent this catastrophe, it is a moment of intense apprehension, — of dread, chilling fear. He sees the young officers almost up to the place where the assassins should spring out upon them. In another instant he may hear the cracking of pistols, and see their flashes through the fog. Expecting it even before he can speak, he nevertheless calls out, “Halt there, Mr. Crozier! We’re ‘Crusaders.’ Stop where you are. Another step, and you’ll be shot a. There’s four men under that wall, waiting to murder ye. D’ye know the names, — Calderon and Lara? It’s them!”

At the first words the young officers — for it is they — instantly stop; the more promptly from being prepared to anticipate an attack, but without the warning. Well timed it is; and they have not stopped a moment too soon. Simultaneous with the sailor’s last speech, the sombre space under the wall is lit up by four flash-

es, followed by the report of as many pistols; while the " tzip-tzip " of bullets, like hornets hurtling past their ears, leaves them no doubt as to who has been fired at. Fired at, and fortunately missed; for neither feels hurt nor hit. But the danger is not yet over. Quick following the first comes a second volley, and again with like result. Bad marksmen are they who design doing murder. It is the last. In all likelihood, the pistols of the assassins are double-barrelled; and both barrels have been discharged. Before they can reload them, Harry Blew with the " Crusaders " have come up; and it is too late for De Lara and his confederates to employ their poniards. Crozier and Cadwallader bound forward, and, placing themselves at the head of the boat's crew, advance toward the shadowed spot. The young officers have long since drawn their pistols, but prudently retained their fire, seeing nothing sure to aim at. Now they go with a rush, resolved on coming to close quarters with their dastardly assailants, and bringing the affair to a speedy termination. But it is over already, to their surprise, as also chagrin. On reaching the wall, they find nothing there save stones and timber. The dark space, for an instant illuminated by the pistol-flashes, has resumed its grim obscurity. The assassins have got away, escaping the chastisement they would surely have received, had they stood their ground. Some figures are seen in the distance, scuttling along a narrow lane. Crozier brings his revolver to bear on them, his finger upon the trigger. But it may not be them; and, stayed by the uncertainty, he refrains from firing. " Let them go! " he says, returning the pistol to his pocket. " 'Twould be no use looking for them now. Their crime will keep till morning; and, since we know their names, it will be

strange if we can't find them, though not so strange if we should fail to get them punished. That they shall be, if there's a semblance of law to be found in San Francisco. — Now, thanks, my brave 'Crusaders!' And there's a hundred pound-note to be divided among you. Small reward for the saving of two lives with a goodly sum of money. Certainly, had you not turned up so opportunely — But how came you to be here? Never mind now! Let us get aboard; and you, Blew, must come with us. It'll do you no harm to spend one more night on your old ship. There you can tell me all."

Harry joyfully complies with a requisition so much to his mind; and, instead of tossing discontentedly on a couch of wet sand, he that night sleeps soundly in his old bunk in the frigate's fore-castle.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN FLIGHT.

A COUNTRY-HOUSE ten miles distant from San Francisco, in a south-westerly direction. It stands back from the bay, halfway between it and the Pacific, among the Coast Range hills. Though built of mud-brick, — the sort made by the Israelites in Egypt, — and with no pretension to architectural style, it is, in Californian parlance, a *hacienda*; for it is the headquarters of a grazing estate, though not one of the first class, either in stock or appointments. In both respects, it was once better off than now; since now it is less than second, showing signs of decay every-

where, but nowhere so much as in the house itself, and the enclosures around it. The walls are weather washed, here and there cracked and crumbling: the doors have seen no paint for years, and, opening or shutting, creak upon hinges thickly coated with rust. The corrals contain no cattle; nor are there any to be seen upon the pastures outside. In short, the estate shows as if it had an absentee owner, or been abandoned altogether. And the house might appear uninhabited, but for some *peons* seen sauntering listlessly around it, and a barefoot damsel or two, standing dishevelled by its door, or in its kitchen kneeling over the *metate*, and squeezing out the maize-dough for the eternal *tortillas*. However, despite its neglected appearance, it has an owner; and, with all their indolence, the lounging *leperos* outside, and slatternly wenches within, have a master. He is not often at home; but, when he is, they address him as Don Faustino. Servants rarely add the surname. If these did, they would call him Don Faustino Calderon; for he is the *dueño* of the decayed dwelling. Only at intervals do his domestics see him. He spends nearly all his time elsewhere,—most of it in Yerba Buena, now styled San Francisco. And of late more than ever has he absented himself from his ancestral halls, for the *hacienda* is the house in which he was born; it, with the surrounding pasture-land, left him by his father, some time deceased. Since coming into possession, he has neglected his patrimony, indeed, spent the greater portion of it on cards, and debauchery of every kind. The estate is heavily mortgaged: the house has become almost a ruin. In his absence, it looks even more like one; for then his domestics, having nothing to do, are scarce ever seen outside, to give the place an appear-

ance of life. Fond of cards as their master, they may at such times be observed squatted upon the pavement of the inner court, playing *monté* on a spread blanket, with copper *clacos* staked upon the game. When the *dueño* is at home, things are a little different; for Don Faustino, with all his dissipation, is any thing but an indulgent master. Then his domestics have to move about, and wait upon him with assiduity. If they don't, they will hear *carajos* from his lips, and get cuts from his riding-whip.

It is the morning after that night when the *monté* bank suspended play and pay; the time, six o'clock, A.M. Notwithstanding the early hour, the domestics are stirring about the place, as if they had something to do, and were doing it. To one acquainted with their usual habits, the brisk movement will be interpreted as a sure sign that their master is at home. And he is; though he has been there but a very short time, — only a few minutes. Absent for more than a week, he has this morning made his appearance just as the day was breaking; not alone, but in the company of a gentleman, whom all his servants know to be his intimate friend and associate, — Don Francisco de Lara. They have ridden up to the house in haste, dropped the bridles on the necks of their horses, and, without saying a word, left these to the care of a couple of grooms, rudely roused from their slumber. The house-servants, lazily opening the huge door of the *saguan*, see that the *dueño* is in ill humor, which stirs them into activity. In haste they prepare the repast called for, — *desayuno*.

Having entered, and taken seats, Don Faustino and his guest await the serving of the meal, for a while in silence, each with an elbow rested on the table, a hand

supporting his head, the fingers buried in his hair. The silence is at length broken ; the host, as it should be, speaking first.

“What had we best do, De Lara? I don't think 'twill be safe staying here. After what's happened, they're sure to come after us.”

“That's probable enough. *Caspita!* I'm puzzled to make out how that fellow who called out our names could have known we were there. ‘Crusaders,’ he said they were ; which means they were sailors belonging to the war-ship, of course the boat's crew that was waiting. But what brought them up? and how came they to arrive there and then just in the nick of time to spoil our plans? That's the mystery to me.”

“To me too.”

“There were no sailors hanging about the hotel, that I saw ; nor did we encounter any as we went through the streets. Besides, if we had, they couldn't have passed us, and then come up from the opposite side, without our seeing them, dark as it was. 'Tis enough to make me believe in second-sight.”

“That seems the only way to explain it.”

“Yes ; but it won't and don't. I've been thinking of another explanation, more conformable to the laws of nature.”

“What?”

“That there's been somebody under that old boat. We stood talking there like four fools, calling out one another's names. Now, suppose one of those sailors was waiting by the boat as we came along, and, seeing us, crept under it? He could have heard every thing we said, and slipping off, after we retired to the shadow, might have brought up the rest of the accursed crew. The thing seems strange : at the same time it's possible enough, and probable too.”

Don. And, now you speak of it, I remember something. While we were standing under the wall, I fancied I saw a man crouching along the water's edge, as if going away from the boat."

"You did?"

"I'm almost certain I did. At the time I thought nothing of it, as we were watching for the other two; and I had no suspicion of any one else being about. Now I believe there was one."

"And now I believe so too. Yes: that accounts for every thing. I see it all. That's how the sailor got our names, and knew all about our design, — that to do — *murder!* You needn't start at the word, nor turn pale; but you may at the prospect before us. *Carrai!* we're in danger now, no mistake about it. Calderon, why didn't you tell me at the time you saw that man?"

"Because, as I've said, I had no thought it could be any one connected with them."

"Well, your thoughtlessness has got us into a fix indeed, — the worst ever I've been in; and I can remember a few. No use to think about duelling now, whoever might be challenger. Instead of seconds, they'd meet us with a posse of sheriff's officers. Likely enough they'll be setting them after us before this. Although I feel sure our bullets didn't hit either, it'll be just as bad. The attempt will tell against us all the same. Therefore it won't do to stay here. So direct your servants not to unsaddle. We'll need to be off soon as we've swallowed a cup of chocolate."

A call from Don Faustino brings one of his domestics to the door; then a word or two sends him off with the order for keeping the horses in hand.

"*Chingara!*" fiercely exclaims De Lara, striking

the table with his shut fist, "every thing has gone against us."

"Every thing indeed. Our money lost, our love made light of, our revenge baffled" —

"No, not the last! Have no fear, Faustino. That's still to come."

"How?"

"How, you ask, do you?"

"I do. I can't see what way we can get it now. You know the English officers will be gone in a day or two. Their ship is to sail soon. Last night there was talk in the town that she might leave at any moment, — to-morrow, or it may be this very day."

"Let her go, and them with her. The sooner, the better for us. That won't hinder us from the revenge I for one want. On the contrary, 'twill help us. Ha! I shall strike this Crozier in his tenderest part; and you can do the same for Señor Cadwallader."

"In what way?"

"Faustino Calderon, I won't call you a fool, notwithstanding your behavior last night. But you ask some very silly questions, and that's one of them. Supposing these *gringos* gone from here, does it follow they'll take every thing along with them? Can you think of nothing they must needs leave behind?"

"Their hearts. Is that what you mean?"

"No, it isn't."

"What, then?"

"Their sweethearts, stupid!"

"But they're going too."

"So you say, and so it may be; but not before another event takes place, — one that may embarrass and delay, if it do not altogether prevent, their departure."

“*Amigo*, you talk enigmatically. Will you oblige me by speaking plainer?”

“I will, but not till we’ve had our chocolate, and after it a *copita* of Catalan. I need a little alcohol to get my brain in working-order; for there’s work for it to do. Enough now to tell you I’ve had a revelation. A good angel (or it may be a bad one) has visited me, and given it, — a vision which shows me at the same time riches and revenge, pointing the straight way to both.”

“Has the vision shown that I am to be a sharer?”

“It has; and you shall be, but only in proportion as you may prove yourself worthy.”

“I’ faith! I’ll do my best. I have the will, if you’ll only instruct me in the way.”

“I’ll do that. But I warn you ’twill need more than will, — strength, secrecy, courage, determination.”

“*Desayuno, señores!*” This from one of the domestics, announcing the chocolate served.

A few moments suffice for the slight matutinal repast; after which a decanter of Catalonian brandy, and glasses, are placed upon the table, with a bundle of Manila cheroots, size number one. While the glasses are being filled, and the cigars lighted, there is silence. Then Calderon calls upon his guest to impart the particulars of that visionary revelation which promises to give them at the same time riches and revenge.

Taking a sip of the potent spirit, and a puff or two at his cigar, De Lara responds to the call. But first leaning across the table, and looking his confederate straight in the face, he asks, in an odd fashion, “Are you a bankrupt, Faustino Calderon?”

“You know I am. Why do you put the question?”

“Because I want to be sure before making known

to you the scheme I've hinted at. As I've told you, I'm after no child's play. I ask again, *Are you a bankrupt?* ”

“ And I answer you, I *am*. But what has that to do with it? ”

“ A good deal. Never mind. You *are* one? You assure me of it? ”

“ I do. I'm as poor as yourself, if not poorer, after last night's losses. I'd embarked all my money in the *monté* concern.”

“ But you have something besides money? This house and your lands? ”

“ Mortgaged — months ago — up to the eyes, the ears, the crown of the head. That's where the cash came from to set up the bank that's broken, breaking me along with it.”

“ And you've nothing left? No chance for starting it again? ”

“ Not a *claco*. Here I am apparently in my own house, with servants, such as they are, around me. It's all in appearance. In reality, I'm not the owner. I once was, as my father before me, but can't claim to be any longer. Even while we're sitting here, drinking this Catalan, the mortgagee — that old usurer Martinez — may step in, and kick us both out.”

“ I'd like him to try! He'd catch a Tartar, if he attempted to kick me out, — he, or anybody else, just now, in my present humor. There's far more reason for us to fear being pulled out by policemen, which makes it risky to remain here talking. So let's to the point at once, back to where we left off. On your oath, Faustino Calderon, you're no longer a man of money? ”

“ On my oath, Francisco de Lara, I haven't an *onza* left, — no, not a *peso*.”

“Enough. Now that I know your financial status, we will understand one another; and, without further circumlocution, I shall make you a sharer of the bright thought that has flashed across my brain.”

“Let me hear what it is. I’m all impatience.”

“Not so fast, Faustino. As I’ve already twice told you, it’s no child’s play, but a business that requires skill and courage, above all, fidelity, among those who may engage in it; for more than two are needed. It will want at least four good and true men. I know three of them: about the fourth, I’m not so certain.”

“Who are the three?”

“Francisco de Lara, Manuel Diaz, and Rafael Rocas.”

“And the fourth, about whom you are dubious?”

“Faustino Calderon.”

“Why do you doubt me, De Lara?”

“Don’t call it doubting. I only say I’m not certain about you.”

“But for what reason?”

“Besause you may be squeamish, or get scared. Not that there’s much real danger. There mayn’t be any, if the thing’s cleverly managed. But there must be no bungling, and, above all, no backing out, nothing like treason.”

“Can’t you trust me so far as to give a hint of your scheme? As to my being squeamish, I think, *señor*, you do me injustice to suppose such a thing. The experience of the last twenty-four hours has made a serious change in my way of viewing matters of morality. A man who has lost his all, and suddenly sees himself a beggar, isn’t disposed to be sensitive. Come, *camarado!* tell me, and try me.”

“I intend doing both, but not just yet. It’s an

affair that calls for certain formalities, among them some swearing. Those who embark in it must be bound by a solemn oath; and, when we all get together, this shall be done. Time enough then for you to know what I'm aiming at. Now I can only say, that, if the scheme succeed, two things are sure, and both concern yourself, Faustino Calderon."

"What are they? You can trust me with that much, I suppose?"

"Certainly I can and shall. The first is, that you'll be a richer man than you've ever been since I've had the honor of your acquaintance; the second, that Don Gregorio Montijo will not leave California, at least not quite so soon, nor altogether in the way, he is wishing. You may have plenty of time yet, and opportunities too, to press your suit with the fair Iñez."

"*Carramba!* Secure me that, and I swear" —

"You needn't set about swearing yet. You can do that when the occasion calls for it. Till then, I'll take your word. With one in love, as you believe yourself, that should be binding as any oath, especially when it promises such a rich reward."

"You're sure about Diaz and Rocas?"

"Quite so. With them there won't be need for any prolonged conference. When a man sees the chance of getting sixty thousand dollars in a lump sum, he's pretty certain to act promptly, and without being particular as to what that action is."

"Sixty thousand dollars! That's to be the share of each?"

"That, and more, maybe."

"It makes one crazy, even to think of such a sum."

"Don't go crazed till you've got it; then you may."

"If I do, it won't be with grief."

• It shouldn't, since it will give you a fresh lease of sweet life, and renew your hopes of having the wife you want. But come, we must get away if we wish to avoid being taken away, though, I fancy, there's nothing to apprehend for some hours yet. The *gringos* have gone on board their ship, and are not likely to come ashore again before breakfast. What with their last night's revelry, it'll take them some time to get the cobwebs out of their eyes after waking up. Besides, if they should make it a law matter, there'll be all the business of looking up warrants, and the like. They do these things rather slowly in San Francisco. Then there's the ten miles out here, even if they strike our trail so straight. No, we needn't be in a hurry so far as that goes. But the other's a thing that won't keep, and must be set about at once. Fortunately, the road that takes us to a place of concealment is the same we have to travel upon business; and that is to the rancho of Rocas. There I've appointed to meet Diaz, who'd have come with us here, but that he preferred staying all night in the town. But he'll be there hetimes; and we can all remain with old Rafael till this ugly wind blows past, which it will in a week, or soon as the English ship sails off. If not, we must keep out of sight a little longer, or leave San Francisco for good."

"I hope we'll not be forced to that. I shouldn't at all like to leave it."

"Like it or not, you may not have the choice. And what does it signify where a man lives, so long as he's got sixty thousand dollars to live on?"

"True: that ought to made any place pleasant."

"Well; I tell you you will have it, maybe more. But not if we stand palavering here. *Nos vamos!*"

A call from Calderon summons a servant, who is

directed to have the horses brought to the door. These soon appear, under the guidance of two ragged grooms, who, delivering them, see their master mount, and ride off, they know not whither ; nor care they, so long as they are themselves left to idleness, with a plentiful supply of black beans, jerked meat, and *monté*. Soon the two horsemen disappear behind the hills ; and the hypothe-cated house resumes its wonted look of desolation.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A CONVERSATION WITH ORANGS.

NOTWITHSTANDING his comfortable quarters in the frigate, Harry Blew is up by early day-break, and off from the ship before six bells have sounded. Ere retiring to rest, he had communicated to his patron Crozier a full account of his zigzag wanderings through the streets of San Francisco, and how he came to bring the boat's crew to the rescue. As the two officers are not on the early morning watch, but still abed, he does not await their rising ; for knowing that the adage, " First come first served," is often true, he is anxious, as soon as possible, to present himself at the office of the agent Silvestre, and from him get directions for going on board the " Condor." He is alive to the hint given him by Crozier, that there may be a chance of his being made mate of the Chilian ship. As yet, he does not even know the name of the vessel ; but that he will learn at the office, as also where she is lying. His request to the lieutenant on duty, for a boat to set him

ashore, is at once and willingly granted. No officer on that frigate would refuse Harry Blew ; and the dingy is placed at his service. In this he is conveyed to the wooden pier, whose planks he treads with heavier step, but lighter heart, than when, on the night before, he ran along them in quest of assistance. With heavier purse too, as he carries a hundred-pound Bank-of-England note in the pocket of his pea-jacket, — a parting gift from the generous Crozier, — besides a number of gold-pieces received from Cadwallader as the young Welshman's share of gratitude for the service done them. Thus amply provided, he might proceed at once to the Sailor's Home, and bring away his embargoed property. He does not. Better first to see about the berth on the Chilian ship ; and therefore he steers direct for the agent's office.

Though it is still early, by good luck Don Tomas chances to be already at his desk. Harry presents the card given him by Crozier, at the same time declaring the purpose for which he has presented himself. In return, he receives from Silvestre instructions to report himself on board the Chilian ship "El Condor." Don Tomas, furnishing him with a note of introduction to her captain, points out the vessel, which is visible from his door, and at no great distance off.

"Capt. Lantanas is coming ashore," adds the agent. "I expect him in the course of an hour. By waiting here, you can see him ; and it will save your boat-hire."

But Harry Blew will not wait. He remembers the old saying about procrastination, and is determined there shall be no mishap through negligence on his part, or niggardliness about a boat-fare. He has made up his mind to be the "Condor's" first mate — if he

can. Nor is it altogether ambition that prompts him to seek the office so earnestly. A nobler sentiment inspires him, — the knowledge, that, in this capacity, he may be of more service, and better capable of affording protection, to the fair creatures whom Crozier has committed to his charge.

The watermen of San Francisco harbor do not ply their oars gratuitously. Even the shabbiest of shore-boats, hired for the shortest time, demands a stiffish fare. It will cost Harry Blew a couple of dollars to be set aboard the “Condor;” though she is lying scarce three cables’ length from the shore. What cares he for that? It is nothing now. Hailing the nearest skiff with a waterman in it, he points to the Chilian ship, saying, “Heave along, lad, an’ put me aboard o’ yonder craft, — that one as shows the tricolor bit o’ buntin’ wi’ a single star in the blue. The sooner ye do your job, the better ye’ll get paid for it.”

A contract on such conditions is usually entered into with alacrity, and with celerity carried out. The boatman beaches his tiny craft, takes in his fare; and, in less than ten minutes’ time, Harry Blew swarms up the man-ropes of the Chilian ship, strides over the rail, and drops down upon her deck. He looks around, but sees no one. At least nothing in the shape of a sailor; only an old negro, with a skin black as a boot, and crow-footed all over the face, standing beside two singular creatures nearly as human-like as himself, but covered with fox-colored hair, — the pets of Capt. Lantanas. The old man-o’-war’s-man is for a time in doubt as to which of the three he should address himself. In point of intelligence, there seems not much to choose. However, he with the black skin

cuts short his hesitation by coming up, and saying, "Well, mass'r sailor-man, wha' you come for? S'pose you want see de capen. I'se only de cook."

"Oh! you're only the cook, are you? Well, old caboose, you've made a correct guess about my business. It's the capten I want to see."

"All right. He down in de cabin. You wait hya: I fotch 'im up less'n no time."

The old darky, shuffling aft, disappears down the companion-way, leaving Harry with the two monstrous-looking creatures, whom he has now made out to be orang-outangs.

"Well, mates," says the sailo', addressing them in a jocular way, "what be your cpenyun o' things in general? D'ye think the wind's goin' to stay sou'-westerly, or shift roun' to the nor'-eastart?"

"Cro — cro — croak!"

"Oh, hang it, no! I ain't o' the croakin' sort. Ha'n't ye got nothin' more sensible than that to say to me?"

"Kurra — kra — kra! Cro — cro — croak!"

"No, I won't do any think o' the kind; leastways, unless there turns out to be short commons in the ship. Then I'll croak, an' no mistake. But I say, old boys, how 'bout the grog? Reg'lar allowance, I hope — three tots a day?"

"Na — na — na — na — na — boof! Ta — ta — ta — fuff!"

"No, only two, ye say! Ah! that won't do for me. For ye see, shipmates, — I s'pose I shall be callin' ye so, — 'board the old 'Crusader, 'I've been 'customed to have my rum reg'lar three times the day; an' if it ain't same on this here craft in the which I'm 'bout to ship, then, shiver my spars! if I don't raise sich a rumpus as" —

“Kurra — kurra — cr — cro — creak! Na — na — na — boof — ta — ta — pf — pf — piff!”

The sailor's voice is drowned by the gibbering of the oranges; his gesture of mock-menace, with the semi-serious look that accompanied it, having part frightened, part enraged them. The fracas continues, until the darky returns on deck, followed by the skipper; when the cook takes charge of the *quadrumana*, drawing them off to his caboose.

Capt. Lantanas, addressing himself to the sailor, asks, “*Un marinero?*” (“A seaman?”)

“*Si, capitan.*” (“Yes, captain.”)

“*Que negocio tienes V. conmigo?*” (“What is your business with me?”)

“Well, capten,” responds Harry Blew, speaking the language of the Chilian in a tolerably intelligible *patois*, “I've come to offer my services to you. I've brought this bit of paper from Master Silvestre: it will explain things better than I can.”

The captain takes the note handed to him, and breaks open the envelope. A smile irradiates his sallow face as he becomes acquainted with its contents.

“At last a sailor!” he mutters to himself; for Harry is the only one who has yet offered. “And a good one too,” thinks Capt. Lantanas, bending his eyes on the ex-man-o'-war's-man, and scanning him from head to foot. But, besides personal inspection, he has other assurance of the good qualities of the man before him; at a late hour on the night before, he held communication with Don Gregorio, who has recommended him. The *haciendado* had reported what Crozier said, — that Harry Blew was an able seaman, thoroughly trustworthy, and competent to take

charge of a ship, either as first or second officer. With Crozier's indorsement thus vicariously conveyed, the ex-man-o'-war's-man has no need to say a word for himself. Nor does Capt. Lantanas call for it. He only puts some professional questions, less inquisitorially than as a matter of form. He speaks now in English.

"The Señor Silvestre advises me that you wish to serve in my ship. Can you take a lunar?"

"Well, capten, I hev squinted through a quadrant afore now, an' can take a sight; tho' I arn't much up to loonars. But, if there's a good chronometer aboard, I won't let a ship run very far out o' her reck'nin'."

"You can keep a log-book, I suppose?"

"I dar say I can. I've larned to write so'st might be read; tho' my fist an't much to be bragged about."

"That will do," rejoins the skipper contentedly. "Now, Señor Enrique, — I see that's your name, — answer me in all candor. Do you think you are capable of acting as *piloto*?"

"By that you mean mate, I take it?"

"Yes: it is *piloto* in Spanish."

"Well, capten, 'tain't for me to talk big o' myself. But I've been over thirty year 'board a British man-o'-war, — more'n one o' 'em, — an' if I wan't able to go mate in a merchanter, I ought to be condemned to be cook's scullion for the rest o' my days. If your honor thinks me worthy o' bein' made first officer o' the 'Condor,' I'll answer for it she won't stray far out o' her course while my watch is on."

"Enough, Señor Enrique B — blee. What is it?" asks the Chilian, re-opening the note, and vainly endeavoring to pronounce the Saxon surname.

"Blew, Harry Blew."

“ Ah, Bloo — *azul, esta ?* ”

“ No, 'capten. Not that sort o' blue. In Spanish, my name has a diff'rent significance. It means as we say of a gale after it's blowed past, — it 'blew.' When it's been a big un, we say it 'blew great guns.' Now ye understand? ”

“ Yes, perfectly. Well, Señor Blew, to come to an understanding about the other matter. I'm willing to take you as my first officer, if you don't object to the wages I intend offering you, — fifty dollars a month, and every thing found.”

“ I'm agreeable to the tarms.”

“ *Basta!* When will it be convenient for you to enter on your duties? ”

“ For that matter, this minute. I only need to go ashore to get my kit. When that's stowed, I'll be ready to tackle to work.”

“ *Bueno, señor:* you can take my boat for it. And, if you see any sailors who want to join, I authorize you to engage them at double the usual wages. I want to get away as soon as a crew can be shipped. But, when you come back, we'll talk more about it. Call at Señor Silvester's office, and tell him he needn't look for me till a later hour. Say I've some business that detains me aboard the ship. *Hasta Luego!* ”

Thus courteously concluding, the Chilian skipper returns to his cabin, leaving the newly appointed *piloto* free for his own affairs.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BLUE-PETER.

THE ex-man-o'-war's-man, now first mate of a merchant-ship, and provided with a boat of his own, orders off the skiff he has kept in waiting, after tossing into it two dollars,—the demanded fare; then, slipping down into the “Condor's” gig, sculls himself ashore. Leaving his boat at the pier, he first goes to the office of the ship-agent, and delivers the message intrusted to him; then, contracting with a truckman, he proceeds to the Sailor's Home, “relieves” his *impedimenta*, and starts back to embark them in his boat, but not before giving the bar-keeper, as also the Boniface, of that inhospitable establishment, a bit of his mind. Spreading before their eyes the crisp hundred-pound-note, which as yet he has not needed to break, he says tauntingly, “Take a squint at that, ye land-lubbers! There's British money for ye! An', tho' 't be but a bit o' paper, worth more than your gold-dross, dollar for dollar. How'd ye like to lay your ugly claws on't? Ah! you're a pair of the most gentlemanly shore-sharks I've met in all *my* cruzins, but — ye'll never have Harry Blew in your grups again.” Saying this, he thrusts the bank-note into his pocket; then, paying them a last reverence with mock politeness, he starts after the truckman, already *en route* with his kit.

In accordance with the wishes of Capt. Lantanas,

he stays a little longer in the town, trying to pick up sailors. There are plenty of these sauntering along the streets, and lounging at the doors of drinking-saloons. But even double wages will not tempt them to abandon their free-and-easy life; and the "Condor's" first officer is forced to the conclusion he must return to the ship *solus*. Assisted by the truckman, he gets his traps into the gig, and is about to step in himself, when his eye chances to turn upon the "Crusader." There he sees something to surprise him, — the Blue-Peter! The frigate has out signals for sailing. He wonders at this: there was no word of it when he was aboard. He knew, as all the others, that she was to sail soon: it might be in a day or two, but not, as the signal indicates, *within the hour or two*. While conjecturing the cause of such hasty departure, he sees something that partly explains it. Three or four cables' length from the "Crusader" is another ship, over whose taffrail floats the flag of England. At a glance the old man-o'-war's-man can tell she is a corvette; at the same time recalling what, the night before, he has heard upon the frigate, — that the coming of the corvette will be the signal for the "Crusader" to sail. While his heart warms to the flag thus doubly displayed in the harbor of San Francisco, it is a little saddened to see the other signal, — the Blue-Peter; for it tells him he may not have an opportunity to take a more formal leave of his friends on the frigate, which he designed doing. He longs to make known to Mr. Crozier the result of his application to the captain of the Chilian ship, to receive the congratulations of the young officers on his success. But now it may be impossible to communicate with them, the "Crusader" so soon leaving port. He has

half a mind to put off for the frigate in the "Condor's" gig, into which he has got. But Capt. Lantanas might, meanwhile, be wanting both him and the boat.

All at once, in the midst of his irresolution, he sees that which promises to help him out of the dilemma, — a small boat putting off from the frigate's sides, and heading right for the pier. As it draws nearer, he can tell it to be the dingy. There are three men in it, — two rowers and a steersman. As it approaches the pier-head, Harry recognizes the one in the stern-sheets, whose bright, ruddy face is towards him. "Thank the Lord for such good-luck!" he mutters. "It's Mr. Cadwallader!"

By this the dingy has drawn near enough for the midshipman to see and identify him; which he does, exclaiming in joyful surprise, "By Jove! it's Blew himself! Halloo, there, Harry! You're just the man I'm coming ashore to see. Hold, starboard oar! Port oar, a stroke or two. Way enough!"

In a few seconds the dingy is bow on to the gig; when Harry, seizing hold of it, brings the two boats side by side, and steadies them.

"Glad to see ye again, Master Willie. I'd just sighted the 'Crusader's' signal for sailin', an' despaired o' havin' the chance to say a last word to yourself or Mr. Crozier."

"Well, old boy, it's about that I've come ashore. Jump out, and walk with me a bit along the wharf."

The sailor drops his oar, and springs out upon the pier; the young officer preceding him. When sufficiently distant from the boats to be beyond earshot of the oarsmen, Cadwallader resumes speech: "Harry, here's a letter from Mr. Crozier. He wants you to deliver it at the address you'll find written upon it.

To save you the necessity of inquiring, I can point out the place it's to go to. Look alongshore. You see a house yonder on the top of the hill?"

"Sartinly I see it, Master Willie, and know who lives in it, — two o' the sweetest creaturs in all Californy. I s'pose the letter be for one o' them."

"No, it isn't, you dog! for neither of them. Read the superscription. You see, it's addressed to a gentleman?"

"Oh! it's for the guv'nor his-self," rejoins Harry, taking the letter, and running his eye over the direction, — Don Gregorio Montijo. "All right, sir. I'll pnt it in the old gentleman's flippers safe an' sure. Do you want me to go with it now, sir?"

"Well, as soon as you conveniently can; though there's no need for helter-skelter haste, since there wouldn't be time for an answer anyhow. In twenty minutes 'the Crusader' will weigh anchor, and be off. I've hurried ashore to see you, hoping to find you at the ship-agent's office. How fortunate my stumbling on you here! for now I can better tell you what's wanted. In that letter, there's something that concerns Mr. Crozier and myself, — matters of importance to us both. When you've given it to Don Gregorio, he'll no doubt ask you some questions about what happened last night. Tell him all you know, except that you needn't say any thing of Mr. Crozier and myself having taken a little too much champagne, which we did. You understand, old boy?"

"Parfitly, Master Will."

"Good! Now, Harry, I haven't another moment to stay. See! The ship's beginning to show canvas. If I don't get back directly, I may be left here in California, never to rise above the rank of reefer. Oh!

by the way, you'll be pleased to know that your friend Mr. Crozier is now a lieutenant. His commission arrived by the corvette that came in last night. He told me to tell you, and I'd nearly forgotten it."

"I'm gled to hear it," rejoins the sailor, raising the hat from his head, and giving a subdued cheer, — "right gled; an' maybe he'll be the same, hearin' Harry Blew's been also purmoted. I'm now first mate o' the Chilian ship, Master Willie."

"Hurrah! I congratulate you on your good luck. I'm delighted to hear of it; and so will he be. We may hope some day to see you a full-fledged skipper, commanding your own craft. Now, you dear old salt, don't forget to look well after the girls. Again good-by, and God bless you!" A squeeze of hands, with fingers intertwined tight as a reef-knot, then relaxed with reluctance; after which they separate.

The mid, jumping into the dingy, is rowed back towards the "Crusader;" while Harry re-hires the truckman, but now only to stay by and take care of his boat till he can return to it, after executing the errand intrusted to him. Snug as his new berth promises to be, he would rather lose it than fail to deliver that letter. And, in ten minutes after, he has passed through the suburbs of the town, and is hastening along the shore-road, towards the house of Don Gregorio Montijo.



CHAPTER XXIX

DREADING A DUEL.

ONCE more upon the housetop stand Carmen Montijo and Iñez Alvarez. It is the morning of the day succeeding that made sacred by their betrothal. Their eyes are upon the huge war-ship that holds the men who hold their hearts, with promise of their hands, in short, every hope of their life's happiness. They could be happy now, but for an apprehension that oppresses them, causing them keen anxiety. Yesterday, with its scenes of pleasurable excitement, had also its incidents of the opposite kind, the remembrance of which too vividly remains, and is not to be got rid of. The encounter between the gamblers and their lovers cannot end with that episode to which they were themselves witness. Something more will surely come from it. What will this something be? What should it? What could it, but a *desafío*, — a duel?

However brave on yester-morn the two *señoritas* were, however apparently regardless of consequences, it is different to-day. The circumstances have somewhat changed. Then their sweethearts were only suitors. Now they are affianced, still standing in the relationship of lovers, but with ties more firmly united. The young Englishmen are now their own. Iñez is less anxious than her aunt, having less cause to be. With the observant intelligence of woman, she has

long since seen that Calderon is a coward, and for this reason has but little belief he will fight. With instinct equally keen, Carmen knows De Lara will. After his terrible humiliation, he is not the man to shrink away out of sight. Blackleg though he be, he possesses courage, perhaps the only quality he has deserving of admiration. Once she herself admired the quality, if not the man. That remembrance itself makes her fear what may come. She speaks in serious tone, discussing with her niece the probabilities of what may arise. The delirious joy of yester-eve — of that hour when she sat in her saddle, looking over the ocean, and listening to the sweet words of love — is to-day succeeded by depression, almost despondency. While conversing, they have their eyes upon the bay, watching the boats, that at intervals are seen to put off from the war-ship, fearing to recognize in them the forms of those so dear. Fearing it; for they know that the young officers are not likely to be ashore again; and their coming now could only be on that errand they, the *señoritas*, so much dread, — the duel. Duty should keep them both on their ship; but honor may require them once more to visit the shore, perhaps never more to leave it alive.

Thus gloomily reflects Carmen, imparting her fears to the less frightened Iñez; though she, too, is not without some apprehension. If they but understood the code of signals, all this misery would be spared them; for on the frigate's main-royal-mast head floats a blue flag, with a white square in its centre, which is a portent that she will soon spread her sails, and glide off out of sight, carrying their *amantes* beyond all danger of duels, or shore-scrapes of any kind. They see the Blue-Peter, but without knowing aught of

its significance. They do not even try to interpret or think of it; their thoughts, as their eyes, being busy with the boats that pass between ship and shore. One at length arrests their attention, and keeps it for some time fixed,—a small craft, that, leaving the ship, is steered direct for the town. It passes near enough for them to see that there are three men in it, two of them rowing, the other in the stern; the last in the uniform of an officer. Love's glance is keen; and this, aided by an opera-glass, enables Inez Alvarez to identify the officer in the stern-sheets as her own Don Gulielmo. This does not alarm the ladies so much as if the steersman had been Crozier. But he is not. The other two, the oarsmen, are only sailors in blue serge shirts, with wide collars falling far back. For what the young officer is being rowed ashore, they cannot guess. If for fighting, they know that another and older officer would be with him. Where is Eduardo? While still conjecturing, the boat glides on towards the town, and is lost to their view behind some sand-hills inshore. Their glance going back to the ship, they perceive a change in her aspect. Her tall, tapering masts, with their network of stays and shrouds, are half-hidden behind broad sheets of canvas. The frigate is unfurling sail. They are surprised at this, not expecting it so soon. With the help of their glasses, they observe other movements going on aboard the war-vessel,—signal-flags running up and down their halyards, while boats are being hoisted to the davits. While watching these manœuvres, the little craft which carries the midshipman again appears, shooting out from behind the sand-hills, and being rowed rapidly back to the ship, the young officer still in it. On reaching the great leviathan, for a short time it shows like a tiny spot

along her water-line; but, soon after, it, too, is lifted aloft, and over the bulwark-rail.

Ignorant as the young ladies may be of nautical matters, they can have no doubt as to what all this manœuvring means. The ship is about to sail. As this is an event which interests all the family, Don Gregorio, summoned to the housetop, soon stands beside them.

“She’s going off, sure enough!” he remarks, after sighting through one of the glasses. “It’s rather strange, so abruptly,” he adds. “Our young friends said nothing about it last night.”

“I think they could not have known of it themselves,” says Carmen.

“I’m sure they couldn’t,” adds Iñez.

“What makes you sure, *niña?*” asks Don Gregorio.

“Well — because,” stammers out the Andalusian, a flush starting into her cheeks — “because they’d have told us. They said they didn’t expect to sail for a day or two, anyhow.”

“Just so. But you see, they’re setting sail now, evidently intending to take departure. However, I fancy I can explain it. You remember they spoke of another war-ship they expected to arrive. Yonder it is. It came into port last night, and, in all likelihood, has brought orders for the ‘Crusader’ to sail at once. I only wish it was the ‘Condor!’ I sha’n’t sleep soundly till we’re safe away from” —

“See!” interrupts Carmen: “is not that a sailor coming this way?” She points to a man moving along the shore-road in the direction of the house.

“I think so,” responds Don Gregorio, after a glance through the glass. “He appears to be in seaman’s dress.”

“Will he be coming here?”

“I shouldn’t be surprised, probably with a message from our young friends. It may be the man they recommended to me.”

“That’s why somebody came ashore in the little boat,” whispers Iñez to her aunt. “We’ll get *billetitas*. I was sure they wouldn’t go away without leaving one last little word.”

Iñez’ speech imparts no information; for Carmen has been surmising in the same strain. The aunt replies by one of those proverbs in which the Spanish tongue is so rich: “*Silencio! hay Moros en la costa.*” (“Silence! there are Moors on the coast.”)

While this bit of by-play is being carried on, the sailor ascends the hill, and is seen entering at the road-gate. There can now be no uncertainty as to his calling. The blue jacket, broad shirt-collar, round-ribbed hat, and bell-bottomed trousers, are all the unmistakable toggery of a tar. Advancing up the avenue in a rolling gait, with an occasional tack from side to side, that almost fetches him up among the *manzanitas*, he at length reaches the front of the house. There stopping, and looking up to the roof, he salutes those upon it by removing his hat, giving a back-scrape with his foot, and a pluck at one of his brow locks.

“*Que quieres V., señor?*” (“What is your business, sir?”) asks the *haciendado*, speaking down to him.

Harry Blew, for it is he, replies by holding out a letter, at the same time saying, “Your honor, I’ve brought this for the master o’ the house.”

“I am he. Go in through that door you see below. I’ll come down to you.”

Don Gregorio descends the *escalera*, and, meeting the

messenger in the inner court, receives the letter addressed to him. Breaking it open, he reads, —

ESTIMABLE SEÑOR, — Circumstances have arisen that take us away from San Francisco sooner than we expected. The corvette that came into port last night brought orders for the “Crusader” to sail at once; though our destination is the same as already known to you, — the Sandwich Islands. As the ship is about to weigh anchor, I have barely time to write a word for myself and Mr. Cadwallader. We think it proper to make known some circumstances, which will, no doubt, cause you surprise as well as ourselves. Yesterday morning we met at your house two gentlemen, — as courtesy would then have required me to call them, — by name Francisco de Lara and Faustino Calderon. We encountered them at a later hour of the day, when an occurrence took place which absolved us from either thinking of them as gentlemen, or treating them as such. And still later, after leaving your hospitable roof, we, for the third time, came across the same two individuals, under circumstances showing them to be professional gamblers. In fact, we found them to be the proprietors of a *monté* bank in the notorious El Dorado, one of them engaged in dealing the cards. A spirit of fun, with perhaps a spice of mischief, led me into the play; and, betting largely, I succeeded in breaking the bank. After that, for a short while, we lost sight of them; but as we were making our way to the wharf, where our boat was to meet us, we had a fourth interview with the “gentlemen,” who on this occasion appeared, with two others, in the character of *robbers* and *assassins*. That they did not succeed in either robbing or murdering us is due to the brave

fellow who will bear this letter to you, — the sailor of whom I spoke. He can give you all the particulars of the last and latest encounter with these versatile individuals, who claim acquaintance with you. You may rely on his truthfulness. I have no time to say more.

Hoping to see you in Cadiz, please convey parting compliments to the *señoritas*.—from Cadwallader and yours faithfully,
EDWARD CROZIER.

The letter makes a painful impression on the mind of Don Gregorio. Not that he is much surprised at the information regarding De Lara and Calderon. He has heard sinister reports concerning them, of late so loudly spoken that he had determined on forbidding them further intercourse with his family. That very day he has been displeased on learning of their ill-timed visit. And now he feels chagrin at something like a reproach conveyed by that expression in Crozier's letter: "These versatile individuals who claim your acquaintance." It hurts his hidalgo pride. Thrusting the epistle into his pocket, he questions its bearer, taking him to his private room, as also into his confidence. The sailor gives him a detailed account of the attempt at murder, so fortunately defeated, afterwards making known other matters relating to himself, and now he has taken service on the Chilian ship, Don Gregorio inquiring particularly about this.

Meanwhile, the young ladies have descended from the *azotea*; and the ex-man-o'-war's-man makes their acquaintance. They assist in showing him hospitality, loading him with pretty presents, and knick-knacks to be carried on board the "Condor," to which they know he now belongs. As he is about to depart, they flutter around him, speaking pleasant words, as if they ex-

pected to get something in return,—those *billetitas*. And yet he goes away without leaving them a scrap. A pang of disappointment, almost chagrin, shoots through the soul of Carmen as she sees him passing out of sight; and similarly afflicted is Iñez, both reflecting alike.

Still they have hope: there may be something enclosed for them in that letter they saw Harry holding up. It seemed large enough to contain two separate notes. And, if not these, there should at least be a postscript with special reference to themselves. Daughters of Eve, they are not long before approaching the subject, and drawing Don Gregorio.

Yes, there is something said about them in the letter. He reads it, "*Parting compliments to the señoritas.*"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAST LOOK.

UP anchor! The order rings along the deck of the "Crusader;" and the men of the watch stand by the windlass to execute it.

That same morning Crozier and Cadwallader, turning out of their cots, heard with surprise the order for sending up the Blue-Peter, as, also, that the ship was to weigh anchor by twelve o'clock noon. Of course, they were expecting it, but not so soon. However, the arrival of the corvette explains it; an officer from the latter vessel having already come on board the "Crusader" with despatches from the flag-ship of the Pacific squadron.

These contain orders for the frigate to set sail for the Sandwich Islands without any delay, the corvette to replace her on the San Francisco station. The despatch-bearer has also brought a mail; and the "Crusader's" people get letters, — home-news, welcome to those who have been long away from their native land; for the frigate has been three years cruising in the South Sea. Something more than mere news several of her officers receive. In large envelopes addressed to them, and bearing the British Admiralty seal, are documents of peculiar interest, commissions giving them promotion. Among the rest, one reaches Crozier, advancing him a step in rank. His ability as an officer has been reported at headquarters, as, also, his gallant conduct in having saved a sailor's life, rescued him from drowning, — that sailor Harry Blew. In all probability, this has obtained him his promotion; but, whatever the cause, he will leave San Francisco a lieutenant.

There are few officers, naval or military, who would not feel favored and joyous at such an event in their lives. It has no such effect upon Edward Crozier. On the contrary, as the white canvas is being spread above his head, there is a black shadow upon his brow, while that of Cadwallader is also clouded. It is not from any regret at leaving California, but leaving it under circumstances that painfully impress them. The occurrences of the day before, but more those of the night, have revealed a state of things that suggest unpleasant reflections, especially to Crozier. He cannot cast out of his mind the sinister impression made upon it by the discovery that Don Francisco de Lara — his rival for the hand of Carmen Montijo — is no other than the notorious Frank Lara, of whom he had fre-

quently heard, — the keeper of a *monté* table in the saloon El Dorado. Now he knows it; and the knowledge afflicts him to the laceration of his heart. No wonder at the formality of that letter which he addresses to Don Gregorio, or the insinuation conveyed by it; nor strange the cold compliments with which it was concluded; far stranger had they been warm. Among other unpleasant thoughts which the young officers have, on being so soon summoned away, is that of leaving matters unsettled with Messrs. De Lara and Calderon. Not that they have any longer either design or desire to stand before such cut-throats in a duel, nor any shame in shunning it. Their last encounter with the scoundrels would absolve them from all stigma or disgrace in refusing to fight them, even were there time and opportunity: so they need have no fear that their honor will suffer, or that any one will apply to them the opprobrious epithet, *lâche*. Indeed, they have not; and their only regret is at not being able to spend another hour in San Francisco, in order that they might look up the intending assassins, and give them into the custody of the police. But then that would lead to a difficulty that had better be avoided, — the necessity of leaving their ship, and staying to prosecute a criminal action in courts where the guilty criminal is quite as likely to be favored as the innocent prosecutor. It is not to be thought of; and, long before the “Crusader’s” anchor is lifted, they cease thinking of it.

Crozier’s last act before leaving port is to write that letter to Don Gregorio; Cadwallader’s, to carry it ashore, and deliver it to Harry Blew. Then, in less than twenty minutes after the midshipman regains footing on the frigate’s deck, the order is issued for

her sails to be sheeted home. The canvas hanging corrugated from her yards is drawn taut, the anchor hauled apeak; and the huge leviathan, obedient to her helm, held in strong hands, is brought round, with head towards the Golden Gate. The wind catches her spread sails, bellies them out; and in five minutes more, with the British flag floating proudly over her taffrail, she passes out of the harbor, leaving many a vessel behind, whose captains, for the want of a crew, bewail their inability to follow her.

But there are eyes following her from farther off, — beautiful eyes, that express sadness of a different kind, and from a different cause. Carmen Montijo and Iñez Alvarez again stand upon the *azotea*, glasses in hand. Instead, there should have been kerchiefs — white kerchiefs — waving adieu. And there would have been but for those chilling words, “Parting compliments to the *señoritas*.” Strange last words for lovers! *Santis-sima!* what could it mean? So reflect they to whom they were sent, as they stand in saddened attitude, watching the war-ship, and straining their eyes upon her, till, rounding Telegraph Hill, she disappears from their sight.

Equally sad are two young officers on the departing ship. They, too, stand with glasses in hand levelled upon the house of Don Gregorio Montijo. They can see, as once before, two heads over the parapet, and, as before, recognize them; but not as before, or with the same feelings, do they regard them. All is changed now, every thing doubtful and indefinite, where it might be supposed every thing had been satisfactorily arranged. But it has not, especially in the estimation of Crozier, whose dissatisfaction is shown in a soliloquy to which he gives utterance, as Telegraph Hill, interfering with

his field of view, causes him to lay aside his telescope.

“Carmen Montijo!” he exclaims, crushing the telescope to its shortest, and returning it to its case. “To think of a ‘sport,’ a common gambler, even having acquaintance with her, far less presuming to make love to her!”

“More than gamblers, both of them,” adds Cadwallader by his side. “Robbers, murderers, any thing, if they only had the chance.”

“Ay, true, Will! — every thing vile and vulgar. Don’t it make you mad to think of it?”

“No, not mad. That isn’t the feeling I have, but fear.”

“Fear! Of what?”

“That the scoundrels may do some harm to our girls. As we know now, they’re up to any thing. Since they don’t stick at assassination, they won’t at abduction. I hope your letter to Don Gregorio may open his eyes about them, and put him on his guard. *Iñez* — who’s to protect her? I’d give all I have in the world to be sure of her getting safely embarked in that Chilian ship. Once there, dear old Harry will take care of her — of them both.”

Cadwallader’s words seem strangely to affect his companion, changing the expression upon his countenance. It is still shadowed; but the cloud is of a different kind. From anger, it has altered to anxiety.

“You’ve struck a chord, Will, that, while not soothing the old pain, gives me a new one. I wasn’t thinking of that: my thoughts were all occupied with the other trouble — you understand?”

“I do. At the same time, I think you make too much of the other trouble, as you term it. I confess

it troubles me too, a little, though perhaps not so much as it does you. And, luckily, less, the more I reflect on it. After all, there don't seem so much to be bothered about. As you know, Ned, it's a common thing among Spanish Americans — whose customs are altogether unlike our own — to have gamblers going into their best society. Besides, I can tell you something that may comfort you a little, — a bit of information I had from Inez as we were *platicando* along the road on our ride. It was natural she should speak about the sky-blue fellow, and my sticking his horse in the hip."

"What did she say?" asks Crozier, with newly awakened interest.

"That he was a gentleman by birth, but falling fast, and, indeed, quite down."

"And De Lara — did she say aught of him?"

"She did: she spoke of him still more disparagingly, though knowing him less. She said he had been introduced to them by the other, and they were accustomed to meet him on occasions. But of late they had learned more of him; and, learning this, her aunt — your Carmen — had become very desirous of cutting his acquaintance, as, indeed, all of them. That they intended doing it, even if they had remained in California. But now — now that they were leaving it, they did not like to humiliate him by giving him the *congé* he deserved."

Crozier, with eyes earnestly fixed upon Cadwallader, has listened to the explanation. At its close, he cries out, grasping his comrade's hand, "Will, you've lifted a load from my heart. I now see daylight where all seemed darkness, and, beholding yonder hill, feel the truth of Campbell's splendid lines, --

“ A kiss can consecrate the ground
Where mated hearts are mutual bound :
The spot where love’s first links are wound,
That ne’er are riven,
Is hallowed down to earth’s profound,
And up to heaven.”

After repeating the poet’s passionate words, Crozier stands gazing on a spot so consecrated to him, — the summit of the hill, where, just twenty-four hours ago, he spoke love’s last appeal to Carmen Montijo. For the “ Crusader ” has passed out through the Golden Gate, and is now beating down the coast of the Pacific. Cadwallader’s eyes, with equal interest, are turned upon the same spot ; and for some time both are silent, absorbed in sweet reflection, recalling all that occurred in a scene whose slightest incident neither can ever forget. Only when the land looms low, and the outlines of the San Bruno Mountains begin to blend with the purpling sky, does shadow again loom on the countenances of the young officers. But now it is different, no longer expressing chagrin, nor the rancor of jealousy, but doubt, apprehension, fear, for the dear ones left behind. Still the cloud has a silver lining ; and that is — Harry Blew.



CHAPTER XXXI.

A SOLEMN COMPACT.

A COTTAGE of the old Californian kind, in other words, a *rancho*,—one of the humblest of these humble dwellings,—the homes of the Spanish American poor. It is a mere hut, thatched with a species of seashore grass (the “broombent”), seen growing in the *medanos* (sand-dunes) near by; for it is by the sea, or within sight of it, itself inconspicuous by reason of rugged rocks that cluster around, and soar up behind, forming a background in keeping with the rude architectural style of the dwelling. From the land-side it is approachable by devious and difficult paths, only known to a few intimate friends of its owner.

From the sea equally difficult; for the little cove leading up to it would not have depth sufficient to permit the passage of a boat, but for a tiny stream trickling seaward, which has furrowed out a channel in the sand. That by this boats can enter the cove, is evident from one being seen moored near its inner end, in front of, and not far from, the hovel. As it is a craft of the kind generally used by Californian fishermen, more especially those who hunt the fur-seal, it may be deduced that the owner of the hut is a seal-hunter.

This is his profession reputedly; though there are some who ascribe to him callings of a different kind, among others, insinuating that he occasionally does business as a *contrabandista*.

Whether true or not, Rafael Rocas — for he is the owner of the hut — is not the man to trouble himself about denying it. He would scarce consider smuggling an aspersion on his character; and indeed, under old Mexican administration, it would have been but slight blame or shame to him, and not such a great deal, either, under the new, at the time of which we write, but perhaps even less. Compared with other crimes then rife in California, contrabandism might almost be reckoned an honest calling.

But Rafael Rocas has a repute for doings of a yet darker kind. With those slightly acquainted with him, it is only suspicion; but a few of his more intimate associates can say for certain that he is not disinclined to a stroke either of road-robbery, or a job at house-breaking; so that, if times have changed for the worse, he has not needed any change to keep pace with them.

It is the day on which the "Crusader" sailed from San Francisco Bay, and he is in his hut; not alone, but in the company of three men, in personal appearance altogether unlike himself. While he wears the common garb of a Californian fisherman, — loose pea-coat of coarse canvas, rough water-boots, and seal-skin cap, — they are attired in costly stuffs, — cloaks of finest broadcloth, *jaquetas* of rich velvet, and *calzoneras* lashed with gold-lace, and gleaming with constellations of buttons.

Notwithstanding the showy magnificence of his guests, the seal-hunter, smuggler, or whatever he may be, does not appear to treat them with any obsequious deference. On the contrary, he is engaged with them in familiar converse, and by his tone and gestures shows that he feels himself quite their equal.

Two of the individuals thus oddly consorting are

already well known to the reader ; the third but slightly. The former are Francisco de Lara and Faustino Calderon : the latter is Don Manuel Diaz, famed for his fighting-cocks. The first two have just entered under Rocas' roof, finding the cock-fighter already there, as De Lara predicted.

After welcoming his newly arrived guests in Spanish American fashion, placing his house at their disposal, — “ *Mia casa a la disposicion de Vms,*” — the seal-hunter has set before them a bottle of his best liquor ; this being *aguardiente* of Tequila. They have taken off their outer apparel, — cloaks and hats, — and are seated around a small deal table, the only one the shanty contains ; its furniture being of the most primitive kind.

Some conversation of a desultory nature has passed between them, and they have now entered on a subject more interesting and particular, the keynote having been struck by De Lara. He opens by asking a question, —

“ *Caballeros!* do you want to be rich ? ”

All three laugh while simultaneously answering, “ *Carramba!* Yes.”

Diaz adds, “ I've heard many an idle interrogatory, but never, in all my life, one so superfluous as yours ; not even when there's twenty to one offered against a staggering cock.”

Rocas inquires, “ What do ye call rich, Don Francisco ? ”

“ Well,” responds the *monté* dealer, “ say sixty thousand dollars. I suppose you'd consider that sufficient to bestow the title ? ”

“ Certainly ; not only the title, but the substantial and real thing. If I'd only the half of it, I'd give up chasing seals.”

“And I, cock-fighting,” put in Diaz; “that is, so far as to look to it for a living; though I might still fight a main for pastime’s sake. With sixty thousand dollars at my back, I’d go for being a grand *ganadero*, like friend Faustino here, whose horses and horned cattle yield him such a handsome income.”

The other three laugh at this, since it is known to all of them that the *ganadero* has long since got rid of his horses and horned cattle.

“Well, gentlemen,” says De Lara, after this bit of preliminary skirmishing, “I can promise each of you the sum I speak of, if you’re willing to go in with me in a little affair I’ve fixed upon. Are you the men for it?”

“Your second question is more sensible than the first, though equally uncalled for; at least, so far as concerns me. I’m the man to go in for any thing which promises to make me the owner of sixty thousand dollars.”

It is Diaz who thus unconditionally declares himself. The seal-hunter indorses it by a declaration of like caring nature. Calderon simply nods assent, but in a knowing manner. He is supposed to be already acquainted with De Lara’s design.

“Now; Don Francisco, let’s know what you’re driving at!” demands Diaz, adding, “Have you struck a *veta*, or discovered a rich *placer*? If so, we’re ready for either rock-mining or pan-washing, so long as the labor’s not too hard. Speak out, and tell us what it is. The thought of clutching such a pretty prize makes a man impatient.”

“Well, I’ll let you into the secret so far: it is a *veta*, a grand gold mine, but one that will need neither rock-crushing nor mud-cradling. The gold has been

already gathered, and lies in a certain place; all in a lump, only waiting transport to some other place, which we may select at our leisure."

"Your words sound well," remarks Don Manuel.

"Wonderful well!" echoes Rocas.

"Are they not too good to be true?" asks Diaz.

"No. They're true as good. Not a bit of exaggeration, I assure you. The gold only wants to be got at, and then to be taken."

"Ah! There may be some difficulty about that?" rejoins the doubting Diaz.

"Do you expect to finger sixty thousand *pesos*, without taking the trouble to stretch out your hand?"

"Oh, no! I'm not so unreasonable. For that I'd be willing to stretch out both hands, with a knife in one, and a pistol in the other."

"Well, it's not likely to need either, if skilfully managed. I ask you again, Are you the men to go in for it?"

"I'm one," answered Diaz.

"And I another," growls Rocas, whose manner tells that he already knows what the *monté* dealer means.

"I'm not going to say no," assents Calderon, glancing sympathetically at the questioner.

"Enough!" says De Lara, "so far as you consent to the partnership. But, before entering fully into it, it will be necessary to have a more thorough understanding, as also a more formal one. Are you willing to be bound that there shall be truth between us?"

"We are!" is the simultaneous response of all three.

"And fidelity to the death?"

"To the death!"

"*Bueno!* But we must take an oath to that effect.

After that, you shall know what it's for. Enough now to say it's a thing that needs swearing upon. If there's to be treason, there shall be perjury also. Are you ready to take the oath?"

They signify assent unanimously.

"To your feet, then!" commands the chief conspirator. "It will be more seemly to take it standing."

All four spring up from their chairs, and stand facing the table. De Lara draws a dagger, and lays it down before him. The others have their stiletos too,—a weapon carried by most Spanish Californians. Each exhibits his own, laying it beside that already on the table. With the four De Lara forms a cross,—Maltese fashion; and then standing erect, Diaz opposite, Rocas and Calderon on either flank he repeats in firm, solemn voice, the others after him:—

"In the deed we this day agree to do, acting together and jointly, we swear to be true to each other; to stand by one another, if need be, to the death; to keep what we do a secret from all the world: and, if any one betray it, the other three swear to follow him wherever he may flee, seek him wherever he may shelter himself, and take vengeance upon him by taking his life. If any of us fail in this oath, may we be accursed ever after!"

This infamous ceremony duly ratified, a drink of the fiery spirit of the *mezcal* plant is a fit *finale*; which quaffed, they take up their stiletos, replace them in their sheaths, and, again sitting down, listen to De Lara, to learn from him the nature of that deed for doing which they have so solemnly compacted.

In a short time he makes it known in all its details; the disclosure calling for but a few words. It is, after all, but a common affair, though one that needs skill and courage. It is simply a "bit of burglary," but a

big thing of its kind. He tells them of between two and three hundred thousand dollars' worth of gold-dust lying in a lone country-house, with no other protection than that of its owner, — a feeble old man, — with some half-score of Indian domestics.

There are but two of them to whom this is news, — Diaz and Calderon. Rocas smiles while the revelation is being made; for he has been the original depository of the secret. It was that he communicated to De Lara, when on the day before he stopped him and Calderon at the *tinacal* of Dolores. It is not the first time for the seal-hunter to do business of a similar kind in conjunction with the gambler, who, like himself, has been accustomed to vary his professional pursuits. But, as now, he has always acted under De Lara, whose clear, cool head and daring hand assure him leadership in any scheme requiring superior intelligence for its execution.

“How soon?” asks Diaz, after all has been declared. “I should say, the sooner the better.”

“You're right about that, Don Manuel!” rejoins Rocas.

“True!” assents De Lara. “At the same time, caution must not be lost sight of. There's two of you know what danger we'd be in if we went near the town, or anywhere outside this snug little asylum of Señor Rocas, whose hospitality we may have to trench upon for some time. I don't know, Don Rafael, whether friend Diaz has told you of what happened last night?”

“He's given me a hint of it,” gruffly replies the smuggler.

“Oh, yes!” puts in Diaz. “I thought he might as well know.”

“Of course?” agrees De Lara. “In that case, then,

I've only to add, that there will be no safety for us in San Francisco so long as the English man-o'-war stays in port. He who broke our bank is rich enough to buy law, and can set its hounds after us by night as by day. Until he and his ship are gone" —

"The ship *is* gone," says Rocas, interrupting.

"Ha! What makes you say that?"

"Because I know it."

"How?"

"Simply by having seen her. Nothing like the eyes to give one assurance about any thing — with a bit of glass to assist them. Through that thing up there," — he points to an old telescope resting on hooks against the wall, — "I saw the English frigate beating out by the Farralones when I was up on the cliff about an hour ago. I knew her from having seen her lying out in the bay. She's gone to sea, for sure."

At this the others look surprised, as well as pleased, more especially Calderon. He need no longer fear encountering the much-dreaded midshipman, either in a duel or with his dirk.

"It's very strange!" says De Lara. "I'd heard the 'Crusader' was to sail soon, but not till another ship came to relieve her."

"That ship has come," returns Rocas, — "a corvette. I saw her working up the coast last evening, just before sunset. She was making for the Gate, and must be inside now."

"If all this be true," says the chief conspirator, "we need lose no more time, but put on our masks, and bring the affair off at once. It's too late for doing any thing to-night; but there's no reason why we shouldn't act to-morrow night, if it prove a dark one. We four of us will be strength enough for such a tri-

fling affair. I thought of bringing Juan Lopez, our croupier; but I saw he wouldn't be needed. Besides, from the way he's been behaving lately, I've lost confidence in him. Another reason for leaving him out will be understood by all of you. In a matter of this kind, it *isn't* the more, the merrier; though it *is* the fewer, the better cheer. The yellow dust will divide bigger among four than five."

"It will!" exclaims the cock-fighter with emphasis, showing his satisfaction at what De Lara has done. He adds, "To-morrow night, then, we are to act?"

"Yes, if it be a dark one. If not, 'twill be wiser to let things lie over for the next. A day can't make much difference, while the color of the night may. A moonlit sky, or a clear starry one, might get us all where we'd see stars without any being visible — with a rope round our necks."

"There'll be no moon to-morrow night," puts in the smuggler, who, in this branch of his varied vocations, has been accustomed to take account of such things; "at least," he adds, "none that will do us any harm. The fog's sure to be on before midnight: at this time of year it always is. To-morrow night will be like the last, — black as a pot of pitch."

"True," says De Lara, as a man of the sea, also having some slight meteorological knowledge. "No doubt 'twill be as you say, Rocas. In that case we have nothing to fear. We can have the job done, and be back here before morning. Ah! then seated round this table, we'll not be like we are now, poor as rats, but every one with his pile before him, — sixty thousand *pesos*."

"*Carramba!*" exclaims Diaz in a mocking tone. "While saying vespers to-night, let's put in a special

prayer for to-morrow night to be what Rocas says it will, — black as a pot of pitch.”

The profane suggestion is hailed with a burst of ribald laughter; after which, they set about preparing the *mascaras*, and other disguises, to be used in their nefarious enterprise.

CHAPTER XXXII.

“AMBRE LA PUERTA!”

ANOTHER sun has shone upon San Francisco Bay, and gone down in red gleam over the far-spreading Pacific, leaving the sky of a leaden color, moonless and starless. As the hour of midnight approaches, it assumes the hue predicted by Rocas, and desired by Diaz; for the ocean fog has again rolled shoreward across the peninsula, and shrouds San Francisco as with a pall. The adjacent country is covered with its funereal curtain, embracing within its folds the house of Don Gregorio Montijo. The inmates seem all asleep, as at this hour they should be. No light is seen through the windows, nor any sound heard within the walls; not even the bark of a dog, the bellow of a stalled ox, or the stamping of a horse in the stables. Inside, as without, all is silence. The profound silence seems strange, though favorable to four men not far from the house, and gradually, but with slow steps, drawing nearer to it; for they are approaching by stealth, as can be told by their attitudes and gestures. They advance crouchingly, now and then stopping to take a

survey of the *terrain* in front, as they do so exchanging whispered speech with one another.

Through the hazy atmosphere, their figures show weird-like; all the more, from their grotesque gesticulation. Scrutinized closely and in a clear light, they would still present this appearance; for although in human shape, and wearing the garb of men, their faces more resemble those of demons. They are human countenances, nevertheless, but craped, *enmascaradas*. Nothing more is needed to tell who and what they are, with their purpose in thus approaching Don Gregorio's dwelling. They are burglars, designing to break it.

It needs not the removal of their masks to identify them as the four conspirators left plotting in the ranche of Rafael Rocas.

They are now *en route* for putting their scheme into execution.

It would look as if Don Gregorio were never to get his gold to Panama, much less have it transported to Spain.

And his daughter — what of her, with Francisco de Lara drawing nigh as one of the nocturnal ravagers? His grand-daughter, too — Faustino Calderon being another!

One cognizant of the existing relations, and spectator of what is passing now, seeing the craped robbers as they steal on towards the house, would suppose it in danger of being doubly despoiled, and that its owner is to suffer desolation not only in fortune, but in that far dearer to him, — his family.

The burglars are approaching from the front, up the avenue, though not on it. They keep along its edge, among the *manzanita* bushes. These, with the fog, afford sufficient screen to prevent their being observed

from the house, even though sentinels were set upon its *azotea*. But there appears to be none, — no eye to see, no voice to give warning, not even the bark of a watchdog to wake those unconsciously slumbering within.

As already said, there is something strange in this. On a large grazing-estate, it is rare for the Molossian to be silent. More usually, his sonorous bay is heard sounding throughout the night, or at short intervals. Though any thing but desirous to hear the barking of dogs, the burglars are, nevertheless, puzzled at the universal silence, so long continued. For, before entering the enclosure, they have been lying concealed in a thicket outside, their horses tied to the trees where they have left them; and during all the time not a sound has reached them, — not a voice, either of man or animal. They are now within sight of the house, its massive front looming large and dark through the mist: still no sound outside, and, within, the stillness of death itself.

Along with astonishment, a sense of awe is felt by one of the four criminals, — Calderon, who has still some lingering reluctance as to the deed about to be done, or it may be but fear. The other three are too strong in courage, and too hardened in crime, for scruples of any kind.

Arriving at the end of the avenue, and within a short distance of the dwelling, they stop for a final consultation, still screened by a clump of *manzanitas*. All silent as ever; no one stirring; no light from any window; the shutters closed behind the *rejas*, — the great *puerta*, as well.

“Now about getting inside,” says De Lara. “What will be our best way?”

“In my opinion,” answers Diaz, “we’ll do best by climbing up to the *azotea*, and over it into the *patio*.”

“Where’s your ladder?” asks Rocas in his gruff, blunt way.

“We must find one—or something that’ll serve instead. There should be loose timber lying about the corrals, enough to provide us with a climbing-pole.”

“And, while searching for it, wake up some of the *vaqueros*. That won’t do.”

“Then what do you propose, Rafael?” interrogates De Lara.

The seal-hunter, with his presumed experience in housebreaking, is listened to with attention.

“Walk straight up to the door,” he answers, “knock, and ask to be admitted.”

“Ay! and have a blunderbuss fired at us, with a shower of bullets big as billiard-balls. *Carrai!*” It is Calderon who speaks thus apprehensively.

“Not the least danger of that!” rejoins Rocas. “Take my word, we’ll be let in.”

“Why do you think so?”

“Why? Because we have a claim on the hospitality of the house.”

“I don’t understand you, Rocas,” says De Lara.

“Haven’t we a good story to tell, simple, and to the purpose?”

“Still I don’t understand. Explain yourself, Rafael.”

“Don’t we come as messengers from the man-of-war,—from those officers you’ve been telling me about?”

“Ah! now I perceive your drift.”

“One can so announce himself, while the others keep out of sight. He can say he’s been sent by the young gentlemen on an errand to Don Gregorio, or the *señoritas* if you like. Something of importance affect-

ing their departure. True, by this they'll know the ship's weighed anchor. No matter: the story of a message will stand good all the same."

"Rafael Rocas," exclaims De Lara, "you're a born genius! Instead of being forced to do a little smuggling now and then, you ought to be made *administrator-general of customs*. We shall act as you advise. No doubt the door will be opened. When it is, one can take charge of the janitor. He's a sexagenarian, and won't be hard to hold. If he struggle, let him be silenced. The rest of us can go ransacking. You, Calderon, are acquainted with the interior, and, as you say, know the room where Don Gregorio is most likely to keep his chest. You must lead us straight for that."

"But, Francisco," whispers Calderon in the ear of his confederate, after drawing him a little apart from the other two, "about the *niñas*? You don't intend any thing with them?"

"Certainly not, not to-night, nor in this fashion. I hope being able to approach *them* in gentler guise, and more becoming time. When they're without a *peso* in the world, they'll be less proud, and may be contented to stay a little longer in California. To-night we've enough on our hands without that. One thing at a time, — their money first, themselves afterwards."

"But suppose they should recognize us?"

"They can't. Disguised as we are, I defy a man's mother to know him. If they did, then" —

"Then what?"

"No use reflecting what. Don't be so scared, man! If I'd anticipated any chance of its coming to extremes of the kind you're thinking about, I wouldn't be here prepared for only half-measures. Perhaps we sha'n't even wake the ladies up; and, if we do, there's not the

slightest danger of our being known. So make your mind easy, and let's get through with it. See! Diaz and Rocas are getting impatient. We must rejoin them, and proceed to business at once."

The four housebreakers again set their heads together, and after a few whispered words, to complete their plan of proceeding, advance towards the door. Once up to it, they stand close in, concealed by its overshadowing arch.

With the butt of his pistol, De Lara knocks.

Diaz, unknown to the family, and therefore without fear of his voice being recognized, is to do the talking.

No one answers the knock; and it is repeated, louder and still louder. "The sexagenarian janitor sleeps soundly to-night," thinks De Lara, deeming it strange. Another "rat-at-ta" with the pistol-butt, followed by the usual formulary, "*Ambre la puerta!*" ("Open the door.") At length comes a response from within, but not the customary "*Quen es?*" ("Who's there?") nor any thing in Spanish. On the contrary, the speech which salutes the ears of those seeking admission is in a different tongue, and tone altogether unlike that of a native Californian.

"Who the old scratch are ye?" asks a voice from inside; while a heavy footstep is heard coming along the *saugan*. Before the startled burglars can shape a reply, the voice continues, "Darn ye! what d'ye want anyhow, wakin' a fellur out o' his sleep at this time o' the night? 'Twould sarve ye right if I sent a bullet through the door at ye. Take care what you're about! I've got my shootin'-iron handy, an' a Colt's revolver it air."

"*Por Dios!* What does this mean?" mutters De Lara.

“Tell him, Diaz,” he adds in *sotto voce* to the cock-fighter, — “tell him we’re from the British man-of-war, with — *Carrai!* I forgot: you don’t speak English. I must do it myself. *He* won’t know who it is.” Then raising his voice, “We want to see Don Gregorio Montijo. We bring a message from the ship ‘Cru-sader,’ — from the two officers.”

“Consarn the ship ‘Croozader,’ an’ yur message, an’ yur two officers: I know nothin’ ’bout them. As for Don Gregorio, if ye want to get sight on him, ye’re a preeshus way wide o’ the mark. He arn’t here any more. He’s gin up the house yesterday, an’ tuk every thing o’ hisn out o’ t. I’m only here in charge o’ the place. Guess you’ll find both the Don an’ his darters at the Parker, — the most likeliest place to tree thet lot.”

Don Gregorio gone! — his gold, his girls! Only an empty house, in charge of a care-taker, who carries a Colt’s repeating-pistol, and would use it on the slightest provocation! No good going inside now, but a deal of danger. Any thing but pleasant medicine would be a pill from that six-shooter.

Many are the wild exclamations that issue from the lips of the disappointed housebreakers as they turn away from Don Gregorio’s dismantled dwelling, and hasten to regain their horses.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SCRATCH CREW.

IT was a fortunate inspiration that led the *ex-hacien-*
dado to have his gold secretly carried on board the
Chilian ship; another, that influenced him to transfer
his family and household gods to an hotel in the town.

It was all done in a day, — that same day. Every
hour after the sailing of the “Crusader” had he
become more anxious; for every hour brought intelli-
gence of some new act of outlawry in the neighborhood,
impressing him with the insecurity, not only of his
Penates, but of the lives of himself and the young
ladies. So long as the British ship lay in port, it
seemed a protection to him; and, although this may
have been but fancy, it served somewhat to tranquillize
his fears. Soon as she was gone, he gave way to them,
summoned Silvestre, with a numerous retinue of *carga-*
dores, and swept the house clean of every thing he
intended taking; the furniture alone being left as
part of the purchased effects. It is a company of
speculators to whom he has sold the property; these
designing to cut it up into town-lots and suburban villa-
sites.

He has reason to congratulate himself on his rapid
removal, as he finds on the following day, when visit-
ing his old home for some trifling purpose, and there
hearing what had happened during the night. The man
in charge — a stalwart American, armed to the teeth

—gives him a full account of the nocturnal visitors. There were four, he says, —having counted them through the keyhole of the door, —inquiring for him, Don Gregorio. They appeared greatly disappointed at not getting an interview with him, and went off uttering adjurations in Spanish, though having held their parley in plain English.

A message from the British man-of-war; and brought by men who swore in Spanish! Strange all that, thinks Don Gregorio, knowing the “Crusader” should then be at least a hundred leagues off at sea. Besides, the messengers have not presented themselves at the Parker House, to which the care-taker had directed them. “What could it mean?” asks the *ex-haciendado* of himself. Perhaps the sailor who is now first officer of the Chilian ship may know something of it; and he will question him next time he goes aboard. He has, however, but little hope of being enlightened in that quarter; his suspicions turning elsewhere. He cannot help connecting Messrs. De Lara and Calderon with the occurrence. Crozier’s letter, coupled with further information received from the bearer of it, has thrown such a light on the character of these two individuals, that he can believe them capable of any thing. After their attempt to rob the young officers, and murder them as well, they would not hesitate to serve others the same; and the demand for admission to his house may have been made by these very men, with a couple of confederates; their design to plunder it, if not worse.

Thus reflecting, he is thankful for having so unconsciously foiled them; indeed deeming it a providence. Still is he all the more solicitous to leave a land beset with such dangers. Even in the town he does not feel

safe. Robbers and murderers walk boldly abroad through the streets; not alone, but in the company of judges who have tried without condemning them; while lesser criminals stand by drinking-bars, hob-nobbing with the constables who either hold them in charge, or have just released them after a mock hearing before some magistrate, with eyes blind as those of Justice herself, — blinded by the gold-dust of California.

Notwithstanding all this, Don Gregorio need have no fear for his ladies. Their sojourn at the hotel may be somewhat irksome and uncongenial, still are they safe. Rough-looking and boisterous as are some of their fellow-guests, they are yet in no way rude. The most sensitive lady need not fear moving in their midst. A word or gesture of insult to her would call forth instant resentment.

It is not on their account he continues anxious, but because of his unprotected treasure. Though secreted aboard the "Condor," it is still unsafe. Should its whereabouts get whispered abroad, there are robbers bold enough, not only to take it from the Chilian skipper, but set fire to his ship, himself in her, and cover their crime by burning every thing up. Aware of this, Don Gregorio, with the help of friendly Silvestre, has half a dozen trusty men placed aboard of her, there to stay till a crew can be engaged. It is a costly matter; but money may save money, and now is not the time to cavil at expenses.

As yet, not a sailor has presented himself. None seems caring to ship "for Valparaiso and intermediate ports," even at the double wages offered in the advertisement. The "Condor's" fore-castle remains untenanted, except by the six longshore-men, who temporarily occupy it, without exactly knowing why they are

there, but contented to make no inquiry so long as they are receiving their ten dollars a day. Of crew, there is only the captain himself, his first officer, and the cook. The oranges do not count.

Day by day Don Gregorio grows more impatient, and is in constant communication with Silvestre. "Offer higher wages," he says: "engage sailors at any price." The ship-agent yields assent; inserts a second *aviso* in the Spanish paper, addressed to "*marineros* of all nations." Triple wages to those who will take service on a well-appointed ship; in addition, all the usual allowances, the best of grub and grog. Surely this should get the "Condor" a crew.

And at length it does. Within twenty-four hours after the advertisement has appeared, sailors begin to show on her deck. They come singly, or in twos and threes, and keep coming, till as many as half a score have presented themselves. They belong to different nationalities, speaking several tongues, among them English, French, and Danish. But the majority appear to be Spaniards, or Spanish Americans, as might have been expected from the "Condor" being a Chilean ship. Among them is the usual variety of facial expression, though in one respect a wonderful uniformity. Scarce a man of them whose countenance is not in some way unprepossessing; either naturally of sinister cast, or brought to it by a career of sinful dissipation. Several of them show signs of having been recently drinking, in eyes bleary and bloodshot; of strife, too, by other eyes that are blackened, with scars upon their cheeks not yet cicatrized. Some are still in a state of inebriety, and stagger as they stray about the decks.

Under any other circumstances, such sailors would

stand no chance of getting shipped. As it is, they are accepted, not one refused : Capt. Lantanas has no choice, and knows it. Without them he is helpless ; and it would be hopeless for him to think of putting to sea. If he do not take them, the " Condor " may swing idly at her anchor for weeks, it might be months. Quick as they come aboard, he enters their names on the ship's books ; while Harry Blew assigns them their separate bunks in the fore-peak. One, a Spaniard, by name Padilla, shows credentials from some former ship that procure for him the berth of *piloto segundo* (second mate).

After the ten have been taken, no more present themselves. Even the big bounty offered does not tempt another tar from the saloons of San Francisco. In any other seaport it would empty every sailors' boarding-house to its last lodger. Still ten hands are not enough to work the good ship " Condor." Her captain knows it, and waits another day, hoping he may get a few more to complete her complement. He hopes in vain : the supply seems exhausted. Becoming convinced of this, he determines to set sail with such crew as he has secured. But little more remains to be done, — some stores to be shipped, provisions for the voyage, the best and freshest San Francisco can afford ; for he who authorizes their inlay cares not for the cost, only that things may be made comfortable. Don Gregorio gives *carte-blanche* for providing the vessel ; and it is done according to his directions. At length every thing is ready, and the " Condor " only awaits her passengers. Her cabin has been handsomely furnished, its best state-room decorated to receive two ladies, fair as ever set foot on board a ship.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

“ADIOS, CALIFORNIA!”

ANOTHER sunrise over San Francisco, in all likelihood the last Don Gregorio Montijo will ever witness in California; for just as the orb of day shows its disk above the dome-shaped *silhouette* of Monté Diablo, flinging its golden shimmer across the bay, a boat leaves the town-pier, bearing him and his towards the Chilian vessel, whose signals for sailing are out. Others are in the boat, — a large party of ladies and gentlemen, who accompany them to do a last hand-shaking on board the ship; for, in quitting California, the *ex-haciendado* leaves many friends behind, among them, some who will pass sleepless hours thinking of Carmen Montijo, and others whose hearts will be sore as their thoughts turn to Iñez Alvarez. It may be that none of these is in the boat, and better for them if they are not; since the most painful of all partings is that where the lover sees his sweetheart sail away, with the knowledge she cares neither to stay, nor come back.

The two young girls going off show but little sign of regret at leaving. They are hindered by remembrance of the last words spoken at another parting, now painfully recalled, “*Hasta Cadiz!*” The thought of that takes the sting out of this.

The boat reaches the ship, and, swinging around, lies alongside. Capt. Lantanas stands by the gangway to receive his passengers, with their friends; while his first officer helps them up the man-ropes.

Among the ladies, Harry Blew distinguishes the two he is to have charge of, and with them is specially careful. As their soft, gloved fingers rest in his rough, horny hand, he mentally registers a vow, that it shall never fail them in the hour of need, if such there ever be.

On the cabin-table is spread a refection of the best; and around it the leave-takers assemble, the Chilian skipper doing the honors of his ship, and gracefully; for he is in truth a gentleman.

Half an hour of merry-making, light chatter, enlivened by the popping of corks and clinking of glasses; then ten minutes of converse more serious, after which, hurried graspings of the hand, and a general scattering towards the shore-boat, which soon after moves off amid exclamations of "*Adios!*" and "*Bueno viage!*" accompanied by the waving of hands, and white slender fingers saluting, with tremulous motion, like the quiver of a kestrel's wing, — the fashion of the Spanish American fair.

While the boat is being rowed back to the shore, the "*Condor*" spreads sail, and stands away towards the Golden Gate.

She is soon out of sight of the port, having entered the strait which gives access to the great landlocked estuary. But a wind blowing in from the west hinders her; and she is all the day tacking through the eight miles of narrow water which connect San Francisco Bay with the Pacific.

The sun is nigh set as she passes the old Spanish fort, and opens view of the outside ocean. But the heavenly orb that rose over Monté Diablo like a globe of gold goes down beyond Los Farallones more resembling a ball of fire about to be quenched in the sea.

It is still only half immersed in the blue liquid expanse, when, gliding out from the portals of the Golden Gate, the "Condor" rounds Seal Rock, and stands on her course W.S.W.

The wind has shifted, the evening breeze beginning to blow steadily from the land. This is favorable; and after tacks have been set, and sails sheeted home, there is but little work to be done.

As it is the hour of the second dog-watch, the sailors are all on deck, grouped about the fore-hatch, and glee-fully conversing. Here and there an odd individual stands by the side, with eyes turned shoreward, taking a last look at the land; not as if he regretted leaving it, but is rather glad to get away. More than one of the "Condor's" crew have reason to feel thankful that the Chilian craft is carrying them from a country, where, had they staid much longer, it would have been to find lodgement in a jail. Out at sea, their faces seem no better favored than when they first stepped aboard. Scarce recovered from their shore carousing, they show swollen cheeks, and eyes inflamed with alcohol, countenances from which the breeze of the Pacific, however pure, cannot remove that sinister expression.

At sight of them and the two fair creatures sailing in the same ship, a thought about the incongruity, as also the insecurity, of such companionship, cannot help coming uppermost. It is like two beautiful birds of paradise shut up in the same cage with half a score of wolves, tigers, and hyenas.

But the birds of paradise are not troubling themselves about this, or any thing else in the ship. Linger- ing abaft the binnacle, with their hands resting on the taffrail, they look back at the land, their eyes fixed upon the summit of a hill, ere long to become lost to

their view by the setting of the sun. They have been standing so for some time in silence, when Iñez says, "I can tell what you're thinking of, *tia*."

"Indeed! can you? Well, let me hear it."

"You're saying to yourself, 'What a beautiful hill that is yonder! and how I should like to be once more upon its top!—not alone, but with somebody beside me.' Now, tell the truth, isn't that it?"

"Those are your own thoughts, *sobrina*."

"I admit it, and also that they are pleasant. They are yours also, are they not?"

"Only in part. I have others, which I suppose you can share with me."

"What others?"

"Reflections not all agreeable, but quite the contrary."

"Again distressing yourself about that! It does not give me any concern, and didn't from the first."

"No?"

"No!"

"Well, I must say you take things easily; which I don't. A lover—engaged too—to go away in that *sans façon* manner! Not so much as a note, nor even a verbal message. *Santissima!* it was something more than rude: it was cruel; and I can't help thinking so."

"But there was a message in the letter to grand-papa for both of us. What more would you wish?"

"Pff! who cares for parting compliments? A *lepero* would send better to his sweetheart in sleeveless *camisa*. That's not the message for me."

"How can you tell there wasn't some other, which has miscarried? I'm almost sure there has been. Else why should somebody have knocked at the door, and

said so? The Americano left in charge of the house has told grandpa something about four men having come there the night after we left it. One may have been the messenger, the others going with him for company; and, through his neglect, we've not got letters intended for us. Or, if they haven't written, it's because they were pressed for time. However, we shall know when we meet them at Cadiz."

"Ah! When we meet them there, I'll demand an explanation from Eduaro. That shall I, and get it — or know the reason why."

"He will give a good one, I warrant. There's been a miscarriage somehow; for hasn't there been mystery all round? Luckily, no fighting, as we feared, and have reason to rejoice. Neither any thing seen or heard of your Californian chivalry! That's the strangest thing of all."

"It is indeed strange!" rejoins Carmen, showing emotion. "I wonder what became of them. Nobody that we know has met either, after that day, nor yet heard word of them."

"Carmen, I believe one *has* heard of them."

"Who?"

"Your father."

"What makes you think so, Iñez?"

"Some words I overheard while he was conversing with the English sailor who's now in the ship with us. I'm almost certain there was something in Mr. Crozier's letter that related to De Lara and Calderon. What it was grandpapa seems desirous of keeping to himself, else he would have told us. We must endeavor to find it out from the sailor."

"You're a cunning schemer, *sobrina*. I should never have thought of that. We shall try. Now I

remember, Eduardo once saved this man's life. Wasn't it a noble, daring deed? For all, I'm mad angry with him leaving me as he did, and sha'n't be pacified till he get upon his knees, and apologize for it. That he shall do at Cadiz!"

"To confess the truth, *tia*, I was a little spited myself at first. On reflection, I feel sure there's been some mischance, and we've been wronging them both. I sha'n't blame my darling till I see him again. Then, if he can't clear himself—oh, won't I?"

"You forgive too easily. I can't."

"Yes, you can. Look at yonder hill. Recall the pleasant hour passed upon it, and you'll be lenient as I am."

Carmen obeys, and again turns her glance toward the spot sacred to sweet memories.

As she continues to gaze at it, the cloud lifts from her brow, replaced by a smile, that promises easy pardon to him who has offended her.

In silence the two stand, straining their eyes upon the far summit, till shore and sea become one, both blending into the purple of twilight.

"*Adios, California!*"

Land no longer in sight. The ship is *au large* on the ocean.



CHAPTER XXXV.

A TATTOO THAT NEEDS RETOUCHING.

THE great Pacific current in many respects resembles the Gulf Stream of the Atlantic. Passing eastward under the Aleutian Archipelago, it impinges upon the American continent, by Vancouver's Island; thence setting southward, along the Californian coast, curves round, horseshoe shape, and strikes back for the centre of the South Sea, sweeping on past the Sandwich Isles. By this disposition, a ship bound from San Francisco for Honolulu has the flow in her favor; and, if the wind be also favorable, she will make fast way. As chance has it, both are propitious to the "Crusader;" and the war-ship, standing for the Sandwich Islands, will likely reach them after an incredibly short voyage. There are two individuals on board of her who wish it to be so, counting every day, almost every hour, of her course. Not that they have any desire to visit the dominions of King Kamekameha, or expect pleasure there: on the contrary, if left to themselves, the "Crusader's" stay in the harbor of Honolulu would not last longer than necessary to procure a boat-load of bananas, and replenish her hen-coops with fat Kanaka fowls.

It is scarce necessary to say that they who are thus indifferent to the delights of Owyhee are the late-made lieutenant Crozier, and the midshipman Cadwallader. The bronzed Hawaiian beauties will have

small attraction for them. Not the slightest danger of either yielding to the blandishments oft lavishly bestowed upon sailors by these seductive damsels of the Southern Sea; for the hearts of both are yet thrilling with the remembrance of smiles vouchsafed them by other daughters of the sunny South, of a far different race, — thrilling, too, with the anticipation of again basking in these smiles under the sky of Andalusia.

It needs hope, all they can command, to cheer them; not because the time is long, and the place distant: sailors are accustomed to long separation from those they love, and so habituated to patience. It is no particular uneasiness of this kind which shadows their brows, and makes every mile of the voyage seem a league. Nor are their spirits clouded by any reflections on that which vexed them just before leaving San Francisco. If they have any feelings about it, they are rather those of repentance for suspicions which both believe to have been as unfounded as unworthy. What troubles them now (for they are troubled) has nought to do with that; nor is it any doubt as to the loyalty of their *financées*, but fear for their safety. It is not well defined, but like some dream which haunts them, — at times so slight as to cause little concern, at other times filling them with anxiety. But, in whatever degree felt, it always assumes the same shape: two figures conspicuous in it besides those of their betrothed sweethearts, two faces of evil omen, — one that of Calderon, the other De Lara's. What the young officers saw of these men, and what more they learned of them before leaving San Francisco, makes natural their misgivings and justifies their fears. Something seems to whisper them that there is danger to be dreaded from the gamblers, desperadoes as they have

shown themselves ; that through them some eventuality may arise affecting the future of Carmen Montijo and Iñez Alvarez, so as to prevent their escape from California. Escape! Yes, that is the word Messrs. Crozier and Cadwallader make use of in their conversation on the subject, the form in which their fear presents itself.

Before reaching the Sandwich Islands, they receive a scrap of intelligence, which in some respect cheers them. It has become known to the "Crusader's" crew that the frigate is to make but short stay there, — will not even enter the harbor of Honolulu. The commission intrusted to her captain is of no very important nature : he is simply to leave an official despatch, with some commands for the British consul ; after which, head round again, and straight for Panama.

"Good news, isn't it, Ned?" says Cadwallader to his senior, as the two, on watch together, stand conversing. "With the quick time we've made from 'Frisco, as the Yankees call it, and no delay to speak of in the Sandwiches, we ought to get to the Isthmus as soon as the Chilian ship."

"True. But it will a good deal depend on the time the Chilian ship leaves San Francisco. No doubt she'd have great difficulty in getting a sufficient number of hands. Blew told you there were but the captain and himself."

"Only they and the cook, — an old darky, a run-away slave, he said, besides a brace of great red baboons — oranges. That was the whole of her crew by last report. Well, in one way we ought to be glad she's so short," continues the midshipman. "It may give us the chance of reaching Panama before her ; and, as the frigate's destined to put into that port, we

may meet the dear girls again sooner than we expected."

"I hope and trust we shall. I'd give a thousand pounds to be sure of it. It would lift a load off my mind, the heaviest I ever had on it."

"Off mine too. But, even if we don't reach Panama before them, we'll hear whether they've passed through there. If they have, that'll set things right enough. We'll then know they're safe, and will be so. *Hasta Cadiz.*"

"It seems a good omen," says Crozier reflectingly, "that we are not to be delayed at the islands."

"It does," rejoins Cadwallader. "Though, but for the other thing, I'd liked it better if we were to stay there, only for a day or two."

"For what reason?"

"There!" says the midshipman, pulling up his shirt-sleeve, and laying bare his arm to the elbow. "Look at that, lieutenant!"

The lieutenant looks, and sees upon the skin, white as alabaster, a bit of tattooing. It is the figure of a young girl, somewhat scantily robed, with long streaming tresses; hair, contour, countenance, every thing, done in the deepest indigo.

"Some old sweetheart?" suggests Crozier.

"It is."

"But *she* can't be a Sandwich Island belle. You've never been there."

"No, she isn't. She's a little Chileña, whose acquaintance I made last spring, while we lay at Valparaiso. Grummet, the cutter's cockswain, did the tattoo for me as we came up the Pacific. He hadn't quite time to finish it, as you see. There was to be a picture of the Chilian flag over her head, and, under-

neath, the girl's name or initials. I'm now glad they didn't go in."

"But what the deuce has all this to do with the Sandwich Islands?"

"Only that I intended to have the thing taken out there. Grummet tells me he can't do it, but that the Kanakas can. He says they've got some trick for extracting the stain without scarring the skin, or only very slightly."

"But why should you care about removing it? I acknowledge tattooing is not nice on the epidermis of a gentleman; and I've met scores, like yourself, sorry for having submitted to it. After all, what does it signify? Nobody need ever see it, unless you wish them to."

"There's where you mistake. Somebody *might* see it, without my wishing; sure to see it, if ever I get" —

"What?"

"Spliced."

"Ah! Iñez?"

"Yes, Iñez. Now you understand why I'd like to spend a day or two among the South-Sea-Islanders. If I can't get the thing taken out, I'll be in a dilemma. I know Iñez would be indulgent in a good many ways; but, when she sees that blue image on my arm, she'll look black enough. And what am I to say about it? I told her she was the first sweetheart I ever had; as you know, Ned, a little bit of a fib. Only a white one; for the Chileña was only a mere fancy, gone out of my mind long ago, as, no doubt, I am out of hers. The question is, How's her picture to be got out of my skin? I'd give something to know."

"If that's all your trouble, you needn't be at any expense, except what you may tip old Grummet. You

But he has not completed the portrait of your Chileña. Grummet's plain enough, looking at the shortness of her skirts. Now let him go on, and lengthen them a little. Then finish by putting a Spanish flag over her head, instead of the Chilian as you intended; and, underneath, the initials 'I. A.' With that on your arm, you may safely show it at Cadiz."

"A splendid idea! The very thing! The only difficulty is, that this picture of the Chilian girl isn't any thing like as good-looking as Iñez. Besides, it would never pass for her portrait."

"Let me see: I'm not so sure about that. I think, with a few more touches, it will stand well enough for your Andalusian. Grummet's given her all the wealth of hair you're so constantly bragging about. The only poverty's in that petticoat; but, if you get the skirt stretched a bit, that will remedy it. You want sleeves, too, to make her a lady. Then set a tall, tortoise-shell comb upon her crown, with a spread of lace over it, hanging down below the shoulders, the mantilla; and you'll make as good an Andalusian of her as is Iñez herself."

"By Jove, you're right! it can be done. The bit added to the skirt will look like a flounced border. The Spanish ladies have such on their dresses. I've seen them. And a fan—they have that too. She must have one."

"By all means give her a fan; and, as you're doubtful about the likeness, let it be done so as to cover her face—at least, the lower half of it: that will be just as they carry it. You can hide that nose, which is a trifle too snub for the Andalusian. The eyes appear good enough."

"The Chileña had splendid eyes."

“Of course, or she wouldn't have her portrait there. But how did your artist know that? Has he ever seen the original?”

“No, I described her to him; and he's acquainted with the costume the Chilian girls wear. He's seen plenty of such. I told him to make the face a nice oval, with a small mouth, and pretty pouting lips; then to give her great big eyes. You see, he's done all that.”

“He has certainly.”

“About the feet? They'll do, won't they? They're small enough, I should say.”

“Quite small enough; and those ankles are perfection. They ought to satisfy your Andalusian — almost flatter her.”

“Flatter her! I should think not. They might your Biscayan, with her big feet, but not Iñez, who's got the tiniest little understandings I ever saw on a woman — tall as she is.”

“Stuff!” scornfully retorts Crozier: “that's a grand mistake people make about small feet. It's not the size, but the shape, that's to be admired. They should be in proportion to the rest of the body; otherwise, they're a monstrosity, as among the Chinese for instance. And as for small feet in men, about which the French pride and pinch themselves, why, every tailor's got that.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughs the young Welshman. “A treatise on orthopedia, or whatever it's called. Well, I shall let the Chileña's feet stand, with the ankles too, and get Grummet to add on the rest.”

“What if your Chileña should chance to set eyes on the improved portrait? Remember, we're to call at Valparaiso!”

“I never thought of that.”

“If you should meet her, you’ll do well to keep your shirt-sleeves down, or you may get the picture scratched, your cheeks along with it.”

“Bah! there’s no danger of that. I don’t expect ever to see that girl again—don’t intend to. It wouldn’t be fair, after giving that engagement-ring to Ñiez. If we do put into Valparaiso, I’ll stay aboard all the time the frigate’s in port. That will insure against any” —

“*Land ho!*”

Their dialogue is interrupted. The lookout on the masthead has sighted Mauna-Loa.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A CREW THAT MEANS MUTINY.

A SHIP sailing down the Pacific, on the line of longitude 125° W. Technically speaking, not a *ship*, but a *bark*, as may be told by her mizzen-sails, set fore and aft.

Of all craft encountered on the ocean, there is none so symmetrically beautiful as the *bark*. Just as the name looks well on the page of poetry and romance, so is the reality itself on the surface of the sea. The sight is simply perfection. And about the vessel in question another graceful peculiarity is observable: her masts are of the special kind called *polacca*, — in one piece from step to truck.

Such vessels are common enough in the Mediterra-

nean, and not rare in Spanish American ports. They may be seen at Monte Video, Buenos Ayres, and Valparaiso, to which last this bark belongs; for she is Chilian built; her tall, tapering masts made of trees from the ancient forests of Araucania. Painted upon the stern is the name, "El Condor;" for she is the craft commanded by Capt. Antonio Lantanas. This may seem strange. In the harbor of San Francisco, the "Condor" was a ship. How can she now be a bark? The answer is easy, as has been the transformation; and a word will explain it. For the working of her sails, a bark requires fewer hands than a ship. Finding himself with an incomplete crew, Capt. Lantanas resorted to a stratagem common in such cases, and converted his vessel accordingly. The conversion was effected on the day before leaving San Francisco; so that the "Condor," entering the Golden Gate a ship, stood out of it a bark. As this, she is now on the ocean, sailing southward along the line of longitude 125° W.

On the usual track taken by sailing-vessels, between Upper California and the Isthmus, she has westered, to get well clear of the coast, and catch the regular winds, that, centuries ago, wafted the spice-laden Spanish galleons from the Philippines to Acapulco. A steamer would hug the shore, keeping the brown, barren mountains of Lower California in view. Instead, the "Condor" has sheered wide from the land, and, in all probability, will not again sight it till she begins to bear up for the Bay of Panama.

It is the middle watch of the night, the first after leaving San Francisco. Eight bells have sounded; and the chief mate is in charge, the second having turned in, along with the division of crew allotted to him. The

sea is tranquil, the breeze light, blowing from the desired quarter ; so that there is nothing to call for any unusual vigilance. True, the night is dark, but without portent of storm. It is, as Harry Blew knows, only a thick rain-cloud, such as often shadows this part of the Pacific. But the darkness need not be dreaded. They are in too low a latitude to encounter icebergs ; and upon the wide waters of the South Sea there is not much danger of collision with ships. Notwithstanding these reasons for feeling secure, the chief officer of the " Condor " paces her decks with a brow clouded as the sky over his head ; while the glance of his eye betrays anxiety of no ordinary kind. It cannot be from any apprehension about the weather. He does not regard the sky, nor the sea, nor the sails : on the contrary, he moves about, not with bold, manlike step, as one having command of the vessel, but stealthily, now and then stopping, and standing in crouched attitude, within the deeper shadow thrown upon her decks by masts, bulwarks, and boats. He seems less to occupy himself about the ropes, spars, and sails, than the behavior of those who work them ; not while they are working them, either, but more when they are straying idly along the gangways, or clustered in some corner, and conversing. In short, he appears to be playing spy on them. For this he has his reasons, and they are good ones. Before leaving San Francisco, he discovered the incapacity of the crew, so hastily got together ; a bad lot, he could see at first sight, — rough, ribald, and drunken. In all, there are eleven of them, the second mate included ; the last, as already stated, a Spaniard, by name Padilla. There are three others of this same race, — Spaniards, or Spanish Americans, — Gil Gomez, Jose Hernandez, and Jacinto Velarde ;

two Englishmen, Jack Striker and Bill Davis ; a Frenchman, by name La Crosse ; a Dutchman, and a Dane ; the remaining two being men whose nationality is difficult to determine, and scarce known to themselves, such as may be met on almost every ship that sails the sea.

The chief officer of the "Condor," accustomed to a man-o'-war, with its rigid discipline, is already disgusted with what is going on aboard the merchantman. He has been so before leaving San Francisco, having, also, some anxiety about the navigation of the vessel. With a crew so incapable, he anticipated difficulty, if not danger ; but, now that he is out upon the open ocean, he is sure of the first, and fully apprehensive of the last ; for, in less than a single day's sailing, he has discovered that the crew, besides counting short, is otherwise untrustworthy. Several of the men are not sailors at all, but longshore-men ; one or two of them "land-lubbers," who never laid hand upon a ship's rope before clutching those of the "Condor." With such, what chance will there be for working the ship in a storm ?

But there is a danger he dreads far more than the mismanagement of her ropes and sails, — insubordination. Even thus early it has shown itself among the men, and may at any moment break out into open mutiny. All the more likely from the character of Capt. Lantanas, with which he has become well acquainted. The Chilian skipper is an easy-going man, given to reading books of natural history, and collecting curiosities, as evinced by his brace of Bornean apes, and other specimens picked up during his trading-trip to the Indian Archipelago, — a man in every way amiable, but just on this account the most unfitted to control a

crew such as that he has shipped for the voyage to Valparaiso. Absorbed in his studies, he takes little notice of them, leaving them in the hands, and to the control, of his *piloto*, Harry Blew. But Harry, though a typical British sailor, is not one of the happy-go-lucky kind. He has been intrusted with something more than the navigation of the Chilian ship, — with the charge of two fair ladies in her cabin; and, although these have not yet shown themselves on deck, he knows they are safe, and well waited on by the black cook, who is also steward, and who, under his rough sable skin, has a kindly, gentle heart. It is when thinking of his cabin-passengers, that the “Condor’s” first officer feels apprehensive, and then not from the incapacity of her sailors, but their bold, indeed almost insolent behavior. Their having shown something of this at first might have been excusable, or, at all events, capable of explanation: they had not yet sobered down. Fresh from the streets of San Francisco, so lawless and licentious, it could not be expected. But most of them have been now some days aboard, no drink allowed them save the regular ration, with plenty of every thing else. Kind treatment from captain and mate, and still they show scowling and discontented, as if the slightest slur, an angry word, even a look, would make mutiny among them. “What can it mean? What do the men want?”

A score of times has Harry Blew thus interrogated himself, without receiving satisfactory answer. It is to obtain this he is now gliding silently about the “Condor’s” decks, and here and there concealing himself in shadow, in the hope he may overhear some speech that will give him a clew to the conspiracy, if conspiracy it be. And in this hope he is not deceived or

disappointed, but successful even beyond his most sanguine expectations ; for he at length gets the clew, not only to the insubordination of the crew, but all else that has been puzzling him. And a strange problem it is, its solution positively appalling. He gets it while standing under a piece of sail-cloth, spread from the rail to the top of the round-house, rigged up by the carpenter as a sun-screen while doing some work during the heat of the day, and so left. The sky being now starless and pitch-black, with this additional obstruction to light, Harry Blew stands in obscurity impenetrable to the eye of man. One passing so close as almost to touch could not possibly see him.

Nor is he seen by two men, who, like himself, sauntering about, have come to a stop under the spread canvas. Unlike him, however, they are not silent, but engaged in conversation, in a low tone, still loud enough for him to hear them, — every word said. And to every one he listens with interest so engrossing, that his breath is well-nigh suspended.

He understands what is said, all the easier from their talk being carried on in English, — his own tongue ; for they who converse are Jack Striker and Bill Davis. And, long before their dialogue comes to an end, he has not only obtained intelligence of what has hitherto perplexed him, but gets a glimpse of something beyond, — that which sets his hair on end, and causes the blood to curdle in his veins.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

TWO "SYDNEY DUCKS."

JACK STRIKER and Bill Davis are two "Sydney Ducks," who have seen service in the chain-gangs of Australia. They have also served as sailors, this being their original calling. But since a certain voyage to the Swan River settlement, — in which they were but passengers, sent out at the expense of H. B. Majesty's government, — they have had aversion to the sea, and only take to it intermittently, when under the necessity of working passage from port to port for other purposes. Escaping from a colonization forced upon them, and quite uncongenial, they had thus made their way into California, and after a trip up the Sacramento, and a spell at gold-seeking, with but indifferent success, had returned to San Francisco; in the Queen City of the Pacific finding ways of life they liked better than the hard labor of pick, pan, and cradle. Loafing among its low sailor-haunts, they encountered a pleasant surprise, by meeting a man who offered them five thousand dollars each to ship in a merchant-vessel, for the "short trip" to Panama. A wage so disproportioned to the service asked for, of course required some explanation, which the princely contractor gave, after having secured their confidence. It proved satisfactory to the Sydney Ducks, who, without further questioning, entered into the contract. The result was their getting conducted aboard the

“Condor,” she being the vessel bound for the port of Panama.

He who had given them this handsome engagement was not the owner of the ship, no more was he her captain or supercargo, but a gentleman representing himself authorized to accept their services for a somewhat different purpose than the mere working of her sails, and who promised to pay them in a peculiar manner, — under certain contingencies, even more than the sum stipulated, notwithstanding its magnificence. The strange conditions were partially made known to them before setting foot on the ship; and though an honest sailor would have scornfully rejected them, even in the face of such tempting reward, Jack Striker and Bill Davis accepted them without scruple or cavil; for they are not honest sailors, but ex-convicts, criminals still unreformed, and capable of any misdeed, — piracy, or murder, — if only money can be made thereby.

Since coming aboard the “Condor,” and mixing with others of her crew, they have had additional insight into the character of their contract, and the services required of them. They find that several other men have been engaged in a somewhat similar way, and at a like bounteous wage; for a while wondering at it, till after a mutual comparison of notes, and putting together their respective scraps of intelligence, with surmises added, they arrive at a pretty accurate understanding of how the land lies, and why their *entre-preneur* — who is no other than the second mate, Padilla — has been so liberal.

Striker, who has seen more of the world, and is the elder of the two Sydney Ducks, has been the first to obtain this added information; and it is for the purpose

of communicating it to his old chum of the chain-gang, he has asked the latter to step aside with him. And, chancing to be cast together in the middle watch, an opportunity offers, which the older convict has all that day been looking out for.

Davis, of more talkative habit, is the first to break silence, which he does on the instant of their coming under the awning.

“Well, old pal! What d’ye think of our present employ? Better than breakin’ stone for them Swan River roads, with twenty pound of iron chain clinkin’ at a fellow’s feet. An’t it?”

“Better’n that, yes, but not’s good as it might be.”

“Tut, man, you’re always grumblin’. Five thousand dollars for a trip that isn’t like to run up to a month, not more than a fortnight or three weeks I should say! If that don’t content you, I’d like to know what would.”

“Well, mate, I’ll tell ’ee what wud. Thirty thousand for the trip. An’ Jack Striker an’t like to be saterfied wi’ any thin’ short o’ that sum.”

“You’re joking, Jack?”

“No, I an’t, Bill. As you knows, I’m not o’ the jokin’ sort, an’ now mean what I say, sartin as I ever meant any thin’ in my life. Both me an’ you oughter get thirty thousand apiece o’ this yellow stuff, — that at the werry leest.”

“Why, there wouldn’t be enough to go round the lot that’s in.”

“Yes, thar wud, an’ will. Old as I im, I hain’t yit quite lost hearin’. My yeers are as sharp as they iver wor, an’ jist as reliable. Larst night I heerd a whisper pass atween Padilla an’ another o’ them Spanish chaps, that’s put me up to somethink.”

“What did you hear?”

“That the swag’ll tot up to the total o’ three hundred thousand dollars.”

“The deuse it will! Why, they said it wasn’t half that much! Padilla himself told me so.”

“No matter what he’s told you. I tell ye now it’s all o’ the six figures I’ve sayed. In coorse it’s their interest to make it out small as they possibly can, seein’ as our share’s to be a purcentage. I know better now, an’, knowin’, it, an’t agoin’ to stan’ none o’ their nonsense. Neyther shud you, Bill. We both o’ us are ’bout to risk the same as any o’ the tothers.”

“That’s true enough.”

“In coorse it is! An’, bein’ so, we oughter share same as them; can, an’ will, if we stick well thegither. It’s jest as eezy one way as tother.”

“There’s something in what you say, mate.”

“Theer’s every thin’ in it, an’ nothin’ more than our rights. As I’ve sayed, we all risk the same, — an’ that’s gettin’ our necks stretched. For, if we make a mucker o’ the job, it’ll be a hangin’ matter, sure. For I dar say their’s got to be blood spilt afore it’s finished.”

“What would you advise our doing? You know, Jack, I’ll stand by you, whatever you go in for.”

“Well, I want it to be a fair divide all round; de-tarmined it shall be. Why shud the four Spanish fellas get a dollar moren us others. As I’ve obsarved, two o’ them — Gomez an’ Hernandez — have set their eyes on the weemen folks. It’s eezy to see that’s part o’ their game. Beside, I heerd them talkin’ o’t. Gomez be arter the light girl; an’ Hernandez, the dark un. Well, they may do as they like, for all I care. But that are

all the more reezun why they oughtent be so greedy 'bout the shinin' stuff. As for Mister Gomez, it's plain he's the head man o' the lot; an' 'the second mate, who engaged us, is only like the others, an' 'pears to be controlled by him. 'Twar 'tween them two I overheard the confab; Gomez tellin' Padilla that the dust lyin' snug in the cabin-lockers was full valley for three hunderd thousan'. An', as their's eleven o' us to share, that 'ud be nigh on thirty thousan' apiece, if my 'rithmetic an't out o' reckonin'. Bill Davis, I say, we oughter stan' up for our rights."

"Certainly we should. But there'll be difficulty in getting them, I fear."

"Not a bit, not a morsel, — if we stick out for 'em. The four Spanyards means to go snacks 'mong themselves. But their be seven o' us outsiders; an', when I tell the others what I've told you, they'll be all on our side — if they an't the silliest o' fools."

"They won't be that, I take it: a difference of twenty thousand dollars, or so, in their favor, will make them sensible enough. But what's to be the upshot, or, as they call it in the theatre play-bills, what's the programme?"

"Well, mate, so far as I've been put up to't, we're to run on till we get down the coast, somewheer near the Issmus o' Panyma. Their we'll sight land; an', soon's we do, the ship's to be scuttled, we first securin' the swag, an' takin' it ashore in one o' the boats. We're to land on some part o' the coast that's known to Gomez, he says. Then we're to make for some town, when we've got things straight for puttin' in appearance in a explainable way. Otherways, we might get pulled up; an' all our trouble 'ud be for nowt, worse, — every man jack on us would have a good chance to swing for't."

“And the young ladies?”

“They’re to go along wi’ Gomez an’ Hernandez. How they mean to manage it, Jack Striker can’t tell ye. They’ll be a trouble, no doubt, as always is wi’ weemen; an’ it be a pity we’re hampered wi’ ’em — moren that, it’s reg’lar dangersome. They may get the hul kit o’ us into a scrape. Howsever, we’ll hev to take our chances, since theer’s no help for it. The two chaps ’pear to be reg’lar struck with ’em. Well, let ’em carry off the gurls, an’ welcome. As I’ve sayed, thet oughter make ’em less objectin’ to a fair divide o’ the dust.”

“What’s to be done with the others, — the old Spaniard and skipper, with the black cook and first mate?”

“They’re to go down wi’ the ship. The intenshun is, to knock all o’ ’em on the head soon’s we come in sight o’ land.”

“Well, Jack, for the first three I don’t care a brass farthing. They’re foreigners and blacks, therefore nothing to us. But, as Blew chances to be a countryman of ours, I’d rather it didn’t go so hard with him.”

“Balderdash, Bill Davis! What have you or me to do wi’ feelins o’ that sort? Countryman, indeed! A fine country, as starves ten millions o’ the like o’ us two, an’, if we try to take what by nateral right’s our own, sends us out o’ it wi’ handcuffs round our wrists, an’ iron jewelry on our ankles! All stuff an’ psalm-singin’ that ’bout one’s own country, an’ fella-countrymen! If we let him off, we might meet him somewhere when we an’t a-wantin’ to. He’ll have to be served same as the tother three. There be no help for’t, if we don’t want to have the hemp roun’ our thrapples.”

“I suppose you’re right, Striker; though it does seem a pity too. But what reason have the Spaniards for keepin’ the thing back? Why should they wait till we get down near Panama? As the yellow stuff’s lyin’ ready, sure it might be grabbed at once, an’ then we’d have more time to talk of how it’s to be divided? What’s the difficulty about our taking it now?”

“’Tan’t the takin’ o’t. That’ll be eezy work; an’, when the time comes, we’ll have it all our own way. We could toss the four overboard in the skippin’ o’ a flea. But then how’s the ship to be navvygated without the skipper an’ first mate?”

“Surely we can do without them?”

“That’s jest what we can’t. O’ all our crew, their’s only them two as hev the knowledge o’ charts an’ chronometers, an’ the like; for him as is actin’ second confesses he don’t know nothin’ ’bout sich: tharfor, though we’re in a good soun’ craft, without the skipper, or Blew, we’d be most as good as helpless. We’re now on the biggest o’ all oceans, an’, if she stood on the wrong tack, we might never set eyes on land, or only to be cast away on some dangersome shore — or, what ’ud be bad as eyther, get overhauled by some man-o’-war, an’ not able to gie account o’ ourselves. Their’s the diffyculty, don’t ’ee see, Bill? So the Spaniards hev agreed to let things alone till we’ve ran down nigh Panyma. Theer Gomez says their be a long streetch o’ uninhabited coast, wher we’ll be safe goin’ ashore in the night.”

“Well, I suppose that’ll be the best way, after all. If a man has the money, it dou’t make much difference where he sets foot on shore; an’ no doubt we’ll find sport down at Panyma good as anywhere else.”

“Theer ye be right, Bill. When a cove’s flush,

there's pleasin' everywhere. Gold's the only thing as gives it."

"With the prospect of such big plunder, we can afford to be patient," says Davis resignedly.

"I an't agoin' to be patient for the paltry five thousand they promised. No, Bill! neyther must you. We've equal rights wi' the rest; an' we must stick out for 'em."

"Soon as you say the word, Jack, I'm at your back. So'll all the others, who're in the same boat with ourselves."

"They oughter, an' belike will; tho' theer's a weak-witted fool or two as may take talkin' into it. I means to go at 'em at once, soon's I've finished my trick at the wheel, the which'll soon be on. Ay! theer's the bell now: I must go aft. When I come off, Bill, be you up by the night-heads, an' have that Dutch chap as is in our watch 'long wi' ye, an' also the Dane. They're the likeliest to go in wi' us at once, an' I'll first broach it to them."

"All right, old pal! I'll be there."

The two plotters step out from under the awning; Striker turning aft to take his "trick" at the wheel, the other sauntering off in the direction of the fore-castle.

Harry Blew stands aghast, his hair on end, the blood coursing chill through his veins. No wonder, after listening to such a revelation! A plot diabolical, a scheme of atrocity unparalleled, comprising three horrible crimes,—robbery, the abduction of women, and the murder of men, among these himself.

Now knows he the cause of the crew's insubordination, too clearly comprehends it,—three hundred thousand dollars of gold-dust stowed in the cabin-

lockers. News to him ; for Capt. Lantanas had not made him acquainted with the fact, the treasure having been shipped before his coming aboard, in fact, on that same night when he went after Silvestre. At the very time he was knocking at the ship-agent's office-door, Don Thomas, with some trusty watermen, were engaged in getting it aboard the Chilian ship.

An unfortunate arrangement, after all, and now too certain of ending disastrously, not only for Don Gregorio, but those dear to him, with others less interested, yet linked to his fate. Though the ex-man-of-war's-man is neither doubtful nor incredulous of what he has just heard, it is some time before his mind can grasp all the details. So filled is he with astonishment, it is natural his thoughts should be confused, and himself excited. But soon he reflects calmly, and, revolving every thing over, perceives clearly enough what are the crimes to be committed, with the motives for committing them. There can be no ambiguity about the nature of the nefarious conspiracy. It has all been hatched and pre-arranged on shore ; and the scoundrels have come aboard specially for its execution. The four Spaniards, or Californians as he believes them to be, must have had knowledge of the treasure being shipped, and, in their plan to appropriate it, have engaged the others to assist them. Striker's talk has told this, while revealing also the still more fiendish designs of abduction and murder.

The prospect is appalling ; and, as he reflects upon it, Harry Blew feels his heart sink within him, strong though that heart be. For a dread fate is impending over himself, as well as those he has promised to protect.

How is it to be averted? How is he to save them?
How save himself?

These questions come crowding together, and repeat themselves over and over, but without suggesting answer. He cannot think of one that is satisfactory: he sees no chance of escape. The crew are all in the plot, every man of them,—either as principals or engaged assistants. The conversation of the two convicts has shown this. The second mate same as the rest, which to him, Harry Blew, causes no surprise. He had already made up his mind about Padilla, observing his sympathy with those who had begun to show insubordination. He had also noticed, that, in whatever was up among them, Gil Gomez was the directing spirit, Velarde next in influence; both dominating Padilla, notwithstanding his superior authority as one of the ship's officers; while Hernandez seemed to be controlled by all three. The last, Harry Blew has discovered to be a landsman, with no sea-experience whatever; when found out, excusing himself on the plea that he wished to work his passage to Panama. The position of the other seven is understood by what Striker said. All are in the scheme of pillage and murder, though not to be equally rewarded.

Bringing them one after another before his mind; recalling his experience of them, which, though short, has given him some knowledge of their character, the "Condor's" first officer cannot think of one likely to take sides with him. They are all men of iniquity; and, in defending the innocent, he would have to stand alone; for it would amount to almost that, with no other help than Capt. Lantanas, Don Gregorio, and the cook,—the first, a slight slender man, with just strength enough to handle a telescope; the second, aged, and something of an invalid; the third, for fighting-purposes, scarce worth thinking of. His fidel-

ity could be depended upon to the death; but he is also an oldish man, and would count for little in a conflict with such desperadoes as those who design making themselves masters of the ship.

All these points present themselves to the mind of the first mate clearly, impressively. A thought of telling Capt. Lantanas what he has discovered, and which came naturally, he no longer entertains. The trusting Chilian skipper would scarce give credit to such an atrocious scheme; and if he did, in all likelihood it would result in his taking some rash step that would but quicken their action, and bring sooner on the fatal catastrophe. No: 'twill never do to make him acquainted with the danger, great as it is. Nor yet should Don Gregorio know of it. The terrible secret must be kept from both, and carefully. Either of them aware of it, and in an hour after all might be over, — the tragedy enacted, and its victims consigned to the sea, — himself, Harry Blew, being one of them.

Still crouching under the sail, he trembles, as he conjures up the picture of that fearful fate that seems so certainly before him. In the midst of the open ocean, or close to land, the scene will be all the same, — the girls seized; the captain, Don Gregorio, the cook, and himself, shot down, or poniarded; after that, the gold dragged out of the lockers, the vessel scuttled and sunk, a boat alone left to carry the pirates ashore, with their spoils and captives. Contemplating such a scene, even only in imagination, it is not strange that the "Condor's" first officer feels a shivering throughout his frame. He feels it in every fibre. And reflection fails to give relief, since it suggests to him no plan for saving himself. On the contrary, the more he dwells on it, the more he sees the danger, — sees it in

all its stark naked reality. Against such odds a conflict would be hopeless. It could only end in death to all who have been singled out, himself perhaps the first.

For a time he stands in silent cogitation, with despair almost paralyzing his heart. He is unable to think steadily or clearly. Doubtful, unfeasible schemes shape themselves in his mind, or idle thoughts flit across his brain, all the while wild emotions coursing through his soul.

At length, and after prolonged reflection, he makes a resolve. As his face is in shadow, its expression cannot be seen; but, judging by the words that are muttered by his lips, it is one that should be unworthy of a British sailor, in short, that of a *traitor*. For his soliloquy seems to show that he has yielded to craven fear, intends surrendering up the sacred trust reposed in him, and along with it his honor.

The words are, —

“There’s no chance for that, nor yet for the savin’ of my own life, except by castin’ my lot in along wi’ them. I ll do it — I’ll do it!”



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PLOT UPON PLOT.

THE "Condor" is sailing with a light breeze some points abaft the beam. Jack Striker is at the helm; and, as the sea is smooth, he finds it easy steering, having little to do but keep her steady by taking an occasional squint at the compass-card. The moon, which has just risen, shining in his face, shows it to be that of a man over fifty, with the felon in its every line and lineament. It is beardless, pock-pitted, with thick shapeless lips, broad hanging jowls, nostrils agape, and nose flattened like the snout of a bull-dog. Eyes green, both bleary, one of them bloodshot; for all, eyes that by his own boast can "see into a millstone as far as the man who picks it." He has not been many minutes at his post when he sees some one approaching from the waist of the ship, — a man whom he makes out to be the first mate.

"Comin' to con me," growls the ex-convict. "Don't want any o' his connin', not I. Jack Striker can keep a ship on her course well's him, or any other 'board o' this craft."

He is on the starboard side of the wheel, while the mate approaches along the port gangway, and, after springing up to the poop-deck, stops opposite the steersman.

"Well, Striker," he says; "not much trouble with her to-night. She's goin' free too, with the wind in

the right quarter. We ought to be makin' good nine knots?"

"All o' that, I daresay, sir," rejoins Striker, mollified by the affable manner in which the first officer has addressed him. "The bark an't a bad un to go, though she be a queery-rigged craft as ever I war aboard on."

"You've set foot on a goodish many, I should say, judgin' from the way ye handle a helm. I see you understan' steerin' a ship."

"I oughter, master," answers the helmsman, further flattered by the compliment to his professional skill. "Jack Striker's had a fair show o' schoolin' to that bizness."

"Been a man-o'-war's-man, han't you?"

"Ay, all o' that! Any as doubts it can see the warrant on my back, an' welcome to do so. Plenty o' the cat's claws theer; an' I don't care who knows it."

"Neyther need ye. Many a good sailor can show the same. For myself, I han't had the cat; but I've seed man-o'-war sarvice, an' got rough treatment too. An' I've seed sarvice on ships man-o'-war's men have chased, likin' that sort a little better: I do."

"Indeed!" exclaims the ex-convict, turning his eyes with increased interest on the man thus frankly confessing himself. "Smuggler? or may be slaver?"

"Little bit o' both. An', as you say 'bout the cat, I don't care a toss-up who knows o't. It's been a hardish world wi' me; plenty o' ups an' downs, the downs of'ener than the ups. Just now, things are lookin' sort o' uppish. I've got my berth here 'count o' the scarcity o' hands in San Francisco, an' the luck o' knowin' how to take sights, an' keep a log. Still the pay an't much, considerin' the chances left behind

I daresay I'd 'a done a deal better by stayin' in Californy, an' goin' on to them gold-diggin's up in the mountains."

"You han't been theer, han't ye?"

"No. Never went a cable's length ayont the town o' San Francisco."

"Maybe jest as well ye didn't, Master Blew. Me an' Bill Davis tried that dodge. We went all the way to the washin's on Feather River, but foun' no gold, only plenty o' hard work, wi' precious little to eat, an' less in the way o' drink. Neyther o' us likin' the life, we put back for the port."

For all his frankness in confessing to the cat-o-nine-tails on board a war-ship, Striker says nothing about a rope of a different kind he and his chum Davis were very near getting around their necks on the banks of that same Feather River, and from which they escaped by a timely retreat upon San Francisco.

"Well," rejoins Blew in a tone of resignation; "maybe I've did the wisest thing, after all, in not goin' that way. I might 'a come back empty-handed, same as yourself an' Davis. Ye say liquor was scarce up there? That would never 'a done for me. I must have my reg'lar allowance, or— Well, no use sayin' what. As an old man-o'-war's man, you can understan' me, Striker. An' as the same, I suppose you won't object to takin' a tot now?"

"Two, for that matter," promptly responds Striker, like all his kind, drouthy.

"Well, here's a drop o' rum, — the best Santa Cruz. Help yourself!"

Harry Blew presents a black-jack bottle to the helmsman, who, detaching one hand from the wheel, takes hold of the bottle, and carries it to his lips. After

keeping it there for a prolonged spell, he returns it to its owner, who, for the sake of sociability, takes a drink himself. This done, the dialogue is renewed, and progresses in even a more friendly way than before, the Santa Cruz having opened the heart of the "Sydney Duck" to a degree of familiarity; while, on his side, the mate, throwing aside all reserve, lets himself down to a level with the foremastman. It ends in their establishing a confidence, mutual and complete, of that character known as "thickness between thieves." Blew first strikes the chord that puts their spirits *en rapport*, by saying, —

"Ye tell me, Striker, that ye've had hard times an' some severe punishment: so's had Harry Blew. An' ye say ye don't care about that; no more says he. In that, we're both 'o us in the same boat; an' now we're in the same ship, — you a sailor afore the mast, I first officer. But, for all the difference in our rank, we can work thegether. An' there's a way we can both o' us do better. Do you want me to tell it ye?"

"Ay, ay, tell it! Jack Striker's ears are allus open to hear how he can better his sittivation in life. He's a listener."

"All right! I've observed you're a good hand at the helm. Would ye be as good to go in for a job that'll put a pile o' money in your pocket?"

"That depends, not on what sort o' a job, — I don't mean that, — but what money, how much?"

"Puttin' it in gold, as much as you can carry; ay, enough to make you stagger under it."

"An' you ask if I'm good for a job like that? Werry funny questyin thet be, 'specially puttin' it to ole Jack Striker. He's good for't, wi' the gallows starin' him full in the face. Darned if he an't!"

“Well, I thought you wouldn’t be the one to be basket-faced ’bout it. It’s a big thing I have on hand; an’ there’ll be a fortune for all who go in wi’ me.”

“Show Jack Striker the chance o’ goin’ in, an’ he’ll show you a man as knows no backin’ out.”

“Enough, shipmate. The chance is close to hand, — aboard o’ this ship. Below, in her cabin-lockers, there’s stowed somethin’ like half a ton o’ glitterin’ gold-dust. It belongs to the old Spaniard that’s passenger; an’ what’s to hinder us to lay hands on it: If we can only get enough o’ the crew to say yes, there needs be no difficulty. Them as won’t ’ll have to stan’ aside. Though, from what I see o’ them, it’s like they’ll all cut in. Divided square round, there’ll be between twenty an’ thirty thousand dollars apiece. Does that tempt ye, Striker?”

“Rayther. Wi’ thirty thousand dollars, I’d ne’er do another stroke o’ work.”

“You needn’t, then. You can have all o’ that by joinin’ in, an’ helpin’ me to bring round the rest. Do you know any o’ them you could sound — with safety, I mean?”

“Two or three; one sartin, — my ole chum, Bill Davis. He can be trusted wi’ a secret o’ throat-cuttin’, let alone a trifle such as you speak o’. An’ now, Master Blew, since you’ve seed fit to confide in me, I’m agoin’ to gie ye a bit o’ my confidence. It’s but fair atween two men as hev got to understan’ one the tother. I may’s well tell ye that I knew all about the stuff in the cabin-lockers. Me an’ Davis war talkin’ o’ t jist afore I come to the wheel. You an’t the only one as hez set their heart on hevin’ it. Them Spanish chaps hez got it all arranged arready, an’ had afore they put fut ’board this heer bark. Thar’s the four

on 'em, as I take it, all standin' in equal; whiles the rest o' the crew war only to get so much o' a fixed sum."

"Striker, ye 'stonish me!"

"Well, I'm only tellin' ye what be true. I'm glad you're agreeable to go in wi' us; the which'll save trouble, an' yer own life as well. For I may tell ye, master, that they'd made up thar minds to send ye to the bottom 'long wi' the skipper an' the ole Spanyol."

"That's a nice bit of news to hear, by Jove! Well, mate, I'm thankful to ye for communicatin' it. Lor! it's lucky for me we've this night chanced to get talkin' together."

"Thar maybe luck in't all roun'. Bill an' me'd made up our minds to stan' out for a equal divide o' the dust,—like shares to ivery man. Shud there be any dispute 'bout that bein' fair, wi' you on our side, we'll eezy settle it our way, spite o' them Spanyards. If they refuse to agree, an' it come to fightin', then Jack Striker's good for any two on 'em."

"An' Harry Blew for any other two. No fear but we can fix that. How many do you think will be with us?"

"Most all, I shud say, 'ceptin' the Spanyards themselves. It consarns the rest same's it do us. 'Tall events, we're bound to ha' the majority."

"When do you propose we shud begin broachin' it to them?"

"Straight away, if you say the word. I'll try some o' 'em soon's I've went off from here. Thar be several on the watch as'll be takin' a tot together 'fore we turns in. No time better nor now."

"True: so at them at once, Striker. But mind ye, mate: be cautious how ye talk to them, an' don't com-

mit ayther of us too far, till you've larnt their temper. I'll meet ye on the first dog-watch to-morrow; then you can tell me how the land's likely to lie."

"All right! I'll see to't in the smooth way. You can trust Jack Striker for that."

"Take another pull o' the Santa Cruz. If this trip prove prosperous in the way we're plannin' it, nayther you nor me'll need to go without the best o' good liquor for the rest o' our lives."

Again Striker clutches at the proffered bottle, and holds it to his head, this time till he has drained it dry. Returned to him empty, Harry Blew tosses it overboard. Then parting from the steersman, he commences moving forward, as with the design to look after other duties. As he steps out from under the shadow of the spanker, the moon, gleaming athwart his face, shows on it an expression which neither pencil nor pen could depict. Difficult indeed to interpret it. The most skilled physiognomist would be puzzled to say whether it is the reproach of conscious guilt, or innocence driven to desperation.



CHAPTER XXXIX.

SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE.

IN the "Condor's" fore-castle. It is her second night since leaving San Francisco, and the second watch is on duty; the men of the first having come down from the deck. That on duty is Padilla's; in it Gomez, Hernandez, Velarde, and the two sailors of nationality unknown. The off-watch consists of Striker, Davis, the Frenchman who is called La Crosse, with the Dutchman, and Dane. All five are in the fore-peak; the chief mate, as they suppose, having retired to his cabin.

They are waiting till those on the watch not required for deck-duty come below. All of these have had intimation they will be wanted in the fore-castle, a summons that to most of the second watch seems mysterious. They obey it, notwithstanding; and after a time the two sailors come down, — the nondescripts without name, one passing under the sobriquet of "Old Tarry;" the other having had bestowed upon him the equally distinctive, but less honorable, appellation of "Slush." Shortly after, the second mate, Padilla, makes his appearance, along with him Velarde.

"Theer be two not yit among us," says Striker.
"In coorse, one's at the wheel."

"Yes. Gomez is there," responds Padilla.

"Where be Hernandez?"

"I don't know. Likely along with him."

“Don’t much matter,” pats in Davis. “I daresay we can settle the thing without either. You begin, Jack, and tell Mr. Padilla and the rest what we’ve been talking about.”

“’Twon’t take a very long time to tell it,” responds Striker. “Theer be no great need for wastin’ words. All I’ve got to say are, that the *swag in this ship shud be eekilly divided.*”

Padilla starts, Velarde doing the same. “What do you mean?” asks the former, putting on an air of surprised innocence.

“I means what I’ve sayed, — that the swag shud be eekilly divided.”

“And yet I don’t understand you.”

“Yis, ye do! Come, master mate, ’tain’t no use shammin’ ignorance, not wi’ Jack Striker, ’tall events. He be too old a bird to get cheated wi’ chaff. If ye want to throw dust into my eyes, it must be o’ the sort that’s stowed aft in the cabin. Now, d’ye understand me?”

Padilla looks grave, so does Velarde. Old Tarry and Slush show no sign of feeling; both being already apprised of the demand Striker intended to make, and having given their promise to back it.

“Well,” says the second mate, “you appear to be talking of some gold-dust; and I suppose you know all about it?”

“That we do!” responds Striker.

“Well, what then?” asks Padilla.

“Only what I’ve sayed,” rejoins the Sydney Duck. “If you weesh, I can say it over ’gain. That their yellow grit shud be measured out to the crew o’ this craft share an’ share alike, even hands all roun,’ without respectin’ o’ persons. An’ it shall be so deevided — shell, an’ must.”

“Yes,” indorses Davis, with like emphatic affirmation. “It shall, and it must!”

“*Pe gar*, must it!” adds the Frenchman, followed in the same strain by Stronsen the Dane, and Van Houten the Dutchman, chorused by Tarry and Slush.

“It an’t no use your stannin’ out, masters,” continues Striker, addressing himself to Padilla and Velarde. “Ye see, the majority’s again ye; an’ in all cases o’ the kind, wheresomever I’ve seed ’em, the majority means the right.”

“Certainly it means that!” echo the others—all save Padilla and Velarde, who remain silent and scowling.

“Yis,” continues Striker; “an’ theer be one who an’t present among us, as oughter have his share too.”

“Whom are you speaking of?” demands Padilla.

“I needn’t tell ye,” responds Striker. “If I an’t mistook, that’s him comin’ down; an’ he can speak for hisself.”

At the words a footstep is heard upon the fore-castle-stair. A pair of legs is seen descending, after them a body, the body of Harry Blew.

Padilla looks scared; Velarde the same. Both fancy their conspiracy discovered, their scheme blown, and that Striker, with all that talk, has been only misleading them. They are undeceived on hearing what the mate has to say. Striker elicits it by repeating the conversation that has passed.

Thus Harry Blew gives rejoinder: “I’m with ye, shipmates, to the end—be that sweet or bitter. Striker talks straight; an’ his seems the only fair way of settlin’ the question. The majority must decide. There’s two not here, an’ they’ve got to be consulted. They’re both at the wheel. Therefore let’s all go aft, an’ talk the thing there. There’s no fear for our bein’ inter-

rupted. The skipper's asleep; an' we've got the ship to ourselves."

So saying, Blew leads up the ladder, the rest starting from their seats, and crowding after.

Once on deck, they cluster around the forehatch, and there stop; the first mate having something to say before going aft. The second does not take part in this conference, but, stealing past unseen, glides on towards the after-part of the ship. Soon the others proceed in the same direction, in a straggled string, which again contracts into a knot as they reach the open quarter-deck, by the capstan, there again stopping. And there, the moonlight, falling full upon their faces, betrays the expression of men in mutiny, but mutiny unopposed. On the quarter-deck no one questions them; for the traitorous first officer has spoken truly, the captain is asleep. They have the ship to themselves.

It is Gomez who is at the wheel, his "trick" having commenced at the changing of watches. He is not alone, but with Hernandez beside him. Neither is yet aware of the strike that has taken place; though during the day they have heard some whisperings, and are half expecting trouble with their subordinates.

The theme which engages them is altogether different; beauty, not booty, being the subject of their discourse, which is carried on in a low tone. It is Hernandez who first introduces it, asking, —

"About the girls? What are we to do with them after getting ashore?"

"Marry them, of course," promptly answers the other. "That's what I mean doing with the beautiful Doña Carmen. Don't you intend the same with Iñez?"

"Of course, if I can."

“Can! There need be no difficulty about it, *camarado*.”

“I hope not; though I think there will, and a good deal. There’s certain to be some.”

“In what way?”

“Suppose they don’t give their consent?”

“A fig for their consent! They must consent. Don’t be letting that scare you. Whether they’re agreeable or not, we’ll have a marriage-ceremony, or the form of one, all the same. I can fix that, or I’m much mistaken about the place we’re going to, and the sort of men we shall meet. If the Padre Padierna be yet alive, he’ll marry me to Carmen Montijo without asking *her* any questions, or, if he did, caring what her answers might be. And, if he’s under ground, I’ve got another string to my bow in the young *cura* Gonzaga, who in my time had charge of souls in a *pueblita*, nearer the place where I hope we shall be able to make shore. And, should neither of these my old acquaintances turn up, there are no end of others who will be willing to tie the knot that’s to make you happy for life. I tell you, *hombre*, you’re steering straight towards an earthly paradise: you’ll find that in Santiago.”

“I hope it may be as you say.”

“You may rest sure of it. Once in the old Vera-guan town, with these girls as our wives, and they no longer able to question our calling them so, we can enter society without fear of showing our faces. And, with this big *bonanza* at our backs, we may lead a luxurious life there, or go anywhere else it pleases us. As for returning to your dear California, as you call it, you won’t care for that when you’ve become Benedict.”

“You’ve made up you’re mind, then, that we marry them?”

“Of course I have, and for certain reasons; otherwise I shouldn’t so much care, now that they’re in our power, and we can dictate terms to them. You can do as you please respecting marriage; though you have the same motive as myself for changing your *señorita* into a *señora*.”

“What do you allude to?”

“You forget that both these damsels have large properties in Spain, as worthy friend Martinez made me aware not long since. The Doña Carmen will inherit handsomely at her father’s death, which is much the same as saying now. I don’t refer to his gold, but the landed property he has elsewhere, — in Biscay, which, please the Fates, I shall some day look up, and take possession of. While the Doña Inez has no end of acres in Andalusia, besides whole streets of fine houses in Cadiz. To get all that, these girls must be our wives; otherwise we should have no claim to it, nor be able to show our faces in the Peninsula.”

“I’ve known all along about the Andalusian estates. The old usurer told me, too; said he’d advance money on them, if he were sure of my marrying the lady. But, if you believe me, it’s not altogether the money that’s moving me in this whole affair. I’m madly fond of the girl, — so fond, that, if she hadn’t a *claco* in the world, I would become her husband.”

“Say, rather, her master, as I intend to be of Carmen Montijo. Once we get ashore, I’ll teach her submission. The haughty dame will learn what it is to be a wife; and if not an obedient one, then, *por Dios!* she shall have a divorce — after I’ve squeezed out of her that Biscayan estate. Then she can go free, if it so please her. *Mira!* what’s up yonder?”

The interrogatory comes from his observing a group

of men assembled on the foredeck, alongside the hatch. The sky cloudless, with a full moon overhead, shows it to be composed of nearly, if not all, the crew. The light also displays them in earnest gesticulation; while their voices, borne aft, tell of some subject seriously debated.

What can it be? The men of the first watch, long since relieved, should be asleep in their bunks. Why are they now on deck? This of itself surprises the two at the wheel. And, while engaged in mutual interrogation, they perceive the second mate coming aft, as, also, that he makes approach in a hurried yet stealthy manner.

“What’s up?” asks Gomez.

“Trouble,” answers Padilla. “A mutiny among the men we engaged to assist us.”

“On what grounds?”

“They’ve got to know all about the gold-dust, even the exact quantity there is of it.”

“Indeed! And what’s their demand?”

“That we shall share it with them. They say they’ll have it so.”

“The deuse they do!”

“The old *ladrone*, Striker, began it. But, what will astonish you still more, the first mate knows all our plans, and’s agreed to go in along with us. He’s at the head of the mutineers, and insisting on the same thing. They swear, if we don’t divide equally, the strongest will take what they can. I’ve stolen aft to ask you what we’d best do.”

“They’re determined, are they?”

“To the death — they say so.”

“In that case,” mutters Gomez, after a moment or two spent in reflection, “I suppose we’ll have to yield

to their demands. I see no help for it. Go back, Padilla, and say something to pacify them. *Maldita!* this is an unexpected difficulty, ugly as sin."

Padilla is about to return to his discontented shipmates on the forward-deck, but is saved the journey, seeing them come aft. Nor do they hesitate to invade the sacred precincts of the quarter; for they have no fear of being forbidden. Soon they mount up to the poop-deck, and cluster around the wheel; the whole "Condor's" crew now present, mates as men,—all save the captain and cook. And all take part in the colloquy that succeeds, either by speech or gestures.

The debate is short, and the question in dispute soon decided. Harry Blew, backed by the ex-convicts, talks with determination, confirming it by emphatic exclamations. The others, with interests identical, stand by the two chief speakers, backing them up with words and cries of encouragement.

"Shipmates," says the first officer, "this gold we're all after should be equally partitioned between us."

"Must be!" adds Striker with an oath. "Share an' share alike. It's the only fair way, an' the only one we'll gie in to."

"Stick to that, Striker!" cries Davis: "we'll stand by ye."

"*Pe gar! certainement,*" indorses the Frenchman. "Vat for no? *Sacré bleu!* ve vill. I am for *les droits de matelot, le vrai démocratique. Vive le fair play!*"

Dane and Dutchman, with Tarry and Slush, speak in the same strain. The scene is short as violent. The Spaniards, perceiving themselves in a minority, and a position that threatens unpleasant consequences, give way, and consent to an equal distribution of the anticipated spoil; after which the men belonging to the off-

watch retire to the fore-castle, and there betake themselves to their bunks, while the others scatter about the ship.

Gil Gomez remains at the wheel, his "trick" not yet being over, Hernandez beside him. For a time the two are silent, their brows shadowed with gloom. It is not pleasant to lose some fifty thousand dollars apiece; and this they have as good as lost within the last ten minutes. Still there is a reflection to soothe them: they can think of other bright skies ahead.

Gomez first returning to speak of them, says, —

"Never mind, *amigo!* There will be money enough to serve our present purposes, all the same. And, for the future, we can both build on a good sure foundation."

"On what?"

"On our 'castles in Spain.'"

CHAPTER XL.

"LAND HO!"

THE voyage Carmen Montijo and Inez Alvarez are now making is not their first. Both have been at sea before, — in the passage out from Spain. But in Carmen's case that was long years ago; while Inez' absence from it has been too short to exempt her from the *mal de mer*; and both of them alike suffer from it. Stricken down by it, they are for several days confined to the cabin, most of the time to their state-room.

In their affliction, they have not been so badly attended. The old negro cook, acting also as steward,

comes up to the occasion ; for he has a tender heart under his rough sable skin, and waits upon them with delicate assiduity. And Capt. Lantanas is equally assiduous in his attentions, placing most of his time at their disposal. In due course they recover, and after a day or two waiting for fine weather, venture upon deck.

During their sojourn below, they have had no communication with any one, save Don Gregorio, — who has been, like themselves, invalided, — of course, also the captain and cook, but not any one of the officers or sailors of the ship. Indeed, on these they have never set eyes, excepting on that day when they sailed out through the Golden Gate.

And now they wish to see Harry Blew, and speak with him, but cannot. Whatever the reason, they have been a long time upon deck without finding an opportunity to communicate with him ; and they wait for it with irksome impatience. At length, however, it seems to have arrived. He is in the waist, with several of the sailors around him, occupied about one of the boats there slung upon its davits. While regarding him and his movements, they cannot avoid observing those beside him, nor help being struck by them ; not so much their movements, as their features, and the expression there exhibited. On no one of them is it pleasant, but, on the contrary, scowling and savage.

Just then Harry, separating from the sailors, is seen coming aft. It is in obedience to a message which the black cook has brought up out of the cabin, — an order from Capt. Lantanas for his first officer to meet him on the quarter-deck, and assist him in “ taking the sun.” But the skipper himself has not yet come up ; and, on reaching the quarter, the ex-man-o’-war’s

man, for the first time since he shipped on the Chilian craft, finds himself alone in the presence of the ladies. They salute him with an *empressement* which, to their surprise, is but coldly returned; only a slight bow, after which he appears to busy himself with the log-slate lying on the capstan-head. One closely scrutinizing him, however, would see that this is pretence; for his eyes are not on the slate, but furtively turned towards the ship's waist, watching the men, from whom he has just parted, and who seem to have their eyes upon him.

The young ladies thus repulsed, almost rudely as they take it, make no further attempt to bring on a conversation, but, forsaking their seats, retire down the companion-stairs, keeping on to their own state-room, there to talk over a disappointment that has given chagrin to both, but which neither can satisfactorily explain. The more they canvass the conduct of the Englishman, the stranger it seems to them, and the greater grows their chagrin. For now they feel almost sure that something must have happened, — that same thing, whatever it be, which dictated those parting compliments so cold and unfeeling. They seem doubly so now; for now they have evidence that such was the sentiment, — almost proof of it in the behavior of Harry Blew. He must know the feelings of his patron, — the preserver of his life, — how they stood at their last parting; and from this he has taken his cue to act as he is doing. Only in such sense can the ladies account for his reticence, if not rudeness.

They are hurt by it, stung to the quick, and never again during that voyage do they attempt entering into conversation with the first officer of the "Condor;" only on rare occasions showing themselves on deck, as

if they disliked looking upon him who too vividly reminds them of the treason of their lovers.

Can it be treason? And, if so, why? They ask these questions with eyes bent upon their fingers, — on rings encircling them, placed there by those they are thinking about. That of itself should be sufficient proof of their loyalty. Yet it is not; for love is above all things suspicious; however doting, ever doubting. Even on this evidence of its reliability they no longer lean, and can scarce console themselves with the hope hitherto sustaining them. Farther off than ever seems the realizing of that sweet expectation founded upon two words still ringing in their ears, “*Hasta Cadiz!*”

And thus the time somewhat tediously passes, till they hear two other words of cheerful import, “*Land Ho!*”

The cry comes from one of the sailors stationed on the foretopmast cross-trees of the “*Condor.*” Since sunrise, a lookout has been kept as the hands could be spared. It is now near noon; and land has just been sighted.

Capt. Lantanas is not quite certain of what land it is. He knows it as the Veraguan coast, but does not recognize the particular place. Noon coming on with an unclouded sky, enables him to catch the sun in its meridian altitude, and so make him sure of a good sight. And as the Chilian skipper is a skilled observer, having confidence in the observations he has made, the land sighted should be the Island of Coiba, or an islet that covers it, called Hicaron. Both are off the coast of Veragua, westward from Panama Bay, and about a hundred miles from its mouth. Into this the “*Condor*” is seeking to make entrance.

Having ciphered out his noon reckoning, the skipper

enters it in his log: "Lat. 7° 20' N. Long. 82° 12' W. Wind W.S.W. Light breeze." While penning these slight memoranda, little does he dream of what significance they may one day become. The night before, while taking an observation of the stars, could he have read them astrologically, he might have discovered many a chance against his ever making another entry in that log-book.

A wind west-sou'-west is favorable for entering the Bay of Panama. A ship steering around Cabo Mala, once she has weathered this much-dreaded headland, will have it on her starboard quarter. But the "Condor," coming down from north, gets it nearly abeam; and her captain, perceiving he has run a little too much coastwise, cries out to the man at the wheel, "Hard a-starboard! Put the helm down! Keep well off the land!" Saying this, he lights a cigarrito, for a minute or two amuses himself with his monkeys, always playful at meeting him; then, ascending to the poop-deck, he enters into conversation with company more refined—his lady passengers.

The sight of *terra firma*, with the thought of soon setting foot on it, makes all joyous; and Capt. Lantanas adds to their exhilaration by assuring them, that in less than twenty-four hours he will enter the Bay of Panama, and in twenty-four after bring his bark alongside the wharf of that ancient port, so oft pillaged by *filibusteros*.

After staying an hour or so on deck, indulging in cheerful conversation and pleasant anticipations, the tropic sun becoming too sultry for comfort, one and all retire to the cabin for shade, and to take *siesta*; the last being a habit of all Spanish Americans. The Chilean skipper is also accustomed to have his afternoon

nap. There is no need for his remaining longer on deck. He has determined his latitude, figured up his dead-reckoning, and set the "Condor" on her course. Sailing on a sea without icebergs, or other dangerous obstructions, he can go to sleep without any anxiety on his mind. But, before lying down, he summons the cook, and gives orders for a dinner, to be dressed in the very best style the ship's stores can furnish; this in celebration of the event of their having sighted land.

For a time the "Condor's" decks appear deserted. No one seen, save the helmsman at the wheel, and the second mate standing by his side. The sailors not on duty have betaken themselves to the fore-castle, or are lolling in their bunks; while those of the working-watch — with no work to do — have sought shady quarters, to escape from the sun's heat, now excessive; for the wind has been gradually dying away, and is now so light, that the vessel scarce makes steerage-way.

Odd, though, the direction in which the breeze is now striking her. It is upon the starboard quarter, instead of the beam as it should be, and as Capt. Lantanas left it on going below. Since then the wind has not shifted, even a single point: therefore the "Condor" must have changed her course. Beyond doubt has she done this; the man at the wheel having put the helm *up*, instead of *down*, causing her to draw closer to the land, in direct contradiction to the orders of her captain.

Is it ignorance on the steersman's part? No: it cannot be. Gil Gomez is at the helm, and, being a tolerable seaman, should know how to handle it. Besides, Padilla is standing by; and the second mate, whatever his moral qualities, is quite equal to the "conning"

of a ship. He cannot fail to observe that the bark is running too much inshore. Why has he not obeyed the orders left by the captain?"

The words passing between the two tell why.

"You know all about the coast in there?" queries Padilla, pointing to land looming up on the port-side.

"Every inch of it: at least, sufficient to make sure of a place where we can put in. That headland rising the port-bow is Punta Marieta. We must stand well in, taking care not to round it before evening. If we did, and the breeze should blow off shore, which it will, we'd have trouble to make back. Therefore we must hug close, and keep under shelter of the land. With this light wind we won't make much way before night-fall. Then, in the darkness, when they're below at dinner, we can put about, and run along till we sight a likely landing-place."

"So far as being looked after by Lantanas, we need have no fear. To-day the cabin-dinner is to be a grand spread. I overheard his orders to that effect. He intends making things pleasant for his passengers before parting with them. As a matter of course, he'll keep all night below, and get fuddled to boot, which may spare us some trouble. It looks like luck, doesn't it?"

"Not much matter about that," rejoins Gomez: "it'll have to end all the same. Only, as you say, the skipper below will make it a little easier, and save some unpleasantness in the way of blood-spilling. After dinner, the *señoritas* are sure to come on deck. They've done so every night; and I hope they won't make this one an exception. If Don Gregorio and the skipper stay below" —

The dialogue is interrupted by the striking of bells,

to summon the second dog-watch on duty. Soon as the change is effected, Harry Blew takes charge, Striker relieving Gomez at the wheel. Just at this instant the head of Capt. Lantanas shows above the coamings of the companion-stair. Gomez, seeing him, darts back to the wheel, gives a strong pull at the spokes, Striker assisting him, so as to bring the bark's head up, and the wind upon her beam.

"Good heavens!" exclaims the skipper angrily, rushing up the companion-stair, and out to the rail.

What sees he there to evoke such an exclamation? A high promontory, almost abutting against the bows of his ship. At a glance he identifies it as Punta Marieta; for he knows the headland well, but also knows it should not be on the bow, had his instructions to the steersman been attended to.

"*Que cosa?*" he cries in a bewildered way, rubbing his eyes to make sure they are not deceiving him, then interrogating, "What does this mean, sir? You've been keeping too close inshore: the very contrary to what I commanded. Helm down — hard!"

He at the wheel obeys, bringing the bark as close to the wind as she can bear. Then the skipper, turning angrily upon him, demands to know why his first instructions have not been carried out.

The ex-convict excuses himself, saying that he has just commenced his "trick," and knows nothing of what has been done before. He is keeping the "Condor" on the same course she was in when he took her from the last steersman.

The puzzled skipper again rubs his eyes, and takes a fresh look at the coast-line. He is as much mystified as ever. Still the mistake may have been his own; and, as he can perceive there will be no difficulty in yet clearing the point, his anger cools down.

Soon the "Condor," hauled close to the wind, regains her lost weatherway, sufficient for the doubling of Punta Marieta; and, before the last bells of the second dog-watch are sounded, she is in a fair course for rounding the cape. The difficulty has been removed by the wind veering suddenly round to the opposite point of the compass. For it is now near night, and the land-breeze has commenced blowing off shore. Well acquainted with the coast, and noticing the change of wind, Capt. Lantanas knows all danger is past; and, with the tranquillity of his temper restored, he goes back into his cabin to join his passengers at dinner, which is just in the act of being served.

CHAPTER XLI.

PANAMA, OR SANTIAGO?

IT is the hour for setting the first night-watch; and the bells have been struck, not to summon any sailor, but only intended for the ears of Capt. Lantanas in the cabin below, lest the absence of the usual sound should awake suspicion. The men of both watches are on deck, assembled by the manger-board, to take measures for carrying out their scheme of piracy and plunder, now on the eve of execution. The general plan is already understood by all: it but remains to settle some final details.

Considering the atrocity of their design, it is painful to see the first mate, Harry Blew, in their midst. O man! O British sailor! where is your gratitude?

What has become of your honor your oath? The first gone, the second disregarded, the last broken!

Soon as together, the pirates enter upon discussion. The first question which comes before them is about the place where they shall land. Upon this point there is difference of opinion. Some are for going ashore at once, on that part of the coast in sight. Others counsel running on till they enter Panama Bay. At the head of those in favor of the latter course is the chief mate; while the majority, controlled by Gomez and Padilla, take an opposite view. Gomez, who is their spokesman, argues in favor of landing, soon as they can find a suitable place, and making direct for Santiago, the chief town of Veragua. He gives his reasons, saying, —

“It isn’t over a good day’s journey from the coast. And we can reach it by an easy road. But that’s not the thing of greatest importance. What most concerns us is the safety of the place when we get to it; and I can answer for Santiago. Unless customs have changed since I used to trifle away some time there, and people too, we’ll find those who’ll show us hospitality. With the money at our disposal, — ay, a tenth part of it, — I could buy up the *alcalde* of the town, and every judge in the province.”

“That’s the sort of town for us, and country too!” exclaim several in a breath.

“We’ll first have to put about,” explains Gomez, “and run along the coast till we find an opening in the reef.”

“Yes,” rejoins Harry Blew, speaking satirically, and as if annoyed by the majority going against him. “An’, if we put about just now, we’ll stand a good chance of goin’ slap on them rocks on the port-beam.

Thar's a line o' whitecaps along shore far's I can see. How's a boat to be got through them? She'd be bilged to a sartinty."

"There are breakers," admits Gomez, "but not continuous. I remember there are several openings where a boat, or a ship for that matter, may be safely got through."

"*Vaya, camarados!*" exclaims Padilla with a gesture of impatience. "We're wasting time, which just now is valuable. Let's have the bark about, and stand along the coast, as Gil Gomez proposes. I second his proposal; but, if you like, let it go to a vote."

"No need: we all agree to it."

"Yes, all of us."

"Well, shipmates," says Harry Blew, seeing himself obliged to give way, and conceding the point with apparent reluctance, "if ye're all in favor o' steerin' up coast, I an't goin' to stand out against it. It be the same to me one way or t'other. So to Santiago let's go. But, if the bark's to be put about, I tell ye there's no time to be lost: otherways, we'll go into them whitecaps sure, the which wud send this craft to Davy Jones sooner than we intended."

"Plenty of sea-room," says the second mate, "if we about with her at once."

"You see to it, Padilla," directs Gomez, who, from his success in having his plan adopted in opposition to that of the first officer, thinks he may now take command.

The second mate starts aft, and, going up to the helmsman, whispers a word or two in his ear. Instantly the helm is put hard up; and the bark, payin' off, wears round from east to west-nor'-west. The

sailors at the same time brace about her yards, and trim her sails for the changed course, executing the manœuvre, not, as is usual, with a chorused chant, but silently, as if the ship were a spectre, and her crew but shadows.

The bark is now about a league's distance from land; and halfway between are the breakers, their roar sounding ominously through the calm quiet of the night. The vessel making but little way, — only two or three knots an hour, — one proposes that the boat be lowered at once, and such traps as they intend taking put into her. In such a tranquil sea it will tow along-side in safety. As this will be so much work in advance, the plan is approved of, and they proceed to its execution; the pinnace being selected as the most suitable boat for beaching. Clustering around it, they commence operations. Two leap lightly into it, ship the rudder, secure the oars and boat-hooks, clear the life-lines, and cast off the lanyards of the gripes; the others holding the fall-tackle in hand, to see that they are clear for running. Then, taking a proper turn, they lower away.

Other movements succeed; the pirates passing to and from the forecastle, carrying canvas bags, and bundles of clothing, with such other of their belongings as they deem necessary for a debarkation like that intended. A barrel of pork, another of biscuit, and a beaker of water, are also turned out, and handed down into the boat, not forgetting a keg containing rum, and several bottles of wine they have purloined from the ship's stores.

In silence, but with no great show of caution or stealth, are all these movements made. They have but little fear of being detected; some scarce caring if they

oe. Indeed, there is no one to observe them who is not taking part; for the negro cook, after dressing the dinner and serving it, has gone out of the galley for good, and now, acting as steward, keeps below in the cabin, waiting on the guests at table.

Soon every thing is stowed away in the pinnace, except that which is to form its most precious freight; and again the piratical crew bring their heads together to arrange about the final step, the time to take which is fast drawing nigh. A thing so serious calls for calm deliberation; or, at all events, there must be a thorough understanding among them, for it is the disposal of those they have destined as the victims of their villany. All quite understand how this is to be done, though nothing definite has yet been said of it: even the most hardened among them shrinks from putting it in plain words. Still is it tacitly understood the ladies are to be taken along, the others to be dealt with in a different way.

For a time they stand silent, waiting for one who has the hardihood to speak. There is one who has all this, — a ruffian of unmitigated type, whose breast is not moved by the slightest throb of humanity. It is the second mate, Padilla. Breaking silence, he says, “Let’s get the women into the boat, and heave the others overboard, and have done with it.”

The horrible proposition, despite the auditory to whom it is addressed, does not find favorable response. Several speak in opposition to it, Harry Blew first and loudest. Though broken his word, and forfeited his faith, the British sailor is not so abandoned as to contemplate murder in such a cool, deliberate manner. Some of those around him have no doubt committed it; but *he* does not yet feel up to it. Opposing Pa-

dilla's counsel, he says, "What need for our killin' them at all? For my part, I don't see any."

"And, for your part, what would you do?" sneeringly retorts the second mate.

"Give them a chance for their lives."

"How?" promptly asks Padilla.

"Why, if we set the bark's head out to sea, and trim her sails right, as the wind's off-shore, she'd soon carry them beyont sight o' land; and we'd niver hear another word about 'em."

"*Carrai!*" exclaims Padilla scornfully. "That *would* be a wise way, — just the one to get our throats in the *garrota!* You forget that Don Gregorio Montijo is a man of the big grandee kind; and, should he ever set foot ashore after what we'd done to him, he'd have influence enough to make most places, if not the whole of the earth, too hot for us. There's an old saw about dead men telling no tales. No doubt most of you have heard it, and some know it to be a true one. Take my advice, *camarados*, and let us act up to it. What's your opinion, Señor Gomez?"

"Since you ask for it," responds Gomez, speaking for the first time on this special matter, "my opinion is, that there's no need for any difference among us. Mr. Blew's against killing them; and so would I if it could be avoided. But it can't with safety to ourselves, — at least not in the way he has suggested. To do as he says would be madness on our part, more, it might be suicide. I think I know a way that will save us from actually murdering them, and secure our own safety all the same."

"What way?" demand several voices.

"One simple enough, — so simple, I wonder you haven't all thought of it, as well as I. Of course we

intend sending this pretty craft to the bottom of the sea; but she is not likely to go down till we're a good way off, altogether out of sight. We can leave them aboard, and let them slip quietly down along with her."

"Why, that's just what Blew proposes," say several.

"True," returns Gomez, "but not exactly as I mean it. He'd leave them free to go about the ship, perhaps get off her when she sinks, on a sofa, or spar, or something."

"Then how would you do with them?" asks one impatiently.

"Bind the gentlemen before bidding them adieu."

"Bah!" exclaims Padilla, a monster to whom cold blood seems congenial. "What's the use of being at all that bother? It's sure to bring trouble. The skipper will resist; and so'll the old Don. What then? We'll be compelled to knock them on the head all the same, or toss them overboard. So let's put a stopper on them at once!"

"Why, man!" cries Striker, hitherto only a listener, but a backer of Harry Blew: "you 'pear to 'a been practisin' a queery plan in jobs o' this sort. That o' Gomez be far the best way, — same as I've seed in the Australian bush, where they an't so blood-thirsty. When they stick up a chap theer, so long's he don't cut up nasty, they settle things by splicin' him to a tree, an' leavin' him to his meditashuns. Why can't we do the same wi' the skipper an' the Don, supposin' 'em to show refractory?"

"That's it!" exclaims Davis, strengthening the proposal thus indorsed by his chum Striker. "My ole pal's got the correct idea of sich things."

"Besides," continues the older of the ex-convicts

“this job seems to me simple enuf. We want the swag; an’ some seems to be wantin’ the gals. Well, we can git both ’ithout the needcessity o’ doin’ murder!”

“I tell you what,” interposes Harry Blew, “for myself, as I’ve said, I object to killing, or the sight o’ blood, where it an’t a absolute needcessity. True, by leavin’ them aboard, an’ tied, as Mr. Gomez advises; they’ll get drowned for sartin; but it’ll keep our hands clear o’ red murder.”

“That’s true!” cry several in assent. “Let’s take the Australian way of it, and tie them up!”

The assenting voices are in the majority; and the compromise suggested by Gomez is carried. So far every thing is fixed. It but remains to arrange about the action, and apportion to every one his part. This is soon settled. The first officer, assisted by Davis, who has some knowledge of ship carpentry, is to see to the scuttling of the vessel; Velarde and Hernandez to take charge of the girls, and get them into the boat; Gomez to see to the steering of the vessel; the second mate to head the party intrusted with the seizure of the gold; while Striker and the Frenchman are to tie up the unfortunate men whose lives are to be sacrificed. The atrocious plan is complete in all its revolting details, the hour of its execution at hand.



CHAPTER XLII.

THE DREADED TINTORERAS.

WITH all sail set, the bark glides silently on — to her doom. Gomez has taken charge of the steering, he alone having any knowledge of the coast. They are less than a league from land, shaving close along the outer edge of the breakers. The breeze now blowing off-shore makes it easy to keep clear of them.

There is high land on the starboard-bow, gradually drawing more distinct. Gomez fancies he remembers it, and soon is sure; for in the clear moonlight is disclosed the outline of a hill, which, once seen, could not easily be forgotten, — a *cerro* with two summits, and a *col*, or saddle-like depression, between.

Yes, he is certain he has seen that double-headed hill before: still, though a conspicuous landmark, it does not point out any landing-place, only that they are entering the great gulf which here indents the Veraguan coast.

As the bark moves on, bringing the hill abeam, he sees a reach of clear water opening inland; to all appearance a bay, with mouth miles in width.

He would run into it, but is forbidden by the breakers, whose froth-crested belt extends across its entrance from cape to cape. Running past, he again closes on the land, now within less than a league, and soon has the two-headed hill abeam, its singular silhouette conspicuous against the moonlit sky, all the more from the

moon being beyond and low down, showing between the twin summits like a great globe lamp there suspended. When nearly opposite, he observes an open space in the line of breakers, easily told by its dark tranquil surface, which contrasts with the white horse-tails lashing up on each side of it.

Soon as sighting it, Gomez drops the wheel, intrusting it to the Dutch sailor as he does so, giving the latter directions how to steer. Then leaving the poop, he proceeds towards the ship's waist, where he finds all the others ready for action, — Striker and La Crosse with pieces of rope for making fast the ill-fated men; Padilla and his party armed with axes and crowbars, the keys with which they intend to open the locker-doors.

Near the mainmast stands the first mate, a lighted lantern in his hand; Davis beside him, with auger, mallet, and chisel. They are by the main-hatchway, which they have opened, evidently intending descent into the hold. With the lantern concealed under the skirt of his ample dreadnought, Harry Blew stands within the shadow of the mast, as if reflecting on his faithlessness, ashamed to let his face be seen. He even seems reluctant to proceed in the black business, while affecting the opposite. As the others are now occupied in various ways, with their eyes off him, he steps out to the ship's side, and looks over the rail. The moon is now full upon his face, which, under her soft innocent beams, shows an expression difficult as ever to interpret. The most skilled physiognomist could not read it. There is sign of more than one emotion striving within his breast, mingling together, or succeeding each other, quick as the changing hues of the chameleon. Now it seems guilty cupidity, now

remorse, anon the dark shadow of despair. The last growing darker, he draws nearer to the side, and looks more earnestly over, as if about to plunge into the sea, and so rid himself of a life ever after to be a burden.

While standing thus, apparently hesitating as to whether he should drown himself, and have done with it, soft voices sound in his ears, mingling their tones with the breeze as it sighs through the rigging of the ship. Simultaneously there is a rustling of dresses; and, the moment after, he sees two female forms, robed in white, with shawls over their shoulders, and kerchiefs covering their heads. Stepping out on the quarter-deck, they stand for a short while, the moon shining on their faces, both bright and cheerful as her beams. Then they stroll aft, little dreaming of the doom that awaits them.

Their unsuspecting innocence should soften his traitorous heart. Instead, it seems to steel it the more, as if their presence but recalled, and quickened within him, some vow of revenge. He hesitates no longer, but, gliding back to the hatch, climbs over its coamings, and, lantern in hand, descends into the hold, there to do a deed which light of moon or sun should not shine upon.

Though within the tropics, and but a few degrees from the equatorial line, there is chillness in the air of the night, now nearing its mid-hours. Drawing their cloaks closely around them, the young ladies mount up to the poop, and stand resting their hands on the taffrail. For a time they are silent, their eyes turned astern, watching the foam in the ship's wake lit up with dancing phosphorescence. They observe other sparkling scintillations beside those in the "Condor's"

wake. There are broad splashes of it all over the surface of the sea, with here and there elongated *sillons*, seemingly made by some creatures in motion, swimming parallel to the ship's course, and keeping pace with her. The two girls have not voyaged through thirty degrees of the Pacific Ocean to be now told what these are. They know them to be sharks, as also that some of larger size and brighter luminosity are those of the *tintorera*, that species so much dreaded by the pearl-divers of Panama Bay and the Gulf of California. This night, both *tiburones* and *tintoreras* are more numerous than they have before observed them, closer also to the vessel's side; for the sharks, observantly, have seen a boat lowered down, which gives anticipation of prey nearer reach of their ravenous jaws.

"*Santissima!*" exclaims Carmen, as one makes a dash at some waif drifting astern. "What a fearful thing it would be to fall overboard in the midst of those horrid creatures! One wouldn't have the slightest chance of being saved. Only to think how little space there is between us and certain death! You see that monster just below, with its great, glaring eyes! It looks as if it wanted to leap up, and lay hold of us. Ugh! I mustn't keep my eyes on it any longer. It makes me tremble in a strange way. I do believe, if I continued gazing at it, I should grow giddy, and drop over into its jaws. *Sobrina*, are you not glad we're so near the end of our voyage?"

"I'm not sorry, *tia*: I fancy no one ever is. I should be more pleased, however, if it *were* the end of our voyage, which, unfortunately, it isn't. Before we see Spain, we've another equally as long."

"True, — as long in duration and distance; but

otherwise, it may be very different, and I hope more endurable. Across the Atlantic, we'll have passage in a big steamship, with a grand dining-saloon and state sleeping-rooms, each in itself as large as the main cabin of the 'Condor.' Besides, we'll have plenty of company, — passengers like ourselves. Let us hope they may turn out nice people. If so, our Atlantic voyage will be more enjoyable than this on the Pacific."

"But we've been very comfortable in the 'Condor;' and I'm sure Capt. Lantanas has done all he could to make things agreeable for us."

"He has indeed, the dear good creature! and I shall ever feel grateful to him. Still you must admit, that, however well meant, we've been at times a little bored by his learned dissertations. O'Iñez! it's been awfully lonely and frightfully monotonous: at least to me."

"Ah! I understand. What you want is a bevy of bachelors as fellow-passengers, to enliven one. Well, I suppose there will be in the big steamer; like enough a half-score of our mustachéd *militarios*, returning from Cuba and other colonies. Wouldn't that make our Atlantic voyage enjoyable?"

"Not mine, nothing of the sort, as you know, Iñez. To speak truth, it was neither the loneliness nor monotony of our Pacific voyage that has made it so miserable — something else."

"I think I can guess the something else."

"If so, you'll be clever. It's more than I can."

"Might it have any thing to do with those cold parting compliments, and the informal leave-taking? Of course it has. Come, Carmen! You promised me you'd think no more about that till we see them in Cadiz, and have it all cleared up."

“You’re wrong again, Iñez. It is not any thing of them.”

“What then? It can’t be the *mal de mer*? Of it I might complain. I’m even suffering from it now, although the sea is so calm. But you — why, you stand the sea as well as one of those rough sailors themselves! You’re just the woman to be a naval officer’s wife; and, when your *novio* gets command of a ship, I suppose you’ll be for sailing all round the world with him.”

“You’re merry, *mora*.”

“Well, who wouldn’t be, with the prospect of so soon setting foot on land? For my part, I detest the sea; and, when I marry my little *guardia-marina*, I’ll make him forsake it, and take to some pleasanter profession. And if he prefer doing nothing, by good luck the rent of my lands will keep us both comfortably, with something to spare for a town house in Cadiz. But come, Carmen! Tell me what’s troubling you? Surely you must know it.”

“Surely I don’t, Iñez. I can’t tell myself.”

“That’s strange, a mystery. Might it be regret at leaving behind your *preux chevaliers* of California, — that grand, gallant De Lara, whom at our last interview we saw sprawling in the road-dust? You ought to feel relieved at getting rid of him, as I of my importunate suitor, the Señor Calderon. By the way, I wonder whatever became of them. Only to think of their never coming near us to say good-by! And that nothing was seen or heard of them afterwards? Something must have happened. What could it have been? I’ve tried to think, but without succeeding.”

“So I the same. It is indeed very strange; though I fancy father heard something about them which he

does not wish to make known to us. You remember what happened after we'd left the house, — those men coming to it in the night. — Father has an idea they intended taking his gold, believing it still there. What's more, I think he half suspects, that, of the four men, — for there appear to have been four of them, — two were no other than our old acquaintances," she had almost said suitors; but the word gives her a spasm of pain, — "Francisco de Lara and Faustino Calderon."

"*Maria de merced!*" exclaims Iñez. "It's frightful to think of such a thing. And we ought to be thankful to the good saint for saving us from such villains, as glad to get away from a country where their like are allowed to live."

"*Sobrina*, you've touched the point. The very thought that's been distressing me is the remembrance of those men. Even since leaving San Francisco, as before we left, I've had a strange heaviness on my heart, a sort of boding fear that we haven't yet seen the last of them. It haunts me like a spectre. I can't tell why, unless it be from what I know of De Lara. He's not the man to submit to that great defeat of which we were witnesses: be assured he will seek to avenge it. We expected a duel, and feared it. Likely there would have been one, but for the sailing of the English ship. Still that won't hinder such a desperate man as Don Francisco from going after Señor Crozier, and trying to kill him, any way he can. I have a fear he'll follow him — is after him now."

"What if he is? Your *fiancé* can take care of himself, as so can mine if Calderon should get it into his silly head to go after him. Let them go, so long as they don't come after us; which they're not likely — all the way to Spain."

“I’m not so sure of that. Such as they may make their way anywhere. Professional gamblers, as we now know them to be, travel to all parts of the world. All cities give them the same opportunity to pursue their outlawed calling: why not Cadiz? But, Iñez, there’s something I haven’t told you, thinking you might make mock of it. I’ve had a fright more than once, several times, since we came aboard the ‘Condor.’”

“A fright! What sort of a fright?”

“If you promise not to laugh at me, I’ll tell you.”

“I promise. I won’t.”

“’Twould be no laughing matter, were it true; but, of course, it could only be fancy.”

“Fancy about what? Go on, *tia!* I’m all impatience.”

“About the sailors on board. All have bad faces; some of them like very *demonios*. But there’s one has particularly impressed me. Would you believe it, Iñez? he has eyes exactly like De Lara’s! His features, too, resemble those of Don Francisco, only that the sailor has a great beard and whiskers, while he had none. Of course, the resemblance can be only accidental. Still it caused me a start when I first observed it, and has several times since, never more than this very morning, when I was up here, and saw that man. He was at the wheel, all by himself, steering. Several times, on turning suddenly round, I caught him looking straight at me, staring in the most insolent manner. I had half a mind to complain to Capt. Lantanas; but, reflecting that we were so near the end of our voyage” —

She is not permitted to say more; for at the moment, a man springing up to the poop, as if he had risen

out of it, stands before her, — the sailor who resembles De Lara. Making a low bow, he says, —

“Not *near* the end of your voyage, *señorita*, but *at* it,” adding with an ironical smile, “Now, ladies, you are going ashore. The boat is down; and, combining business with pleasure, it’s my duty to hand you into it.”

While he is speaking, another of the sailors approaches Iñez. It is Hernandez, who offers his services in a similar strain.

For a moment the young ladies are speechless through sheer surprise. Horror succeeds, as the truth flashes upon them. And then, instead of coherent speech, they make answer by a simultaneous shriek; at the same time attempting to retreat towards the companion-stair.

Not a step is permitted them. They are seized in strong arms, and half dragged, half lifted off their feet, hurried away from the taffrail. Even their cries are hindered by huge woollen caps drawn over their heads, and down to their chins, almost stifling them. Though no longer seeing, and but indistinctly hearing, they can tell where they are being taken. They feel themselves lifted over the vessel’s side, and lowered down man-ropes into a boat, along the bottom of which they are finally laid, and held fast, as if they had fallen into the jaws of those terrible *tintoreras* they saw keeping company with the ship.



CHAPTER XLIII.

THE BARK ABANDONED.

SIMULTANEOUS with the abduction on deck, there is a scene in the "Condor's" cabin that might be likened to a saturnalia of demons.

The skipper and Don Gregorio, sitting over their walnuts and wine, are startled by the sound of footsteps descending the stair; these heavy and hurried, bearing no resemblance to the gentle tread of women. It cannot be the ladies coming down again. Nor yet the negro cook, since his voice is heard above in angry expostulation; for two of the sailors have seized him in his galley, throttled him back on the bench, and are there lashing him with a piece of log-line.

They at the cabin-table know nothing of this. They hear his shouts, with the shrieks of the ladies, but have no time to seek explanation, as at that instant the door is dashed open, and several sailors burst in, the second mate at their head. Lantanas, facing the door, sees them first; Don Gregorio, turning in his seat, the instant after. Neither thinks of demanding a reason for the rude intrusion. The determined air of the intruders, with the fierce, reckless expression on their faces, tells it would be idle.

In a time shorter than it takes to tell it, the two doomed men are made fast to the stanchioned chairs, where they sit bolt upright, firm as bollard heads, though not in silence. Both utter threats, oaths, angry

fulminations. Not long are they allowed even freedom of speech. One of the sailors thrusts something between Capt. Lantanas' teeth, gagging him. Another, ready prepared for remonstrance, does the like for Don Gregorio. Then the work of pillage proceeds. The locker-lids are forced, and the boxes of gold-dust dragged out. Several comings and goings are required for its transport to the pinnace; but at length it is stowed in the boat, the plunderers taking their seats beside it. One lingers in the cabin behind the rest, that fiend in human shape who has all along counselled killing the unfortunate men. Left alone with them, — they helpless, and at his mercy, — he looks as if still determined to do this. It is not from any motive of compassion that he goes from one to the other, and strikes the gags from between their teeth; for at the same time he apostrophizes them in horrid mockery: —

“*Carramba!* I can't think of leaving two gentlemen seated at such a well-furnished table, without being able to hob-nob, and converse with one another.” Specially addressing Lantanas, he continues, “You see, captain, I'm not spiteful; else I shouldn't think of showing you this bit of civility, after the insults you've offered me since I've been second officer of your ship.” Then approaching Don Gregorio angrily, he shrieks into his ear, “Perhaps you don't remember me, Montijo. But I do you. Can your worship recall a circumstance that occurred some six years ago, when you were *alcalde-mayor* of Yerba Buena? You may remember having a poor fellow pilloried and whipped for doing a bit of contraband. I was that unfortunate individual. And this is my satisfaction for the indignity you put upon me. Keep your seats, gentlemen!

Drink your wine, and eat your walnuts. Before you've cleared the table, this fine bark, with your noble selves, will be at the bottom of the sea." The ruffian concludes with a peal of scornful laughter, continued as he ascends the cabin-stair, after striding out, and clanging the door behind him.

On deck he finds himself alone, and, hurrying to the ship's waist, scrambles over the side, down into the pinnace, where he finds every thing stowed, the oarsmen seated on the thwarts, their oars in the rowlocks, ready to shove off. They are not all there yet. The first mate and Davis are still aboard the vessel.

There are those who would gladly cast loose, and leave the laggards behind. Soon as stepping into the boat, Padilla proposes it, the other Spaniards abetting him. But their traitorous desire is opposed by Striker. However otherwise debased, the ex-convict is true to the men who speak his own tongue. He protests in strong, determined language, and is backed by the Dutchman, Dane, and La Crosse, as also Tarry and Slush.

"Bah!" exclaims Padilla, seeing himself in the minority: "I was only jesting. Of course, I had no intention to abandon them. Ha, ha, ha!" he adds with a forced laugh, "we'd be the blackest of traitors to behave that way."

Striker pays no heed to the hypocritical speech, but calls to his fellow-convict and Harry Blew, alternately pronouncing their names. He at length gets response, and soon after sees Davis above, clambering over the rail. Blew is not far off, but still does not appear. He is by the foot of the mainmast with a halyard in his hands, as though hoisting something aloft. The moon has become clouded, and it is too dark for any one to see what it is.

“Hillo, there, Blew!” again hails Striker: “what be a-keepin’ ye? Hurry down! These Spanish chaps are threetnin’ to go off without ye.”

“Hang it!” exclaims the chief mate, now showing at the side. “I hope that an’t true!”

“Certainly not!” exclaims Padilla, “nothing of the kind. We were only afraid you might delay too long, and be in danger of going down with the vessel.”

“Not much fear o’ that,” returns Blew, dropping with Davis into the boat. “It’ll be some time afore she sinks. Ye fixed the rudder for her to run out, didn’t ye?”

“Ay, ay!” responds he who was last at the wheel.

“All right: shove off, then! That wind’ll take the old “Condor” straight seawart; an’, long afore sunrise, she’ll be out sight o’ land: Give way there — way!”

The oars dip and splash. The boat separates from the side, with prow turned shoreward. The bark, with all sail still spread, is left to herself and the breeze, which wafts her gently away towards the wide wilderness of ocean.

Proceeding cautiously, guarding against the rattle of an oar in its rowlock, the pirates run their boat through the breakers, and approach the shore. Ahead they see the two summits, with the moon just going down between them.

The shore out’ine is a cove of horseshoe shape, the cliffs extending around it. With a few more strokes, the boat is brought into it, and glides on to its innermost end.

As the keel grates upon its shingly strand, their ears are saluted by a chorus of cries, the alarm signal of

sea-birds, startled by the intrusion. Some fly up from the beach, others from ledges along the cliff's face. The scream of the sea-eagle can be distinguished like the laugh of a maniac. These sounds, notwithstanding their discordance, are sweet to those now hearing them. They tell of a shore uninhabited, — literally, that the "coast is clear," — just as desired. Beaching their boat, the pirates spring on shore, and lift the captives out, then their spoils, — one unresisting as the other. Some go in search of a place where they may pass the night; for it is too late to think of moving inland. Between the strand and the cliff's base, they discover a place, several feet above sea-level, having an area of over an acre, covered with coarse grass, — just the spot for camping-ground. As the sky has become clouded, and threatens a downpour of rain, they carry thither the boat's sail, intending to rig it up as an awning. But a discovery is made which spares them the trouble. Along its base, the cliff is honey-combed with caves, one of ample dimensions, sufficient to shelter the whole crew. A ship's lamp, which they have brought with them, when lighted, throws its glare upon stalactites that sparkle like the pendants of chandeliers. Disposing themselves in various attitudes, — some reclined on their spread pilot-coats, some seated on stones or canvas bags, — they enter upon a debauch with the wine abstracted from the cabin-stores of the abandoned bark, — drinking, talking, singing, and shouting, till the cavern rings with their rude revelry. It is well their captives are not compelled to take part in it. To them has been appropriated one of the smaller grottoes, the boat-sail fixed in front, securing them privacy. Harry Blew has done this. In the breast of the British man-o'-war's-man there is

still a spark of delicacy. Though his gratitude has given way to the greed of gold, he has not yet sunk to the low level of ruffianism around him.

While the carousal is thus carried on within the cave, without the overcast sky begins to discharge itself. Lightning forks and flashes athwart the firmament; thunder rolls reverberating along the cliffs; a strong wind sweeps them; and rain rushes down in torrents.

It is a tropic storm, short lived, — lasting scarce an hour; but, while on, it lashes the sea into fury, driving the breakers upon the beach, where the boat has been left loosely moored. In the reflux of the ebbing tide, it is set afloat, and carried away seaward. Coming upon the coral reef, it bilges, is broken to pieces; and the fragments, as waifs, dance about, and drift far away over the foam-crested billows.

CHAPTER XLIV.

TWO TARQUINS.

IT is an hour after midnight. A calm has succeeded the storm; and silence reigns around the cove where the pirates have put in. The sea-birds have returned to their perches on the cliff, and now sit noiselessly, save an occasional angry scream from the osprey, as a whippoorwill, or some other plumed plunderer of the night, flits past his place of repose, near enough to wake the tyrant of the seashore, and excite his jealous rage. Other sounds are the dull boom of the outside

breakers, and the lighter ripple of the tidal waves washing over a strand rich in shells, and coral worn by attrition into a thousand shapes. Now and then a *manatee*, raising its bristled snout above the surf, gives out a low, prolonged wail, like the cry of some creature in mortal agony. It might be mistaken for the moan of a human being, whose spirit is sorely oppressed.

But there is no human voice now. The ruffians have ended their carousal. Their profane songs, ribald jests, and drunken cachinnations, inharmoniously mingling with the soft monotone of the sea, have ceased to be heard. They lie a stretch along the cavern floor, its hollow aisles echoing back only their snores and stertorous breathing.

But they are not all asleep, nor all inside the cavern. Two are outside, seen making approach towards the grotto occupied by the captive girls. As the moon has gone down, it is too dark to distinguish their faces. Still there is light enough reflected from the luminous surface of the sea to show that neither is in sailor garb, but in the habiliments of landsmen, — this the national costume of Spanish California. On their heads are *sombreros* of ample brim; on their legs, trousers, open-seamed, flapping loose around their ankles; while over their shoulders they carry cloaks, which, by their peculiar drape, are recognizable as *mangas* of Mexico.

In the obscurity, the color cannot be determined; but one is scarlet, the other sky-blue. As dressed now, it would be difficult to identify these men as Gomez and Hernandez. Yet it is they.

They are approaching the grotto without any show of fear, or even caution; slowly, and in conversation. Gomez has commenced it, saying, —

“I’ve been thinking, *companero*, now we’ve got

every thing straight so far, that our best plan will be to stay where we are till it's all fixed as we want it. We can send on for the *padre*, and bring him here; or, failing him, the *cura*. To tell truth, I haven't the slightest idea of where we've come ashore. We may be a goodish distance from Santiago; and to go there embargoed as we are, there's a possibility of our being robbed of our pretty baggage on the route. You understand me?"

"*Si — ciertamente!*"

"Against risk of that kind, it is necessary we should take some precautions. And the first, as also the best I can think of, is to stay here till we're spliced to our sweethearts. Rafael can act as a messenger, or, for that matter, Don Manuel. Either, with six words I shall intrust to him, will be certain to bring back an ecclesiastic having full powers to go through the form of a ceremony. Then we can march inland without fear, ay, with flying colors; both Benedicts, our blushing brides on our arms. In Santiago de Veragua we shall spend our honeymoon."

"Delightful anticipation!"

"Just so. And, for that very reason, we mustn't risk marring it; which we might, by travelling as simple bachelors. So I say let us get married before going a step farther."

"But the others? Are they to assist at our nuptials?"

"Certainly not."

"In what way is it to be avoided?"

"The simplest in the world. It's understood that we divide our plunder the first thing in the morning. When that's done, and each has stowed away his share, I intend proposing that we separate, every one to go his own gait."

“Will they agree to that, think you?”

“Of course they will. Why shouldn't they? It's the safest way for all, and they'll see it. Twelve of us trooping together through the country, to say nothing of having the women along — the story we're to tell about shipwreck might get discredited. When that's made clear to our old shipmates, they'll be considerate for their own safety. Trust me for making it clear. Of course, we'll keep Padilla and Velarde to act as groomsmen; so that the only things wanted will be a brace of bridesmaids.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughs Hernandez.

“And now to see about our brides. We've not yet proposed to them. We went once to do that, and were disappointed. No danger now.”

“I suppose we may count upon a flat refusal.”

“Flat or sharp, little care I; and it won't signify one way or the other. In three days, or less, I intend calling Carmen Montijo my wife. But come on! I long to lay hand and heart at her feet.”

Saying which, Gomez strides on towards the grotto, the other after, like two Tarquins about to invade the sleep of innocence.

Though the cave is in darkness, its occupants are not asleep. To them repose is impossible. They are experiencing the keenest anguish possible to human heart. They have passed through its first throes, and are for the time calmer; but it is the tranquillity of despair, of deep deadening grief. They mourn him dearest to them dead. They have no doubt that he is so. How could they? While in the boat, they heard their captors speak about the scuttling of the ship, well knowing what was meant. Long since has she gone to the bottom of the sea, with the living, or perhaps only

their lifeless bodies ; for they may have been murdered before being abandoned. No matter now in what way death came to them. Enough of sadness and horror to think it has come, without speculating on details ; enough for the bereaved ones to know they are bereft. Nor do they need telling why it has all been done. Though hindered from seeing while in the boat, they have heard. Cupidity the cause of the crime, resulting in a conspiracy, a scheme to plunder the ship. Alas, it has succeeded !

But all is not yet over. Would that it were ! There is something still to come, — something they fear to reflect upon, much more speak of to one another. What is to be their own fate ? They can neither tell nor guess. In their affliction, their thoughts are too distracted for calm or clear reasoning. But, in the midst of vague visions, one assumes a shape too well defined, with darkest shadows filling up the outline. It is the same of which Carmen was speaking when seized. She again returns to it, saying, “ Iñez, I’m now almost sure we are not in the hands of strangers. What has happened, and those voices we heard, tell me my suspicions have been correct.”

“ Heaven help us, if it be so ! ”

“ Yes, Heaven help us ! Even from pirates we might have expected some mercy, but none from them. *Ay de mi !* what will become of us ? ”

The interrogatory is only answered by a sigh. The proud spirit of the Andalusian girl, habitually cheerful, is now crushed by a weight of wretchedness enough to steep it in despair. After a time they again exchange speech, seeking counsel of one another. Is there no hope, no hand to help, no one to whom they may turn in this hour of dread ordeal ?

No, not one! Even the English sailor, in whom they had trusted, has proved untrue; to all appearance, from what they have seen and heard, chief of the traitorous crew. Every human being seems to have abandoned them. Has God?

“Let us pray to him!” says Carmen.

“Yes,” answers Iñez. “He only can help us now.”

They kneel side by side on the hard, cold floor of the cavern, and send up their voices in earnest prayer. They first entreat the Holy Virgin that the life of him dear to them may yet be spared, then invoke her protection for themselves, against a danger both dread more than death itself. They pray in trembling accents, but with a fervor eloquent through fear. Solemnly pronouncing “Amen!” they make the sign of the cross. As their hands drop down from the gesture, and while they are still in a kneeling attitude, a noise outside succeeds their appeal to Heaven, suddenly recalling them to earthly thoughts and fears.

They hear voices of men in conversation: at the same time the sail-cloth is pushed aside, and two men press past it into the cave. Soon as entering, one says, “*Señoritas*, we must ask pardon for making our somewhat untimely call, which present circumstances render imperative. It’s to be hoped, however, you won’t stand upon such stiff ceremony with us as when we had the honor of last paying our respects to you.”

After this singular peroration, the speaker pauses to see what may be the effect of his words. As this cannot be gathered from any reply, — since none is vouchsafed, — he continues, “Doña Carmen Montijo, you and I are old acquaintances, though, it may be, you do not remember my voice. With the sound of the sea so long echoing in your ears, it’s not strange you

should not. Perhaps the sense of sight will prove more effectual in recalling an old friend. Let me give you something to assist it."

Saying this, he holds out a lantern, hitherto concealed beneath his cloak. As it lights up the grotto, four figures are seen erect; for the girls have sprung to their feet in apprehension of immediate danger. Upon all, the light shines clear; and, fronting her, Carmen Montijo sees — too surely recognizing it — the face of Francisco de Lara; while in her *vis-à-vis* Iñez Alvarez beholds Faustino Calderon.

Yes: before them are their scorned suitors, no longer disguised in sailor garb, but resplendent in their Californian costume,—the same worn by them on that day of their degradation, when De Lara rolled in the dust of the Dolores road.

Now that he has them in his power, his triumph is complete; and, in strains of exultation he continues, "So, ladies, we have come together again. No doubt you're a little surprised at our presence, but I hope not annoyed."

There is no reply to his taunting speech.

"Well, if you won't answer, I shall take it for granted you *are* annoyed, besides looking a little alarmed too. You've no need to be that."

"No, indeed!" indorses Calderon. "We mean you no harm, — none whatever."

"On the contrary," goes on De Lara, "only good. We've nothing but favors to offer you."

"Don Francisco de Lara," says Carmen, at length breaking silence, and speaking in a tone of piteous expostulation, "and you, Don Faustino Calderon, why have you committed this crime? What injury have we ever done you?"

“Come, not so fast, fair Carmen! Crime’s a harsh word; and we’ve not committed any as yet, nothing to speak of.”

“No crime! *Santissima!* My father, my poor father!”

“Don’t be uneasy about him. He’s safe enough.”

“Safe! Dead! Drowned!”

“No, no! That’s all nonsense,” protests the fiend, adding falsehood to his sin of deeper dye. “Don Gregorio is not where you say. Instead of being at the sea’s bottom, he’s sailing upon its surface; and is likely to be, for no one knows how long. But let’s drop that subject of the past, which seems unpleasant to you, and talk of the present, of ourselves. You ask what injury you’ve ever done us. Faustino Calderon may answer for himself to the fair Iñez. To you, Doña Carmen, I shall make reply. But we may as well confer privately.”

At this he lays hold of her wrist, and leads her aside; Calderon conducting Iñez in the opposite direction.

When the whole length of the cavern is between the two pairs, De Lara resumes speech.

“Yes, Doña Carmen, you *have* done me an injury, — a double wrong, I may call it.”

“How, sir?” she asks, releasing her hand from his, and flinging him off with a disdainful gesture

“How?” he retorts. “Why, in making me love you, by leading me to believe my love returned.”

“You speak falsely: I never did so.”

“You did, Doña Carmen: you did. It is you who speak false, denying it. That is the first wrong I have to reproach you with. The second is in casting me off as soon as you supposed you’d done with me. Not

so, as you see now. We're together again, never more to part till I've had satisfaction for every injury received at your hands. I once hinted, and now tell you plainly, you've made a mistake in trifling with Francisco de Lara."

"I never trifled with you, *señor*. What means this? Man, — if you be a man, — have mercy! Oh! what would you? what would you?"

"Nothing to call for such distracted entreaty. On the contrary, I've brought you here — for I'll not deny that it's I who have done it—to grant you favors, instead of asking them, or even satisfying resentments. What I intend towards you, I hope you'll appreciate. To shorten explanations (for which we've neither opportunity nor time), I want you for my wife, — want you, and will have you."

"Your wife!"

"Yes, *my* wife. You needn't look surprise, nor counterfeit feeling it; and equally idle for you to make opposition. I've determined upon it. *Señorita*, you must marry me."

"Marry the murderer of my father! Sooner than do that, you shall also be mine. Wretch! I am in your power. You can kill me now."

"I know all that without your telling me. But I don't intend killing you. On the contrary, I shall take care to keep you alive until I've tried what sort of a wife you'll make. Should you prove a good one, and fairly affectionate, we two may lead a happy life together, notwithstanding the little unpleasantness that's been between us. If not, and our wedded bondage prove uncongenial, why, then I may release you in the way you wish, or any other that seems suitable. After the honeymoon, you shall have your choice. Now, *Doña*

Carmen! those are my conditions. I hope you find them fair enough."

She makes no reply. The proud girl is dumb, partly with indignation, partly from the knowledge that all speech would be idle. But, while angry to the utmost, she is also afraid, trembling at the alternative presented, — death, or dishonor; the last, if she marry the murderer of her father; the first, if she refuse him.

The ruffian repeats his proposal in the same cynical strain, concluding it with a threat.

She is at length stung to reply, which she does in but two words, twice repeated in wild, despairing accent. They are, "Kill me, kill me!"

Almost at the same time does Iñez answer her cowardly suitor, who, in a corner of the grotto, has alike brought her to bay.

After the dual response, there is a short interval of silence. Then De Lara, speaking for both, says,—

"*Señoritas*, we shall leave you now: you can go to sleep without fear of further solicitation. No doubt, after a night's rest, you'll awake to a more sensible view of matters in general, and the case as it stands. Of one thing be assured, — that there's no chance of your escaping from your present captivity, unless by consenting to change your names. And, if you don't consent, they'll be changed all the same. Yes, Carmen Montijo, before another week passes over your head, you shall be addressed as Doña Carmen de Lara."

"And you, Iñez Alvarez, will be called Doña Iñez Calderon. No need for you to feel dishonored by a name among the best in California, — noble as your own, ay, or any in Spain."

"*Hasta mañana, muchachas!*" salutes De Lara. "*Pasan Vos buena noche!*" ("Till morning, ladies · good-night!")

Calleron repeating the same formulary of speech, the two step towards the entrance, lift up the piece of suspended sail-cloth, and pass out into the night. They take the lantern along with them, again leaving the grotto in darkness.

The girls grope their way till they touch each other; then, closing in an agonized embrace, they sink together upon the floor of the cabin.

CHAPTER XLV.

OCEANWARDS.

ANOTHER day dawns over the great South Sea. As the golden orb shows above the crest of the Central American Cordillera, its beams scatter wide over the Pacific, as a lamp raised aloft, flashing its light afar. Many degrees of longitude receive instant illumination, at once turning night into day. An observer, looking west over that vast watery expanse, would see on its shining surface objects that gladdened not the eyes of Balboa. In his day, only the rude Indian *balza*, or frail *periagua*, afraid to venture out, stole timidly along the shore; but now huge ships, with broad white sails, and at rare intervals the long black hull of a steamer, thick smoke vomited forth from her funnel, may be descried in an offing that extends to the horizon itself. Not always can these be seen; for the commerce of the Pacific is slight compared with that of the Atlantic, and large ships passing along the coast of Veragua are few and far between.

On this morning, however, one is observed, and only one: she not sailing coastwise, but standing out towards mid-ocean, as though she had just left the land.

As the ascending sun dispels the night darkness around her, she can be descried as a white fleck on the blue water, her spread sails seeming no bigger than the wings of a sea-gull. Still, through a telescope — supposing it in the hands of a seaman — she may be told to be a craft with polacca masts; moreover, that the sails on her mizzen are not square-set, but fore-and-aft, proclaiming her a bark. For she is one; and could the observer, through his glass, make out the lettering upon her stern, he would there read the name, “El Condor.” Were he transported aboard of her, unaware of what has happened, it would surprise him to find her decks deserted, not even a man at the wheel, though she is sailing with full canvas spread, even to studding-sails; no living thing seen anywhere, save two monstrous creatures covered with rust-colored hair, mocking counterfeits of humanity. Equally astonished would he be at finding her fore-castle abandoned; sailors’ chests with the lids thrown open, and togs lying loose around them. Nor would it lessen his astonishment to glance into her galley, and there behold a black man sitting upon its bench, who does not so much as rise to receive him; nor yet, descending her cabin-stair, to see a table profusely spread, at either end a guest, alike uncourteous in keeping their seats, on the faces of both an expression of agonized despair. And all this might be seen on board the Chilian vessel on the morning after abandonment by her traitorous and piratical crew.

A fearful night has it been for the three unfortunate men left in her, more especially the two constrained to

sit at her cabin-table; for both have other thoughts, more bitter than confinement, enough to fill the cup of their anguish to the very brim. They did not yield unresistingly. Even the gentle skipper struggled, stormed, and threatened, till overpowered by brute force, and firmly bound. In like manner had Don Gregorio behaved, till resistance was of no avail, then making appeal to the humanity only of his assailants, to find this alike idle. A dread hour that for the *ex-hacendado*. Not because of his treasure, the bulk of his fortune, borne off before his eyes, but from the double shriek, which at the instant reached him from the deck, announcing the seizure of that more dear. Carmen and Iñez were evidently made captive; and, from their cries suddenly ceasing, he dreaded something worse. Had they been stifled by death? Being reminded of an event in Yerba Buena, as also the recognition of the ruffian who taunted him, but made it the more probable that death had been their fate. He almost wished it: he would rather that, than a doom too horrible to think of.

The first mate? He must have been killed too, butchered while endeavoring to defend them? The unsuspecting captain could not think of his chief officer having gone against him; and how could Don Gregorio believe the man so recommended turning traitor? While they are thus charitably judging him, they receive a crushing response. Just then, to their astonishment, they hear his voice among the mutineers, not in exposition, or opposed, but as if taking part with them. One Striker is calling out his name, to which he answers; and, soon after, other speeches from his lips sound clear through the cabin-windows, open on that mild moonlit night. Still listening, as they gaze in

one another's face with mute, painful surprise, they hear a dull thud against the ship's side, — the stroke of a boat-hook as the pinnace is shoved off, — then a rattle, as the oars commence working in the tholes, succeeded by the plash of the oar-blades in the water; after that, the regular "dip-dip," at length dying away as the boat recedes, leaving the abandoned vessel silent as a graveyard in the mid-hour of night.

Seated with face towards the cuddy windows, Don Gregorio can see through them; and as the bark's bow rises on the swell, depressing her aft, he commands a view of the sea far astern.

There upon the surface he makes out a dark object moving away. It is a boat filled with forms, the oar-blades rising and falling in measured stroke, flashing the phosphorescence on both sides. No wonder at his earnest look as he bends his eyes on that boat, — a gaze of concentrated anguish. It contains all that is dear to him, bearing that all away, he knows not whither, to a fate which chills his very blood to reflect upon. He can trace the outlines of land beyond, and can perceive that the boat is being rowed for it; the bark at the same time sailing seaward, each instant widening the distance between them. But for a long while he can distinguish the black speck with luminous jets on either side, as the oar-blades intermittently rise and fall in the clear moonlight, till at length, entering within the shadow of the land, a line of high cliffs, he loses sight of it.

"Gone, all gone!" groans the bereaved father, his beard drooping down to his breast, his countenance showing he has surrendered up his soul to a despair hopeless as helpless. So, too, Lantanas, who has ceased struggling and shouting. Both are now alike

convinced of the idleness of such demonstrations. The chief officer a mutineer, so must all the others; and all have forsaken the ship. No, not all. There is one remains true, who is still on her,—the black cook. They hear his voice, though not with any hope. It comes from a distant part in shouts and cries betokening distress. They need look for no help from him. He is either disabled, or, like themselves, securely bound. Throughout the night they hear it; the intervals between becoming longer, the voice fainter, till he, also, yielding to despair, is silent.

As the morning sun shines in through the stern windows, Don Gregorio can see they are out of sight of land. Only sea and sky are visible to him; but neither to Lautanas, whose face is the other way, so fastened he cannot even turn his head. The bark is scudding before a breeze, which bears her still farther into the great South Sea, on whose broad bosom she might beat for weeks, months, ay, till her timbers rot, without sighting ship, or being herself descried by human eye. Fearful thought, appalling prospect, to those constrained to sit at her cabin table! With it in their minds, the morning light brings no joy. Instead, it but intensifies their misery; for they are now sure they have no chance of being rescued. They sit haggard in their chairs,—for no sleep has visited the eyes of either,—like men who have been all night long engaged in a drunken debauch. Alas, how different! The glasses of wine before them are no longer touched, the fruits untasted. Neither the bouquet of the one, nor the perfume of the other, has any attraction for them now. Either is as much beyond their reach as if a thousand miles off, instead of on a six-foot table between them. Gazing in one another's faces, they at

times fancy it a dream. They can scarcely bring themselves to realize such a situation; as who could? The rude intrusion of the ruffian crew, the rough handling they have had, the breaking open of the lockers, and the boxes of gold borne off, all seem the phantasmagoria of some fleeting but horrible vision

CHAPTER XLVI.

AN AWKWARD QUESTION.

THE same sun that shines upon the abandoned bark lights up the crew that abandoned her, on the same spot where they have made landing. As the first rays fall over the cliff's crest, they show a cove of semicircular shape, backed by a beetling precipice. A ledge or dike, sea-washed and weed-covered, trends across its entrance, with a gate-like opening in the centre, through which at high tide the sea sweeps in, though never quite up to the base of the cliff. Between this and the strand lies the elevated platform already spoken of, accessible from above by a sloping ravine, the bed of a stream, running only when it rains. As said, it is only an acre or so in extent, and occupying the inner concavity of the semicircle. The beach is not visible from it, this concealed by the dry reef which runs across it as a cord. Only a small portion of it can be seen through the portal which admits the tidal flow. Beyond, stretches the open sea outside the surf, with the breakers more than a mile off.

Such is the topography of the place where the muti-

neers have made landing, and passed the night. When the day dawns, but little is seen to betray their presence there,—only a man seated upon a stone, nodding as if asleep, at intervals awakening with a start, and grasping at a gun between his legs; soon letting it go, and again giving way to slumber, the effects of that drunken debauch kept up to a late hour of the night. He would be a poor sentinel, were there need for vigilance. Seemingly there is none. No enemy is near, no human being in sight; the only animate objects some sea-birds, that, winging their way along the face of the cliff, salute him with an occasional scream, as if incensed by his presence in a spot they deem sacred to themselves.

The sun fairly up, he rises to his feet, and walks towards the entrance of the larger cavern; then, stopping in front of it, cries out, —

“Inside there, shipmates! Sun’s up: time to be stirring!”

Seeing him in motion, and hearing his hail, the gulls gather and swoop around his head in continuous screaming; in larger numbers, and with cries more strident, as his comrades come forth out of the cave, one after another, yawning, and stretching their arms.

The first, looking seaward, proposes to refresh himself by a plunge in the surf, and for this purpose starts toward the beach. The others, taken with the idea, follow in twos and threes, till, in a string, all are in motion. To reach the strand, it is necessary for them to pass through the gap in the transverse ledge; which the tide, now at ebb, enables them to do. He who leads having gone through it, on getting a view of the shore outside, suddenly stops, as he does so, sending back a shout. It is a cry of surprise, followed by the startling announcement, “The boat’s gone!”

This should cause them apprehension, and would if they but knew the consequences. Ignorant of these, they make light of it; one saying, "Let her go, then! We want no boats now."

"A horse would be more to our purpose," suggests a second, "or, for that matter, a dozen of them."

"A dozen donkeys would do," adds a third, accompanying his remark with a horse-laugh. "It'll take about that many to pack our chattels."

"What's become of the old pinnace, anyhow?" asks one in sober strain, as, having passed through the rock-portal, they stand scanning the strand. All remember the place where they landed, and left the boat. They see it is not there.

"Has any one made away with it?"

The question is asked, and instantly answered, several saying, No. Striker, the man who first missed it, vouchsafes the explanation.

"The return tide's taken it out, an', I darsay, it's broke to bits on them their breakers."

All now remember that it was not properly moored, but left with painter loose, and do not wonder it went adrift. They care little, indeed nothing, and think of it no longer, but, stripping, plunge into the surf. After bathing to their hearts' content, they return to the cavern, and array themselves in garments befitted to the life they intend leading. Their tarry togs are cast off; to be altogether abandoned; for each has a suit of shore-clothes, brought away from the bark.

Every one rigged out in his own peculiar style, they draw together to deliberate on a plan of future action. Breakfast has been already eaten; and now comes the matter of greatest moment, — the partition of the spoils.

It is done in little time, and with no great trouble. The boxes are broken open, and the gold-dust measured out in a pannikin; a like number of measures apportioned to each, round and round.

In money value no one knows the exact amount of his share; enough satisfaction to feel it is nigh as much as he can carry.

After each has appropriated his own, they commence packing up, and preparing for the inland journey. And now arises the question, What way are they to go? They have already resolved to strike for the city of Santiago; but in what order should they travel?—separate into several parties, or go all together? The former plan, proposed by Gomez, is supported by Padilla, Hernandez, and Velarde. Gomez gives his reason. Such a large number of pedestrians along roads where none save horsemen are ever seen could not fail to excite curiosity. It might cause inconvenient questions to be asked them, perhaps lead to their being arrested, and taken before some village *alcalde*. If so, what story could they tell?

On the other hand, there will be the chance of coming across Indians; and as those on the Veraguan coast are ranked among the “bravos,”—having preserved their independence, and, along with it, their instinctive hostility to the whites,—an encounter with them might be even more dangerous than with any *alcalde*. Struggling along in squads of two or three, they would run a risk of getting captured, or killed and scalped, perhaps all three.

This is the suggestion of Harry Blew; Striker and Davis alone favoring his view. All the others go against it; Gomez ridiculing the idea of danger from red men, at the same time enlarging on that to be

apprehended from white ones. As the majority have more reason to fear civilized man than the so-called savage, it ends in their deciding for separation. They can come together again in Santiago, if they choose it; or not, should chance for good or ill so determine. They are all amply provided for playing an independent part in the drama of their future lives; and, with this pleasant prospect, they may part company without a sigh of regret.

Ah! something yet, still another question to be determined. The female captives: how are they to be disposed of? They are still within the grotto, unseen, as the sail-cloth curtains it. Breakfast has been taken to them, which they have scarce touched; and the time has come for deciding what has to be done with them. No one openly asks, or says a word upon the subject, though it is uppermost in the thoughts of all. It is a delicate question; and they are shy of broaching it. There is a sort of tacit impression there will be difficulty about the appropriation of this portion of the spoils, — an electricity in the air that foretells dispute and danger. All along it had been understood that two men laid claim to them; their claim, whether just or not, hitherto unquestioned, or, at all events, untested — these, Gomez and Hernandez. As they had been the original designers of the foul deed now done, their confederates, rough men of a different stamp, little given to love-making, had either not thought about the women, or deemed their possession of secondary importance. But now, at the eleventh hour, it has become known that two others intend asserting a claim to them, — one being Blew, the other Davis.

The mode of making their journey having been definitively settled, there is a short interregnum, during

which most of those ready for the road stand idling, one or two still occupied in equipping themselves. La Crosse has been sent up the ravine to report how things look inland. The four Spaniards have signified their intention to remain a little longer on the ground; while the three Englishmen have not said when they will leave. They are together, conferring in low voice, but with an earnestness in their eyes, especially Blew's, which makes it easy to guess the subject. Only the theme of woman could kindle these fiery glances.

At length the dreaded interrogatory is put; and Gomez answers, "They'll, of course, go with us, — with Señor Hernandez and myself."

"I don't see any of course about it," says Blew. "And, more'n that, I tell ye they don't go with ye: leastwise, not so cheap as you think for."

"What do you mean, Mr. Blew?" demands the Spaniard, his eyes showing anger, at the same time a certain uneasiness.

"No use your losin' temper, Gil Gomez. You ain't goin' to scare me: so you may as well keep cool. By doin' that, and listenin', you'll larn what I mean; the which is, that you and Hernandez have no more right to them creeturs in the cave than any o' the rest of us. Just as the gold, so ought it to be wi' the girls. In coorse, we can't divide them all round, but that's no reason why any two should take em, so long's any other two wants 'em as well. Now, *I* wants one o' them."

"And I another," puts in Davis.

"Yes," continues Blew; "and though I be a bit older than you, Mr. Gomez, and not quite so pretentious a gentleman, I can like a pretty wench as well as yerself. I've took a fancy to the one wi' the tortoise-

shell hair, an' an't goin' to gie her up in the slack way you seem to be wishin'."

"Glad to hear it's the red one, Blew," says Davis. 'As I'm for the black one, there's no rivalry between us. Her I mean to be mine — unless some better man hinders me."

"Well," interpolates Striker, "as 'twas me first put the questyun, I s'pose I'll be allowed to gie an opeenyun?" No one saying nay, the ex-convict proceeds, "As to any one hev'in' a speecial claim to them weemen, nobody has, an' nobody shed have. 'Bout that, Blew's right, an' so's Bill. An,' since the thing's disputed, it oughter be settled in a fair an' square" —

"You needn't waste your breath," interrupts Gomez, in a tone of determination. "I admit no dispute in the matter. If these gentlemen insist, there's but one way of settling. First, however, I'll say a word to explain. One of these ladies is my sweetheart — was before I ever saw any of you. Señor Hernandez here can say the same of the other. Nay, I may tell you more: they are pledged to us."

"It's a lie!" cries Blew, confronting the slanderer, and looking him straight in the face. "A lie, Gil Gomez, from the bottom o' your black heart!"

"Enough!" exclaims Gomez, now purple with rage. "No man can give Frank Lara the lie, and live after."

"Frank Lara, or whatever you may call yerself, I'll live long enough to see you under ground, or, what's more like, hangin' wi' your throat in a halter. Don't make any mistake about me. I can shoot straight as you."

"Avast, theer!" shouts Striker to De Lara, seeing the latter about to draw a pistol. "Keep yer hand off o' that wepun! If theer must be a fight, let it be a

fair one. But, before it begin, Jack Striker has a word to say."

While speaking, he has stepped between the two men, staying their encounter.

"Yes, let the fight be a fair one!" demand several voices, as the pirates come clustering around.

"Look here, shipmates!" continues Striker, still standing between the two angry men, and alternately eying them. "What's the use o' spillin' blood about it, maybe killin' one the other? All for the sake o' a pair o' stoopid girls, or a kuppel o' pairs, as it be! Take my advice, an' settle the thing in a pacifical way. Maybe ye will, after ye've heerd what I intend proposin'; which I darsay'll be satisfactory to all."

"What is it, Jack?" asks one of the outsiders.

"First, then, I'm agoin' to make the observashun, that fightin' an't the way to get them weemen, whoever's fools enough to fight for 'em. Theer's somethin' to be done besides."

"Explain yourself, old Sydney! What's to be done besides?"

"If the gals are goin' to be fought for, they've first got to be *paid* for."

"How that?"

"How? What humbuggin' stuff askin' such a ques-tyin! Han't we all equal shares in 'em? Coorse we have! Tharfor, them as wants 'em must pay for 'em; an' they as wants 'em so bad as to do shootin' for 'em surely won't objeck to that. Theer appear to be four candydates in the field; an', kewrous enuf, they're set in pairs, — two for each one o' the girls. Now, 'ithout referin' to any fightin' that's to be done, — an', if they're fools enuf to fight, let 'em, — I say that eyther who ceventyally gits a gal shed pay a considerashin'

o' gold-dust all roun' to the rest o' us ; at the least a pannikin apiece. That's what Jack Striker proposes first."

"It's fair," says Slush.

"Nothing more than our rights," observes Tarry ; the Dane and Dutchman also indorsing the proposal.

"I agree to it," says Harry Blew.

"I also," adds Davis.

De Lara — late Gomez — signifies his assent by a disdainful nod, but without saying a word ; Hernandez imitating the action. In fear of losing adherents, neither dares disapprove of it.

"What more have you to say, Jack?" asks Slush, recalling Striker's last words, which seemed to promise something else.

"Not much. Only thet I think it a pity, after our livin' so long in harmony thegither, we can't part same way. Weemen's allers been a bother ever since I've knowd 'em. An' I s'pose it'll continue so to the eend o' the chapter, an' the eend o' some lives heer. I repect, thet it be a pity we shed hev to wind up wi' a quarrel wheer blood's bound to be spilt. Now, why can't it be settled 'ithout thet? I think I know of a way."

"What way?"

"Leave it to the ladies theirselves. Gie them the chance o' who they'd like for a protector ; same time lettin' 'em know they've got to choose 'tween one or tother. Let 'em take theer pick, everybody unnerstandin' afterwards theer's to be no quarrelin' or fightin'. That's our law in the Australyin bush, when we've cases o' this kind ; an' every bushranger hes to bide by it. Why shedn't it be the same heer?"

"Why shouldn't it?" asks Slush. "It's a good law, just and fair for all."

"I consent to it," says Blew, with apparent reluctance, as if doubtful of the result, yet satisfied to submit to the will of the majority. "I mayen't be neyther so young nor so good lookin' as Mr. Gomez," he adds: "I know I an't eyther. Still I'll take mychance. If she I lay claim to pronounces against me, I promise to stand aside, and say neer another word, much less think o' fightin' for her. She can go 'long wi' him, an' my blessin' wi' both."

"Bravo, Blew! You talk like a good un. Don't be afraid: we'll stand by you."

This, from several of the outsiders.

"Comrades," says Davis, "I place myself in your hands. If my girl's against me, I'm willin' to give her up, same as Blew."

What about the other two? What answer will they make to the proposed peaceful compromise? All eyes are turned on them, awaiting it.

De Lara speaks first, his eyes flashing fire. Hitherto he has been holding his anger in check; but now it breaks out, poured forth like lava from a burning mountain. "*Carajo!*" he cries. "I've been listening a long time to talk, taking it too coolly. Idle talk all of it, yours, Mr. Striker, especially. What care we about your ways in the Australian bush. They won't hold good here, or with me. My style of settling disputes is this, or this." He touches his pistol-butt, and then the hilt of a *macheté*, hanging by his side, adding, "Mr. Blew can have his choice."

"All right!" retorts the ex-man-o'-war's-man. "I'm good for a bout with either, and don't care a toss which,—pistols at six paces, or my cutlass against that straight blade of yours. Both, if you like."

"Both be it. That's best, and will make the end

sure. Get ready, and quick; for, as sure as I stand here, I intend fighting you!"

"Say you intend tryin'. I'm ready to give you the chance. You can begin soon's you feel disposed."

Hernandez hangs back, as though he would rather decline the combat.

"No, Bill!" says Striker; "one fight at a time. When Blew an' Gomez hev got through wi' theirs, then you can gie Hernandez his chance — if so be he care to hev it."

Hernandez appears gratified with Striker's speech, disregarding the innuendo. He had no thought it would come to this, and looks as if he would surrender up his sweetheart without striking a blow. He makes no rejoinder, but shrinks back cowed-like and craven.

"Yes, one fight at a time!" cry others, indorsing the *dictum* of Striker.

It is the demand of the majority; and the minority concedes it. All know it is to be a duel to the death. A glance at the antagonists, at their angry eyes and determined attitudes, makes this sure. On that lonely shore one of the two will sleep his last sleep: it may be both.



CHAPTER XLVII.

A DUEL ADJOURNED.

THE combat now declared inevitable, its preliminaries are speedily arranged. Under the circumstances, and between such adversaries, the punctilios of ceremony to be satisfied are slight; for theirs is the rough code of honor common to robbers of all countries and climes. No seconds are chosen, nor spoken of. All on the ground are to act as such, and at once proceed to business.

Some measure off the distance, stepping it between two stones. Others examine the pistols to see that both are loaded with ball-cartridge, and carefully capped. The fight is to be with Colt's six-shooters, navy size. Each combatant chances to have one of this particular pattern. They are to commence firing at twelve paces, and, if that be ineffectual, then close up, as either chooses. If neither falls to the shots, then to finish with the steel.

The captives inside the cave are ignorant of what is going on. Little dream they of the red tragedy soon to be enacted so near, or how much they themselves may be affected by its *finale*. It is indeed to them the chances of a contrasting destiny.

The duellists take stand by the stones, twelve paces apart. Blew, having stripped off his pilot-cloth coat, is in his shirt-sleeves. These, rolled up to the elbow, expose ranges of tattooing, fouled anchors, stars, cres-

cents, and sweethearts,—a perfect medley of fore-castle souvenirs. They show also muscles lying along his arms like cording upon a ship's stay. Should the shots fail, those arms promise well for wielding the cutlass; and, if his fingers clutch his antagonist's throat, the struggle will be a short one.

Still no weak adversary will he meet in Francisco de Lara. He, too, has laid aside his outer garments, thrown off his scarlet cloak and the heavy hat. He does not need stripping to the shirt-sleeves: his light *jaqueta* of velveteen in no way encumbers him. Fitting like a glove, it displays arms of muscular strength, with a body in symmetrical correspondence.

A duel between two such gladiators might be painful, but, for all, a fearfully interesting spectacle. Those about to witness it seem to think so, as they stand silent, with breath bated, and glances bent alternately on one and the other.

As it has been arranged that Striker is to give the signal, the ex-convict, standing centrally outside the line of fire, is about to say a word that will set two men, mad as tigers, at one another, each with full resolve to fire, cut down, and kill.

There is a moment of intense stillness, like the lull which precedes a storm; nothing heard save the tidal wash against the near strand, the boom of the distant breakers, and at intervals the shrill scream of a sea-bird.

The customary "Ready" is forming on Striker's lips, to be followed by the "Fire! One, two, three!" No one of these words, not a syllable, is he permitted to speak. Before he can give utterance to the first, a cry comes down from the cliff, which arrests the attention of all, soon as understood, enchaining it.

It is La Crosse who sends it, shouting in accents of

alarm, "Monsieur Blew! Comrades! *We're on an island!*"

When the forest is on fire, or the savanna swept by flood, and their wild denizens flee to a spot uninvaded, the timid deer is safe beside the fierce wolf or treacherous cougar: in face of the common danger, they will stand trembling together; the beasts of prey, for the time, gentle as their victims. So with human kind; a parallel being furnished by the pirate crew of the "Condor," and their captives.

The former, on hearing the cry of La Crosse, are at first only startled. Soon their surprise changes to apprehension, keen enough to stay the threatening fight, and indefinitely postpone it. For at the words, "We're on an island," they are impressed with an instinctive sense of danger; and all, combatants as spectators, rush up the ravine to the summit of the cliff, where La Crosse is still standing.

Arrived there, and casting their eyes inland, they have evidence of the truth of his assertion. A strait, leagues in width, separates them from the mainland, far too wide to be crossed by the strongest swimmer amongst them, too wide for them to be descried from the opposite side, even through a telescope. The island on which they have beached their boat is a mere strip of sea-washed rock, running parallel to the coast, cliff-bound, table-topped, sterile, treeless, and to all appearance waterless.

As this last thought comes uppermost, along with the recollection that their boat is lost, what was at first only a flurry of excited apprehension becomes a fixed fear, still further intensified, when, after scattering over the islet, and exploring it from end to end, they again come together, and each party delivers its report.

No wood, save some stunted bushes; no water, — stream, pond, or spring, — only that of the salt sea rippling around; no sign of animal life, except snakes, scorpions, and lizards, with the birds flying above, screaming, as if in triumph at the intruders upon their domain being thus entrapped; for they are so, and clearly comprehend it. Most of them are men who have professionally followed the sea, and understand what it is to be “castaways.” Some have had experience of it in their time, and need no reminding of its dangers. To a man, they feel their safety as much compromised as if the spot of earth under their feet, instead of being but three leagues from land (for such it seems), were three thousand; for that matter, in the middle of the Pacific itself. What would they not now give to be again on board the bark sent sailing thither to miserably sink! Ah! their cruelty has come back upon them like a curse.

The interrupted duel — what of it? Nothing. It is not likely ever to be fought. Between the *ci-devant* combatants, mad anger and jealous rivalry may still remain; but neither shows it now, both subdued in contemplation of the common peril; Blew apparently less affected than his antagonist. But all are frightened, — awed by a combination of occurrences that look as though an avenging angel had been sent to punish them for their crimes.

From that moment Carmen Montijo and Iñez Alvarez are safe in their midst as if promenading the streets of Cadiz, or flirting their fans at the successful *matador*, — safe as far as being molested by the ruffians around them, yet, alas! exposed to the danger overhanging all, — death from starvation.

But surely some means will be discovered to escape

from the island? or, remaining upon it, a way to sustain life? Questions asked, and hopes indulged in, that, as the days pass, prove delusive. Not a stick of timber out of which to construct a raft; nothing for food, save reptiles on the land, and shell-fish in the sea, these scarce, and difficult of collection. Now and then a bird, its flesh ill favored and rank. But the want above all — water. For days, not a drop is obtained, till their throats feel as if on fire. Plenty of it around, too much. But it is as with Tantalus. The briny deep they may touch, but not taste. It makes them mad to gaze on it: to drink of it would but madden them the more.

A fearful fate now threatens the crew of the “Condor,” in horror, equalling that to which those left aboard of her have been consigned. Well may they deem it a retribution, that God’s hand is upon them, meting out a punishment apportioned to their crime. But surely he will not permit the innocent to suffer with the guilty. Let us hope, pray, he will not.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

LONG SUFFERING.

SEVERAL days have elapsed since the desertion of her crew; and the “Condor” is still afloat, sailing in a south-westerly direction, with full canvas set, just as when the pirates put away from her. Why she has not gone to the bottom is known but to two men, — they entrusted with the scuttling. And just as when

left are the three unfortunate beings aboard, — the black cook on his galley-bench, the captain and his passenger *vis-à-vis*, bound at the cabin-table, upright in their chairs. But, though their attitudes are unchanged, there is a marked change in their appearance, especially those who occupy the cabin; for the white man shows the effect of physical suffering sooner than the Ethiopian. For long days they have been enduring agony great as ever tortured Tantalus. It has made fearful inroad on their strength, on their frames. Both are reduced almost to skeletons, cheek-bones protruding, eyes sunken in their sockets. Were the cords that confine them suddenly taken off, they would sink helpless to the floor.

Not all this time have they been silent. At intervals they have conversed upon their desperate situation, for the first day with some lingering hope of being released, but afterwards despairingly, as the hours pass, and nothing occurs to alter it. Now and then they have heard cries on deck, knowing they are from the cook, whom they now feel sure is, like themselves, fast bound in the forward part of the vessel. At first they answered them, till finding it an idle effort; and now their feeble strength forbids even the exertion of their voices.

Long since have the two men given up making attempts to untie themselves: now they have also ceased to converse, or only at periods long apart. Lantanas, after his first throes of fierce rage, has sunk into a sort of stupor, and, with head drooping down to his breast, appears as if life had left him. Don Gregorio, on the contrary, holds his erect; at least during most part of the day, for before him is something to be seen, — the sea through the stern windows, still open

He keeps his eyes bent on it habitually, though not with much hope of there seeing aught to cheer him. On its blue expanse he beholds but a streak of white, the frothing water in the vessel's wake, now and then a "school" of tumbling porpoises, or the "spout" of a cachalot whale. Once, however, an object comes within his field of vision, which causes him to start, writhe in his ropes, and cry out to the utmost of his strength; for it is a ship in full sail, crossing the "Condor's" track, and scarce a cable's length astern. He hears a hail, and calls out in response, Lantanas joining him. And the two keep shouting for hours after, till their feeble voices fail them; and they again resign themselves to a despondency hopeless as ever. All their shouts have brought them are the Bornean apes, that are heard scampering up and down the cabin-stair, dashing their uncouth bodies against the closed door.

The Chilian has long ago surrendered to despair; while Don Gregorio, who has also lost hope of help from man, still has faith in Heaven. With unabated fervor, he entreats for mercy from above; and, as he does so, the Chilian captain gives way to a paroxysm of frenzy, raving as he bewails his unhappy fate. For long he continues to rave. Don Gregorio makes no effort to hold converse with him. The sight is sufficiently painful, suggestive of what may be his own fate, as sweeps through his soul the thought of his accumulated calamities. He wishes that death would relieve him, and has prayed for it more than once. He prays for it again, silently, with his eyes resting on the sea. He awaits the final hour, longing for it to come, his features set in calm, Christian resignation.

Suddenly their expression changes, a ray of renewed hope shooting athwart his face. Not a ray, but a beam,

which spreads over his whole countenance, while his eyes kindle into cheerfulness, and his lips seem parted in a smile. Is he about to echo the mad laugh of Lantanas?

No! In that look there is no sign of unseated reason. On the contrary, he gazes with intelligent earnestness, as at something outside demanding investigation. Soon his lips part farther, not to smile, but speak words that involuntarily issue from them. Only two little words, but of large import and greatest cheer, "A sail!"

For such he has espied, — a white speck, away off on the line that separates the two blues, but distinguishable from waif of floating foam, or wing of gull. Beyond doubt, a sail — a ship! Once more hope is in his heart, which, bounding up, beats audibly within his breast, higher and louder, as the white speck shows larger, assuming shape; for the tall, narrow disk, rising tower-like against the sky, can only be the spread canvas of a ship. And, gradually growing taller, he at length can tell she is standing towards the bark. Intently he continues to watch the distant sail; silently, without saying aught of it to his companion, or in any way communicating with him. It would be useless now: the mind of the Chilian is closed against outward things; and it is not the time to open it.

Hopefully Don Gregorio keeps gazing, yet not without anxiety. Once before has he had disappointment from a similar sight: it may be so again. But, no. That ship was standing across the "Condor's" track; while this is sailing in the same course, sailing after, apparently with the intention to come up; and, though slowly, surely drawing nearer, as he can tell by the canvas increasing in bulk, growing broader, and looming higher.

A long time, however, elapses, — nearly half a day, — during which he has many hopes and fears, alternating as the hours pass. But the former are at length in the ascendant; and all anxiety passes as the pursuing ship shows her dark hull above the water-line, and he can distinguish her separate sails. They are all set. What joy in his heart as his eyes rest on them! They seem the wings of merciful angels, coming to relieve him from his misery. And that flag floating above, — the flag of England! Were it the banner of his own Spair, he could not regard it with greater gladness or gratitude; for surely he will be saved now. Alas! while thus congratulating himself, he sees that which causes his heart again to sink within him, bringing back keenest apprehensions. The strange vessel is still a far way behind; and the breeze impelling her, light all along, has suddenly died down, not a ripple showing on the sea's surface, while her sails now hang loose and limp. Beyond doubt is she becalmed.

But the "Condor?" Will she, too, cease sailing? Yes, she must, from the same cause. Already she moves slowly, scarce making way. And now — now she is motionless. The glass rack and lamps overhead hang steady, without the slightest oscillation. But the bark gradually swings round; and he loses sight of the ship. Through the windows he still beholds the sea, calm and blue, but vacant; no outline of hull, no expanded sails, no flouting flag to keep up his heart, which for a while is down, almost despondent. But only for a short time, again rising as the bark, sheering round, brings once more stern towards the ship, and he sees the latter, and something besides, — a boat! It is down in the water, and coming on toward the "Condor," the

oar-blades flashing in the sun, and flinging spray-drops that seem like silver stars. The bark eddying on, he has the boat in view but a short while. What matters it now? He is no more apprehensive, but certain of being saved, and he looks no longer, only listens; soon to hear words spoken in a strong manly voice, to him sweeter than music. It is the hail,—

“Bark ahoy!”

In feeble accents he makes answer, continuing to call out till other voices, echoing along the “Condor’s” decks, become commingled with his own. Then there are footsteps on the quarter-deck, and they are soon after heard descending the cabin-stair. The handle is turned, the door pushed open; and a swish of fresh air sweeps in, human beings along with it, as they enter, giving utterance to exclamations of astonishment.

Wrenching his neck around, he sees there are two of them, both in the uniform of naval officers, and both known to him. Their presence gives him many emotions, too many for his strength, so long and sorely tried. Overpowered by it, he becomes unconscious, as though the sight, instead of gladdening, had suddenly deprived him of life.

No need to say that the officers who have entered the “Condor’s” cabin are Crozier and Cadwallader: for she is the polacca bark we have seen chased by a frigate, that frigate the “Crusader.”



CHAPTER XLIX.

A CARD UNEXPECTEDLY RECOVERED.

IT is the fourth day since the English officers— lieutenant, midshipman, and cockswain— boarded the Chilian bark. They are still on board of her, and she yet afloat,—the one a sequence of the other. Otherwise, she would now be at the bottom of the sea. For the squall that struck her would have thrown her on her beam-ends, but that her sheets and halyards were cast loose at an opportune moment, so saving her from certain destruction. Her sails have suffered, nevertheless; scarce one that was not torn to shreds, excepting a storm-stay and trysail, which they were enabled to set during the gale. And now that it is over, they have managed to bend on a new foresail and jib, found among the bark's spare canvas. With these she is making way at the rate of some six knots an hour, her head set east by south. A grim, terrible fight that squall gave them; only the three men to manage so large a craft in a tempest, which, though short lived, was as fierce as ever swept over the Pacific. They had no aid from any of the other three; nor from two of them have they any yet. Capt. Lantanas is still delirious, locked up in his state-room, lest, in his madness, he may do some violent act; while Don Gregorio, weak as a child, reclines on the cabin settee, unable to ascend to the deck. The negro alone, having partially recovered strength, lends some assistance at the sails.

It is twelve o'clock meridian; and Grummet, the cockswain, is at the wheel; the officers on the quarter, Crozier, sextant in hand, "shooting the sun." They have long ago given up hope of finding the frigate, or being found by her.

The signal gun, heard by them repeatedly throughout that wild night, they could not answer, neither, in the fog, know its direction. At the time, it sounded like their death-knell; and now any chance of their coming across the "Crusader" is as one in a thousand. Aware of this, they are steering the crippled vessel towards Panama, in hope of there finding the frigate. In any case, that is the port where they will be most likely to get tidings of her.

A prey to saddened thoughts are the two young officers, as they stand on the quarter-deck of the Chilian vessel, taking the altitude of the sun, with instruments her own skipper is no longer able to use. Fortunately, these things had not been carried off, else there would be but little likelihood of their making Panama. At best, they will reach it with broken hearts; for they have heard the whole story in all its dark details, so far as Don Gregorio could give them.

Having already determined their longitude by the bark's chronometer, they have kept it by log-reckoning; and their present observation is but to confirm them in the latitude.

"Starboard your helm!" shouts Crozier to Grummet. "Give her another point to port. Keep her east by south. Steady!"

Then turning to Cadwallader, he says, "If all goes well, we shall make Panama in less than four days. We might do it in two, if we could but set sail enough. Anyhow, I think old Bracebridge will wait for us at

least a week. Ah! I wish that were all we had to trouble us. To think they're gone — lost to us — forever!"

"Don't say that, Ned. There's still a hope we may find them."

"And found — what then? You needn't answer, Will: I don't wish to speak of it: I daren't trust myself to think of it. Carmen Montijo, my betrothed, captive to a crew of pirates!"

Cadwallader is silent. He suffers the same agony, thinking of Iñez.

For a time the picture remains before their minds, dark as their gloomiest fears and fancies can paint it. Then across it shoots a ray of hope, sinister, but sweet; for it is a thought of vengeance. Cadwallader first gives expression to it.

"Whatever has happened to the girls, we shall go after them anyhow. And the robbers — we *must find them*."

"Find and punish them," cries Crozier. "That we surely shall! If it cost all my money, all the work of my life, I'll revenge the wrongs of Carmen Montijo."

"And I those of Iñez Alvarez."

For a while they stand silently brooding upon that which has brought such black shadow over their hearts; then Cadwallader says, —

"They must have plotted it all before leaving San Francisco, and shipped aboard the Chilian vessel for the express purpose of getting this gold. That's Don Gregorio's idea of it, borne out by what he heard from that ruffian he knew there — Rocas the name, he says."

"It seems probable, indeed certain," rejoins Crozier; "though it don't much matter how or when they planned the wicked deed. Enough that they've

done it. But to think of Harry Blew turning traitor, and taking part with them! That is to me the strangest thing of all, and painful as strange."

"But do you believe he has done so?"

"How can I help believing it? What Don Gregorio heard leaves no alternative. He went off in the boat along with the rest, besides saying words which prove he went willingly. Only to think of such black ingratitude! Cadwallader, I'd as soon have thought of suspecting yourself!"

"His conduct, certainly, seems incredible. I believed Blew to be a thoroughly honest fellow. No doubt the gold corrupted him, as it has many a better man. But let's think no more about it, only hope we may some day lay hands on him."

"Ah! If I ever do that! With my arms around him, I once saved his worthless life. Let me but get him into my embrace again, and he'll have a hug that'll squeeze the last breath out of his body."

"The chance may come yet, and with the whole scoundrelly crew. What brutes they must have been! According to Don Gregorio's account, they were of all nations, and the worst sort of each. The negro says the same. Among them four that spoke Spanish, and appeared to be Spaniards, or Spanish Americans. Suppose we pay a visit to the fore-castle, and see if we can find any record of their names. It might be of use hereafter."

"By all means!" assents the lieutenant; and the two start for the fore-deck in silence, with anxiety upon their faces; for there is a thought in their hearts which neither has yet made known to the other, — blacker and more bitter than the knowledge of Harry Blew's treason. Unspoken, they carry it into

the fore-castle; but they are not many minutes there, before seeing what brings it out, without either having spoken a word. A bunk, the most conspicuous of the two tiers, is explored first. Among its scattered contents are papers of various sorts, — some letters, several numbers of an old newspaper, and a pack of Spanish cards. Beside these is one of a different kind, — a little bit of white card, with a name printed upon it; a visiting-card — but whose? As Crozier picks it up, and reads the name, his blood curdles, the hair crisping on his head, — “MR. EDWARD CROZIER, H.B.M. FRIGATE CRUSADER.”

He does not need to be told how his card came there. Intuitively he understands, remembering when, where, and to whom, he gave it, — to De Lara on the day of their encounter in front of Don Gregorio's house. Thrusting it into his pocket, he clutches at the letters, and looks at their superscription, — “Don Francisco de Lara.” Opening them, he rapidly reads one after the other. His hands holding them shake as with a palsy, while in his eyes there is an expression of a painful nature; for he fears, that, subscribed to some, he will find a name dear to him, — that of Carmen Montijo. If so, farewell to all faith in human kind. Harry Blew's ingratitude has destroyed his belief in man. A letter from the daughter of Don Gregorio Montijo to the gambler Frank Lara will alike wither his confidence in woman.

With eager eyes, and lips compressed, he continues the perusal of the letters. They are from many correspondents, and relate to various matters, most about money and *monté*, signed “Faustino Calderon.” As the last passes through his fingers, he breathes freely, though with a shrug of self-reproach for having

doubted the woman who was to have been his wife. Turning to Cadwallader, — as himself, aware of all, — he says in solemn emphasis, —

“ Now we know ! ”

CHAPTER L.

THE LAST LEAF IN THE LOG.

NO common pirates, then, no mere crew of mutinous sailors, have carried off Carmen Montijo and Inez Alvarez. It has been done by De Lara and Calderon; for, although there is no evidence of the latter having been aboard the bark, it is deducible, and not even doubtful. With a design such as that before them, the confederates were not likely to have parted.

Several hours have elapsed since the discovery; and the young officers, again upon the quarter-deck, stand gazing in one another's faces, on both an expression of anguish, which the new knowledge has intensified. It was painful to think of their sweethearts being the sport of rough robbers; but to picture them in the power of Francisco de Lara and Faustino Calderon, knowing what they do of these men, is agony itself.

“ Yes, it's all clear,” says Crozier. “ No idea of getting gold has brought the thing about. That may have influenced the others who assisted them; but with them the motive was different, as fiendish. I see it now.”

“ Do you know, Ned, I half suspected it from the first. You remember what I said as we were leaving

San Francisco. After what happened between us and the gamblers, I had my fears about our girls being left in the same place with them. Still, who'd have thought of their following them aboard ship?—above all, with Blew there, and after his promise to protect them? You remember him saying he'd lay down his life for theirs?"

"Certainly I do. If ever I find him, I shall make him suffer for that broken promise."

"What do you propose doing after we reach Panama? If we find the frigate there, we'll be obliged to join her."

"Obliged! There's no obligation to bind a man reckless as I—as this misery makes me. Unless Capt. Bracebridge consent to assist us in the search, I'll go alone."

"Not alone. There's one will be with you."

"I know it, Will. Of course, I count upon you. What I mean is, if Bracebridge won't help us with the frigate, I'll throw up my commission, charter a vessel myself, engage a crew, and search every inch of the American coast till I find where they've put in."

"What a pity we can't tell the place! They must have been near land to take to an open boat."

"In sight of, close to it. I've been questioning Don Gregorio. He knows that much, and but little besides. The poor gentleman is almost as crazed as the skipper. A wonder he's not more. He says they had sighted land that very morning—the first since leaving California. The captain told them they would be in Panama about two days after. As the boat was being rowed away, Don Gregorio saw it through the cabin-windows. They appeared to make for some

land not far off, lighted up by a clear moonlight. That's all I can get out of him."

"The old negro — can he tell no better story?"

"I've questioned him too. He's equally sure of their having been close in to the coast. What point, he has no idea any more than the oranges. However, he states a particular fact, which is more satisfactory. A short while before they seized hold of him, he was looking over the side, and saw a strangely-shaped hill, a mountain. He describes it as having two tops. The moon was between them, the reason for his taking notice of it. That double-headed hill may yet stand us in stead."

"How unfortunate the skipper losing his senses! If he'd kept them, he could have told us where he was at the time the bark was abandoned. His getting lunny is enough to make one think the very Fates are against us. By the way, we've never thought of looking at the log-book. That ought to throw some light on the locality."

"It ought, and doubtless would if we only had it. You're mistaken in saying we never thought of it. I did, and have been searching for it all along. But it's gone; and, what's become of it, I know not. They may have thrown it overboard before leaving; though what good that would do them, I can't see. The cook says it used to lie on a little shelf at the turning of the cabin-stair. I've looked there and everywhere else, but no log-book. As you say, it's enough to make one believe the Fates were against us. If so, we may never reach Panama, much less live to" —

"See!" cries Cadwallader, interrupting the despairing speech. "Those brutes! What's that they're knocking about? By Jove! I believe it's the very thing we're speaking of."

The "brutes" are the Myas monkeys, that, away in the ship's waist, are tossing something between them, apparently a large book bound in rough red leather. They have mutilated the binding, and, with teeth and claws, are tearing out the leaves, as they strive to take it from one another.

"It is, it must be, the log-book," responds Crozier, as both officers rush off to rescue it from the clutch of the oranges.

They succeed, but not without difficulty, and a free handling of handspikes, almost braining the apes before these consent to relinquish it.

It is at length recovered, though in a ruinous condition, fortunately, however, with the written leaves unturned. Upon the last of these is an entry, evidently the latest made, — "Lat. $7^{\circ} 20'$ N.; Long. $82^{\circ} 12'$ W. Light breeze."

"Good!" exclaims Crozier, rushing back to the quarter-deck, and bending over the chart. "With this, and the double-headed hill, we may get upon the track of the despoilers. Just when we were despairing! Will, old boy, there's something in this. I have a presentiment that things are taking a turn, and the Fates will yet be for us."

"God grant they may!"

"Ah!" sighs Crozier, "if we had but ten men aboard this bark, or even six, I'd never think of going on to Panama, but steer straight for the Island of Coiba. As the chart shows, that's the land they must have seen, or else Hicaron, which lies on its sou'-west side. With a light breeze, they couldn't have made much way after the date of that entry. Oh for ten good hands! A thousand pounds apiece for ten trusty lads! I only wish in that squall the cutter's crew had been left along with us."

“Never fear, Ned; we’ll get them again, or as good. Old Bracebridge won’t fail us, I’m sure. He’s a dear good soul; and, when he hears the tale we’ve to tell, it’ll be all right. If he can’t himself come along with the frigate, he’ll allow us men to man this bark,—enough to make short work with her late crew, if we can once stand face to face with them. I only wish we were in Panama.”

“I’d rather we were off Coiba, or on shore wherever the ruffians have landed.”

“Not as we now are — three against twelve!”

“I don’t care for that. I’d give ten thousand pounds to be in their midst, even alone.”

“Ned, you’ll never be there alone: wherever you go, I go with you. We have a common cause, and shall stand or fall together.”

“That we shall. God bless you, Will Cadwallader! I feel you’re worthy of the friendship, the trust, I’ve placed in you. And now let’s talk no more about it, but bend on all the sail we can, and get to Panama. After that, we’ll steer for the Island of Coiba. We’re so far fortunate in having this westerly wind,” he continues in more cheerful tones. “If it keep in the same quarter for another twenty-four hours, we ought to sight land; and, if this Chilian chart may be depended on, that should be the promontory on the west side of Panama Bay. I hope the chart is a true one; for Punta Malo, as its name imports, isn’t a nice place to make mistakes about. If we should run too close to it, with this west wind” —

“Steamer to norward!” cries a rough voice, interrupting him. It is Grummet’s.

The young officers, turning with a start, see the same. Crozier, laying hold of a telescope, raises it to

his eye, while he holds it there, saying, "You're right, cockswain: it is a steamer, and standing this way. She'll run across our bows. Up helm, and set the bark's head on her. I want to hail that vessel."

Grummet obeys, and, with a few turns of the wheel, brings the "Condor's" head round, till she is right to meet the steamer. The officers, with the negro assisting, loose tacks and sheets, trimming her sails for the changed course.

Soon the two vessels, steered from almost opposite directions, lessen the distance between; and, as they mutually make approach, each speculates on the character of the other. They on board the bark have little difficulty in determining that of the steamer. At a glance, they see she is not a war-ship, but a passenger-packet; and, as there are no others in that part of the Pacific, she can be only one of the "liners" lately established between San Francisco and Panama, coming down from the former port, her destination the latter.

Not so easy for those aboard the steamship to make out the character of the craft that has turned up in their track, and is sailing straight towards them. They see a bark, polacca-masted, with some sails set, and others hanging in shreds from her yards. This of itself would be enough to excite curiosity; but there is something besides, — a flag reversed flying at her mainmast-head, the flag of Chili. It matters not what its nationality: Enough that they know it to be a signal of distress.

Responding to the appeal, the commander of the steam-packet orders her engines to slow, and then to cease action, till the huge leviathan, late running at the rate of twelve knots an hour, gradually lessens speed, and at length lies motionless upon the water

Simultaneously the bark is "hove to:" her sails cease propelling her, and she lies at less than a cable's length from the steamer. From the latter the hail is heard first, "Bark ahoy! What bark is that?"

"The 'Condor,' Valparaiso. In distress."

"Send a boat aboard!"

"Not strength to man it."

"Wait, then! We'll board you."

In less than five minutes' time, one of the quarter-boats of the liner is lowered down, and a crew leaps into it. Pushing off from her side, it soon touches that of the vessel in distress, but not for its crew to board her. Crozier has already traced out his course of action. Slipping down into the steamer's boat, he makes request to be rowed to the ship, which is done without questioning. The uniform he wears entitles him to respect.

Stepping aboard the steamship, he sees that she is what he has taken her for, a line-packet from San Francisco, bound for Panama. She is crowded with passengers; at least a thousand showing upon her decks. They are of all qualities and kinds, all colors and nationalities; most of them Californian gold-diggers returning to their homes, — some successful and cheerful, others downcast and disappointed.

He is not long in telling his tale, — first to the commander of the steamer and his officers, then to the passengers; for to these he makes appeal, a call for volunteers, not alone to assist in navigating the bark, but to proceed with him in pursuit of the crew that cast her away.

He makes known his position, with his power to compensate them for the service sought, both indorsed by the commander of the steamship, who, in his anxi-

ety to assist, is ready to answer for his credentials. They are not needed, nor yet the promise of a money reward. Among those stalwart men are many who are heroes, true Paladins, despite their somewhat threadbare habiliments; and amidst their soiled rags shine pistols and knives ready to be drawn for the right.

After hearing the young officer's tale, without listening further, twenty of them spring forward in response to his appeal; not for the reward he offers, but in the cause of humanity and justice. He could enlist twice or thrice the number; but, deeming twenty enough, with these he returns to the "Condor."

Then the two vessels part company, the steamer continuing on for Panama; while the bark, now better manned, and with more sail set, is steered for the point where the line of lat. $7^{\circ} 20' N.$ intersects that of long. $82^{\circ} 12' W.$

CHAPTER LI.

STARVATION POINT.

WHILE these scenes are passing at sea, others of equally exciting character occur upon that desert shore, where, by a sinister chance for themselves, if not for their captives, the pirate crew of the "Condor" made landing. They are still upon the isle, all their efforts to get off having proved idle. But how different are they from that hour when they brought their boat upon its beach, laden with the spoils

of the plundered vessel! Changed not only in their feelings, but looks, scarce recognizable as the same men. Then in the full plenitude of swaggering strength, mental as bodily, with tongues given to loud talk; now subdued and silent, stalking about like spectres, with weak, tottering steps; some sitting listlessly upon stones, or lying a stretch along the earth; not resting, but from sheer inability to stand erect.

Famine has made its mark upon their faces. Hunger can be read in their hollow eyes, and pale, sunken cheeks; while thirst shows upon their parched and shrivelled lips.

Not strange all this. For nine days they have tasted no food, save shell-fish and the rank flesh of sea-fowl (both in short supply), and no drink, excepting some rain-water caught in the boat-sail during an occasional slight shower.

All the while have they kept watch with an earnestness such as their desperate circumstances evoked. A tarpauling they have rigged up by oar and boat-hook, set upon the most elevated point of the isle, has failed to attract the eye of any one on the mainland, or, if seen, the signal has been disregarded; while to seaward, no ship or other vessel has been observed, nought but the blank blue of ocean recalling their crime, in its calm tranquillity mocking their remorse.

Repentant are they now. If they could, willingly would they undo their wicked deed, joyfully surrender the stolen gold, gladly give up their captives, be but too glad to restore to life those they have deprived of it.

It cannot be. Their victims left aboard the bark must have long ago gone to the bottom of the sea. In its bed they are now sleeping their last sleep, released

from all earthly woes ; and they who have so ruthlessly consigned them to their eternal rest now almost envy it. In their hour of agony, as hunger gnaws at their entrails, and thirst scorches them like a consuming fire, they care little for life ; some even desiring death.

All are humbled now. Even the haughty Gomez no longer affects to be their leader ; and the savage Padilla is tamed to silent inaction, if not tenderness. By a sort of tacit consent, Harry Blew has become the controlling spirit, perhaps from having evinced more humanity than the rest. Now that adversity is on them, their better natures are brought out, and the less hardened of them have resumed the gentleness of childhood's days.

The change has been of singular consequence to their captives. These are no longer restrained, but free to go and come as it pleases them. No more need they fear insult or injury. No rudeness is offered them, either by speech or gesture : on the contrary, they are treated with studied respect, almost with deference. The choicest articles of food, bad at best, are apportioned to them, as also the largest share of the water, fortunately, sufficient of both to keep up their strength ; and they, in turn, have been ministering angels, tender nurses to the men who have made all their misery.

Thus have they lived up till the night of the ninth day since their landing on the isle ; then a heavy rain-fall, filling the concavity of the boat's sail, enables them to replenish the beaker, with other vessels they had brought ashore.

On the morning of the tenth, they are relinquishing themselves to bitter despair and have called to the Dutchman, who has been posted on the heights above,

on the outlook for a passing sail, to come down. A last solemn council of ways and means is to be held, and all hands must assist. But he neither obeys, nor gives back response. He does not even look in their direction. They can see him by the signal-staff, standing erect, with face turned towards the sea, and one hand over his eyes, shading them from the sun. He appears to be regarding some object in the offing.

Presently he lowers the spread palm, and raises a telescope with which he is provided.

They stand watching him, speechless, and with bated breath, their solemn purpose for the time forgotten. In the gleaming of that glass they have a fancy there may be life, as there is light.

The silence continues till 'tis seen going down. Then they hear words which send the blood in quick current through their veins, bringing hope back into their hearts, "*Sail in sight!*"

CHAPTER LII.

AN AVENGING NEMESIS.

SAIL in sight! Three little words, but full of big meaning, oft carrying the question of life or death.

To the ears of the starving crew, sweet as music, despite the harsh Teutonic pronunciation of him who gave them utterance.

At the shout from above, all have faced towards the sea, and stand scanning its surface, but with gaze

unrewarded. The white flecks seen afar are only the wings of gulls.

“Where away?” shouts one, interrogating him on the hill.

“Sou’-westert.”

South-westward they cannot see. In this direction their view is bounded; a projection of the cliff interposing between them and the outside shore. All who are able start off towards its summit. The stronger ones rush up the gorge as if their lives depended on speed. The weaker go toiling after. One or two, weaker still, stay below to wait the report that will soon reach them.

The first up, on clearing the scarp, have their eyes upon the Dutchman. His behavior might cause them surprise, if they could not account for it. The signal-staff is upon the higher of the two peaks, some two hundred yards beyond. He is beside it, and apparently beside himself. Dancing over the ground, he makes grotesque gesticulations, tossing his arms about, and waving his hat overhead; all the while shouting as if to some ship close at hand, repeating the hail, “Ahoy, ahoy!”

Looking, they can see no ship, nor craft of any kind. For a moment they think him mad, and fear, after all, it may be a mistake. Certainly there is no vessel near enough to be hailed.

But, sending their eyes farther out, their fear gives place to joy almost delirious. There is a sail; and though long leagues off, little more than a speck, their practised eyes tell them she is steering that way, running coastwise. Keeping her course, she must come past the isle, within sight of their signal, so long spread to no purpose. Without staying to reflect

further, they strain on towards the summit where the staff is erected.

Harry Blew is the first to reach it, and, clutching the telescope, jerks it from the hands of the half-crazed Dutchman. Raising it to his eye, he bends it on the distant sail, there keeping it more than a minute. The others have meanwhile come up, and, clustering around, impatiently question him.

“What is she? How’s she standing?”

“A bit o’ a bark,” responds Blew, “and, from what I can make out, close huggin’ the shore. I’ll be better able to tell when she draws out from that clump o’ cloud.”

Gomez, standing by, appears eager to get hold of the glass; but Blew seems reluctant to give it up. Still holding it at his eye, he says, “See to that signal, mates! Spread the tarpaulin’ to its full stretch. Face it square, so’s to give ’em every chance o’ sight-in’ it.”

Striker and Davis spring to the piece of tarred canvas, and grasping it, one at each corner, draw out the creases, and hold as directed.

All the while Blew stands with the telescope levelled, loath to relinquish it. But Gomez, grown importunate, insists on having his turn; and it is at length surrendered to him.

Blew, stepping aside, seems excited with some emotion he tries to conceal. Strong it must be, judging from its effects on the ex-man-o’-war’s-man. On his face there is an expression difficult to describe, — surprise amounting to amazement, joy subdued by anxiety. Soon as giving up the glass, he pulls off his pilot-coat; then divesting himself of his shirt, a scarlet flannel, he suspends it from the outer end of the cross-

piece which supports the tarpauling, as he does so, saying to Striker and Davis, "That's a signal no ship ought to disregard, and won't if manned by Christian men. *She* won't, if she sees it. You two stay here, and keep the things well spread. I'm going below to say a word to them poor creeturs. Stand by the staff, and don't let any o' them haul down the signal."

"Ay, ay!" answers Striker, without comprehending, and somewhat wondering at Blew's words — under the circumstances strange. "All right, mate. Ye may depend on me an' Bill."

"I know it, I do," rejoins the ex-man-o'-war's-man, again drawing the dreadnought over his shirtless skin. "Both o' you be true to me, and, 'fore long, I may be able to show I an't ungrateful."

Saying this, he separates from the Sydney Ducks, and hurries down towards the gorge.

Both, as they stand by the signal-staff, now more than ever wonder at what he has said, and interrogate one another as to his meaning.

In the midst of their mutual questioning, they are attracted by a cry strangely intoned. It is from Gomez, who has brought down the telescope, and holds it in hands that shake as with palsy.

"What is it?" asks Padilla, stepping up to him.

"Take the glass, Rafael Rocas. See for yourself!"

The old contrabandista does as directed. He is silent for some seconds, while getting the telescope on the strange vessel. Soon as he has her within the field of view, he commences making remarks, overheard by Striker and Davis, giving both a surprise, though the latter least.

"Bark she is — polacca-masts. Queer! About the same bulk too! If it wasn't that we're sure of the

‘Condor’ being below, I’d be willing to swear it was she. Of course, it can be only a coincidence. A strange one, though.”

Velarde, in turn, takes the telescope; he, too, after a sight through it, expressing himself in a similar manner. Hernandez next; for the four Spaniards have all ascended to the hill.

But Striker does not wait to hear what Hernandez may have to say. Dropping the tarpauling, he strides up to him, and, *sans cérémonie*, takes the telescope from his fingers; then bringing it to his eye, sights for himself.

Less than twenty seconds suffice for him to determine the character of the vessel. Within that time, his glance taking in her hull, traversing along the line of her bulwarks, and then ascending to the tops of her tall, smooth masts, he recognizes all as things with which he is well acquainted.

He, too, almost lets drop the telescope, as, turning to the others, he says in a scared but firm voice, the “‘Condor!’”

“‘Condor!’ Impossible!” cry the four Spaniards, speaking together.

“It is, for all that!” rejoins Striker. “How so I don’t understan’ any more than yourselves. But that vonder craft be the Chili bark — or her spectre — I’ll take my solemn affydvay.”

Striker’s speech calls up strange thoughts, that take possession of the minds of those listening to it. How could it be the “Condor,” long since scuttled, sent to the bottom of the sea? Impossible! The sail seen must be a spectre.

In their weak state, with nerves unnaturally excited, they almost believe this, one and all impressed with

wild, weird fancies, that strike terror to their guilty souls.

Something more than mortal is pursuing to punish them. It is the hand of vengeance. For days they have been thinking so; and now they see it stretching farther, and coming nearer. Clearly a Fate, an avenging Nemesis!

“It’s the bark, beyond a doubt,” continues Striker, with the glass again at his eye. “Every thin’ the same, ’ceptin’ her sails, the which show patched like. That be nothin’. It’s the Chili craft, and no other. Her sure’s we stan’ heer!”

“Stay!” exclaims Gomez. “Where are they who took charge of the scuttling? Can they have blundered in their work?”

Remembering the men, all turn round, looking for them. They are not among the group gathered around the staff. Blew has long ago gone down the gorge, and Davis is just disappearing into it. They shout to him to come back. He hears, but, not heeding, continues on, and is soon out of sight. It matters not questioning him, and they give up thought of it. The thing out at sea engrosses all their attention.

Now nearer, the telescope is no longer needed to tell that it is a bark, polacca-masted, in size, shape of hull, sit in the water, every thing, the same as with the “Condor;” and the bit of bunting, — red, white, blue, — the Chilian ensign, the flag carried by the bark they abandoned. They remember a blurred point in the central star: ’tis there!

Spectre or not, she is standing towards them, straight towards them, coming on at a rate of speed that soon brings her abreast the islet. She has seen their signal, no doubt of that: if there were, it is

before long set at rest; for, while they are watching her, she draws opposite the opening in the reef, then lets sheets loose, and, squaring her after-yards, is instantly hove to.

Down drops a boat from the davits: as it strikes the water, men seem swarming over the side into it. Then the splash of oars, their wet blades glinting in the sun, as the boat is rowed through the reef-passage. Impelled by strong arms, it soon crosses the stretch of calm water, and shoots up into the cove. Beaching it, the crew spring out on the pebbly strand, some not waiting till it is drawn up, but dashing breast-deep into the surf. There are nearly twenty, all stalwart fellows, with big beards; some in sailor garb, but most red-shirted, belted, bristling with bowie-knives and pistols, wearing tall boots, with trousers tucked in at their tops, — the costume of the California gold-digger.

Two are different from the rest, in the uniform of naval officers, with caps gold-banded. These, though the youngest, seem to command, being the first to leap out of the boat, soon as on shore, drawing their swords, and advancing at the head of the others.

All this observed by the four Spaniards, who are still around the signal-staff, like it, standing fixed, though not altogether motionless; for they are shaking with fear. Their thoughts, hitherto given to the supernatural, are not less so now, even more, those of Gomez and Hernandez. Incomprehensible to them, the "Condor" being afloat; but to behold among the men who have just come out of her two they well know! For, in the officers leading, De Lara and Calderon recognize their detested rivals in love, — the same who made smash of their *monté* bank.

For some moments, De Lara stands in sullen silence,

with eyes dilated. He has watched the beaching of the boat, and the landing of her crew. Recognizing the officers, he clutches Calderon by the arm. Now, more vividly than ever, is their crime recalled; for now its punishment is near: there is no chance to escape it. To resist will only be to hasten their doom, — sure to be death. They do not think of resistance, nor yet flight, but remain upon the hilltop, cowering and speechless. Calderon is the first to break silence, frantically exclaiming, “The officers of the English frigate! Mystery of mysteries! What can it mean?”

“No mystery,” rejoins De Lara, addressing himself to the other three, — “none whatever. I see it all now, clear as the sun at noonday. Blew has been traitor to us, as I suspected all along. He and Davis have not scuttled the bark, but left her to go drifting about; and the frigate to which these officers belong has come across, picked her up, and, lo! they are there.”

“That’s it, no doubt,” says Velarde, otherwise Diaz. “But those rough fellows with them don’t appear to be men-of-war’s-men, nor sailors of any kind, more like gold-diggers, the same as crowd the streets of San Francisco. They must have come thence.”

“It matters not what they are or where from: enough that they’re here, and we in their power.”

At this, Diaz and Padilla, now known as Rafael Rocas, step towards the cliff’s edge, to have a look below, leaving the other two by the staff.

“What do you suppose they’ll do to us?” asks Calderon of De Lara. “Do you think they’ll —”

“Shoot or hang us?” interrupts De Lara: “that’s what you’d say. I don’t think any thing about it. One or other they’ll do, to a certainty.”

“Is there no chance of escaping?” piteously exclaims the *ex-ganadero*.

“None whatever. No use our trying to get away from them. There’s nowhere we could conceal ourselves, not a spot to give us shelter for a single hour. For my part, I don’t intend to stir from here. Yes, I shall go down to them, and meet death like a man — no, like a tiger. Before dying, I shall defend myself. Are you good to do the same? Are you game for it?”

“I don’t comprehend you,” answers Calderon. “Who would you fight against?”

“Whomsoever I can. Two for certain.”

“Which two?”

“Crozier and Carmen. You may do as you please. I’ve marked out my pair, and mean to have their lives before yielding up my own, — hers, if I can’t his. She sha’n’t live to triumph over me.”

While speaking, the desperado has taken out his revolver, and, holding it at half-cock, spins the cylinder round, to see that all the six chambers are loaded, with the caps on the nipples. Sure of this, he returns it to its holster, and then glances at his *macheté*, hanging on his left hip. All this with a cool carefulness which shows him determined upon his hellish purpose. Calderon, quailing at the thought of it, endeavors to dissuade him, urging, that, after all, they may be only made prisoners, and leniently dealt with. He is cut short by De Lara crying out, —

“You may stifle in a prison, if it so please you. After what’s happened, that’s not the destiny for me. I prefer death and vengeance.”

“Better life and vengeance,” cries Rocas, coming up, Diaz along with him, both in breathless haste. “Quick, comrades!” he continues. “Follow me! I’ll find a way to save the first, and maybe get the last, sooner than you expected ”

“It’s no use, Rafael,” argues De Lara, misunderstanding the speech of the seal-hunter. “If we attempt flight, they’ll only shoot us down the sooner. Where could we flee to?”

“Come on: I’ll show you where. Courage! Don’t stand hesitating: every second counts now. If we can but get there in time” —

“Get where?”

“To the boat.”

On hearing the words, De Lara utters an exclamation of joy. They apprise him of a plan which may not only get him out of danger, but give revenge sweet as ever fell to the lot of mortal man.

He hesitates no longer, but hastens after the seal-hunter, who, with the other two, has already started towards the brow of the cliff. But not to stay there; for, in a few seconds after, they are descending it, not through the gorge by which they came up, but another, also debouching into the bay.

Little dream the English officers, or the brave men who have landed with them, of the peril impending. If the scheme of the seal-hunter succeed, theirs will be a pitiful fate: the tables will be turned upon them.



CHAPTER LIII.

THE TABLES NEARLY TURNED.

AT the cliff's base, the action, simultaneous, is yet more exciting. Having left their boat behind, with a man to take care of it, the rescuers advance towards the inner end of the cove; at first with caution, till, passing the rock-portal, they see the platform, and those on it. Then the young officers rush forward, with no fear of having to fight. Instead of armed enemies to meet them, they behold the dear ones from whom they have been so long separated; beside them, half a dozen figures, more like spectres than men, with cowed, craven faces, seeming so feeble as to have a difficulty in keeping their feet. With swords sheathed, and pistols returned to their holsters, they hasten on, the girls rushing out to receive them. Soon they are together, two and two, breasts touching, and arms infolded in mutual embrace. For a while, no words, — the hearts of all four too full for speech, — only ejaculations and kisses, with tears, not of sorrow. Soon follow speeches, necessarily brief and half-incoherent; Crozier telling Carmen that her father is still alive, and aboard the bark. He lives, he is safe: that is enough. Then, in answer to his questions, a word or two on her side; but, without waiting to hear all, he turns abruptly upon Harry Blew, who is seen some paces off. Neither by word nor gesture has the sailor saluted him. He stands passive, a silent spectator, as Crozier supposes, the greatest criminal on earth.

In quick retrospect of what has occurred, and what he has heard from Don Gregorio, how could it be otherwise? But he will not condemn without hearing; and, stepping up to the ex-man-o-war's-man, he demands explanation of his conduct, sternly saying, "Now, sir, I claim an account from you. Tell your story straight, and don't conceal aught, or prevaricate. If your treason be as black as I believe it, you deserve no mercy from me. And your only chance to obtain it will be by telling the truth."

While speaking, he draws his sword, and stands confronting the sailor, as if a word were to be the signal for thrusting him through.

Blew is himself armed with both pistol and knife; but instead of drawing, or making any show of defence, he remains cowed-like, his head drooping down to his breast. He gives no response. His lips move not; neither his arms nor limbs. Alone his broad chest heaves and falls, as if stirred by some terrible emotion. His silence seems a confession of guilt.

Taking, or mistaking it for this, Crozier cries out, "Traitor, confess before I run this blade through your miserable body."

The threat elicits an answer. "You may kill me if you wish, Master Edward. By rights, my life belongs to ye. But, if you take it, I'll have the satisfaction o' knowin' I've done the best I could to prove my gratefulness for your once savin' it."

Long before he has finished his strange speech, the impending stroke is stayed, and the raised blade dropped point downward; for on the hand which grasps it, a gentler one is laid, a soft voice saying, "Hold, Eduardo! What would you do?: You know not. This brave man — to him I owe my life, — I and Iñez."

“Yes,” adds Iñez, advancing, “more than life 'Tis he who protected us.”

Crozier stands trembling, the sword almost shaken from his grasp. While sheathing it, he is told how near he has been to doing that which would ever after have made him miserable. He feels like one withheld from a crime, — almost parricide; for to have killed Harry Blew would have been like killing his own father.

The exciting episode is almost instantly succeeded by another, still more stirring, and longer sustained. While Carmen is proceeding to explain her interference on behalf of Blew, she is interrupted by cries coming up from the beach; not meaningless shouts, but words of ominous import: “Ahoy, there! help, help!” Coupled with them, Crozier hears his own name, then the “Help, help!” reiterated, recognizing the voice of the man left in charge of the boat. Without hesitating an instant, he springs off toward the strand, Cadwallader and the gold-diggers following; two staying to keep guard over those of the robbers who have surrendered. On clearing the rocky portal, they see what is causing the boat-keeper to sing out in such terrified accents, — a sight which sends the scare through their own hearts, with cries of alarm from their lips. He in the boat is on his feet, with a boat-hook in his hands, which he brandishes in a threatening manner, shouting all the while. Four men are making towards him fast as their legs can carry them. They are coming along the strand from the right side of the cove. At a glance, the young officers see who they are; at least two of them, — De Lara and Calderon, — sooner from their not meeting them unexpectedly; for, aware that these are on the

isle, they were about to go in quest of them, when summoned by the cries. No need to search for them now. There they are, with their confederates, rushing direct for the boat, already within pistol-shot of it. There can be no doubt as to their intent; and the certainty of it sends a cold, shivering fear through the hearts of those who see them, all suddenly recognizing a danger seeming as death itself. They remember having left only two or three men on the bark. Should the pirates succeed in boarding her, they may carry her off to sea, leaving the rescuers on the isle, and then — An appalling prospect, they have no time to dwell on, nor need; for it comes before them like a flash in all its horrid details. Without waiting even to exchange word with one another, they rush on to arrest the threatened catastrophe, bounding over the rocks, crashing through shells and pebbles. But they are behind time; and the others will reach the boat before them. Crozier, seeing this, shouts to the man, “Shove off into deep water!”

The sailor, understanding what is meant, brings the boat-hook point downward, and, with a desperate effort, pushes the keel clear, sending the boat adrift. But, before he can repeat the push, pistols are fired; and, simultaneous with their reports, he is seen to sink down, and lie doubled over the thwarts. A yell of vengeance peals from the pursuing party; and, maddened, they rush on. They will be too late. Already the pirates have reached the boat, now undefended; and all four together, swarming over the gunwale, drop down upon the thwarts, each laying hold of an oar, and shipping it. In agony, Crozier cries out, “Oh, they cannot surely get away — those guilty wretches!” But it would seem so. They have dropped their oar-

blades in the water, and commenced pulling, while they are beyond pistol-range. Ha! something stays them! An avenging Power stays them. Their arms rise and fall; but the boat moves not. Her keel is on a coral bottom; her bilge caught upon its rough projections. Their own weight, pressing down, holds her fast, and their oar-strokes are idly spent.

They had not thought of being thus stayed, which proves the turning-point of their fate. No use their leaping out now to lighten the boat; no time for that, nor any chance to escape. But two alternatives stare them in the face, — resistance, which means death, and surrender, that seems the same. De Lara would resist and die; so, also, Rocas. But the other two are against it, instinctively holding on to whatever hope of life may be left them.

The craven Calderon cuts short the uncertainty by rising erect, stretching forth his arms, and crying out in a piteous appeal for mercy. In an instant after, they are surrounded, the boat grasped by the gunwale, and dragged back to the shore. Crozier with difficulty restrains the angry gold-diggers from shooting them down on the thwarts. Well for them the boat-keeper was not killed, but only wounded, and in no danger of losing his life. Were it otherwise, theirs would be taken on the spot. Assured of his safety, his rescuers pull the four wretches out of the boat; then, disarming, drag them up to the platform, and bestow them in the larger cave, for a time to be their prison, though not for long. There is a judge present, accustomed to sit upon short trials, and pass quick sentences, soon followed by execution. It is the celebrated Justice Lynch.

Represented by a stalwart digger, all the others

acting as jury, the trial is speedily brought to a termination. For the four of Spanish nationality, the verdict is guilty; the sentence, death on the scaffold. The others, less criminal, to be carried on to Panama, and there delivered over to the Chilian consul; the crime being mutiny, with robbery, and abandonment of a Chilian vessel. An exception is made in the case of Striker and Davis. The Sydney Ducks receive conditional pardon, on promise of better behavior throughout all future time. This they obtain by the intercession of Harry Blew, in accordance with the hint he gave them while they stood beside the spread tarpauling.

Of the four sentenced to be hanged, one meets his fate in a different manner. The gold-dust has been recovered, packed, and put into the boat. The ladies are cloaked, and impatient to be taken back to the bark, yearning to embrace him they so long believed dead. The young officers stand beside them; all awaiting the last scene of the tragedy, — the execution of the condemned criminals. The stage has been set for it, this the level plot of ground in front of the cavern's mouth. A rope hangs down with a running-noose at one end; the other, in default of gallows' arm and branch of tree, rigged over the point of a projecting rock. All this arranged, De Lara is led out first, a digger on each side of him. He is not tied, nor confined in any way. They have no fear of his making escape. Nor has he any thought of attempting it; though he thinks of something else as desperate, and more deadly. He will not die like a scared dog, but as a fierce tiger; to the last thirsting for blood, to the end trying to destroy, — to kill. The oath sworn to Calderon on the cliff he is still determined on keeping. As they conduct him out of the cave, his eyes, glaring

with lurid light, go searching everywhere, till they rest upon a group some twenty paces distant. It is composed of four persons, Crozier and Carmen Montijo, Cadwallader and Iñez Alvarez, standing two and two. At the last pair De Lara looks not, the first enchaining his attention. Only one short glance he gives them; another to a pistol which hangs holstered on the hip of a gold-digger guarding him. A spring, and he has possession of it; a bound, and he is off from between the two men, rushing on towards the group standing apart.

Fortunately for Edward Crozier, for Carmen Montijo as well, there are cries of alarm, shouts of warning, that reach him in time. He turns on hearing them, sees the approaching danger, and takes measures to avert it. Simple enough these,—but the drawing of his revolver, and firing at the man who advances.

Two shots are heard, one on each side, almost simultaneous, but enough apart to decide which of the two who fired must fall. Crozier's pistol has cracked first; and, as the smoke of both swirls up, the gambler is seen astretch upon the sward, blood spurting from his breast, and spreading over his shirt-bosom.

Harry Blew, rushing forward, and bending over him, cries out, "Dead! Shot through the heart,—brave heart too! What a pity 'twas so black!"

"Come away, *mia*," says Crozier to Carmen. "Your father will be suffering from anxiety. You've had enough of the horrible. Let us hope this will be the end of it."

Taking his betrothed by the hand, he leads her down to the boat, Cadwallader with Iñez accompanying them.

All seat themselves in the stern-sheets, and wait for

the diggers, who soon after appear, conducting their prisoners, — the pirate crew of the “Condor,” — short four left behind, a banquet for the vultures and sea-birds.

CHAPTER LIV.

A SAILOR'S TRUE YARN.

IT is the second day after the tragic scene upon the isle; and the Chilian bark has sailed away from the Veraguan coast, out of that indentation known upon modern maps as Montijo Bay. She has long since rounded Cabo Mala, and is standing in for the port of Panama. With a full crew, — most of them old and able seamen, — no fear but she will reach it now. Crozier, in command, has restored Harry Blew to his situation of first officer, which, so far from having forfeited, he is deemed to doubly deserve. But still weak from his long privation, the ex-man-o'-war's man is excused from duty, Cadwallader doing it for him. Harry is strong enough, however, to tell the young officers what they are all ears to hear, — the story of that *Flag of Distress*. Their time hitherto taken up attending upon their *fiancées*, they have deferred calling for the full account, which only the English sailor can give them. Now having passed Cabo Mala, as if, with the “wicked cape,” all evil were left behind, they are in the mood to listen to the strange narration in all its details, and summon the chief officer to their side.

“Your honors!” he begins, “it's a twisted-up yarn, from the start to the hour ye hove in sight; an'

if ye hadn't showed yerselves just in the nick o' time, an' ta'en the twist out o' it, hard to say how 'twould 'a ended. No doubt, in all o' us dyin' on that desert island, an' layin' our bones there. Thank the Lord for our delivery — without any disparagement to what's been done by both o' you, young gentlemen. For that he must ha' sent you, an' has had a guidin' hand throughout the whole thing, I can't help thinkin' when I look back on the scores o' chanced that seemed goin' against the right, an' still sheered round to it, after all."

"True," assents Crozier, honoring the devout faith of the sailor. "You're quite right in ascribing it to divine interference. Certainly, God's hand seems to have been extended in our favor. But go on."

"Well, to commence at the beginnin', which is when you left me in San Francisco. As I told Master Willie that day he come ashore in the dingy, I war engaged to go chief mate in the Chili bark. She war then a ship; afterward converted into a bark, as ye see, through our shortness o' hands. When I went aboard her, an' for sev'ral days after, I war the only thing in the shape o' sailor she'd got. Then her captain — that poor crazed creetur below — put advertisements in the papers, offering big pay; the which, as I then supposed, brought eleven chaps, callin' themselves sailors, an' shippin' as such. One o' 'em, for want o' a better, war made second mate; his name bein' entered on the books as Padilla. He war the last o' the three swung up; an', if ever man desarved hangin', he did, bein' the cruellest scoundrel o' the lot. After we'd waited another day or two, an' no more makin' appearance, the skipper made up his mind to sail. Then the old gentleman, along wi' the two saynoretas, came

aboard, when we cleared, an' stood out to sea. Afore leavin' port, I had a suspishun about the sort o' crew we'd shipped. Soon's we war fairly afloat, it got to be somethin' worse than suspishun: I war sartin then we'd an ugly lot to deal with. Still I only believed them to be bad men, an', if that war possible, worse seamen. I expected trouble wi' them in sailin' the vessel, an' a likelihood o' them bein' disobedient. But, on the second night after leavin' land, I found out somethin' o' a still darker stripe, — that they war neither more nor less than a gang o' piratical conspirators, an' had a plan arready laid out. A lucky chance led to me discoverin' their infarnal design. The two we've agreed to let go — Striker an' Bill Davis, both old birds from the convict gangs o' Australia — war talkin' it over atween themselves; an' I chanced to overhear them. What they sayed made every thin' clear — as it did my hair to stand on eend. 'Twar a scheme to plunder the ship o' the gold-dust Don Gregorio hed got in her, an' carry off your young ladies. Same time, they war to scuttle the vessel, an' sink her, first knockin' the old gentleman on the head, or drownding of him, as well as the skipper. Your humble sarvint an' the darky war to be disposed o' same sweet fashion. On listenin' to the dyabolikal plot, I war clear dumfoundered, an' for a while didn't know what to do. 'Twar a case o' life an' death to some o' us, an', for the say-noretas, somethin' worse. At first, I thort o' tellin' Capt. Lantanas an' also Don Gregorio. But then I seed, if I shud, that 'twould only make death surer to all as were doomed. I knowed the skipper to be a man o' innocent, unsuspus nature, an' mightn't gie belief to such 'trocious rascality as bein' a thing possible. More like he'd let out right away, an' bring on

the bloody bizness sooner than they intended it. From what Striker an' Davis said, I made out that it war to be kept back till we should sight land near Panama. After a big spell o' thinkin', I seed a sort o' way out of it, — the only one appearin' possible. 'Twar this: to purtend joinin' in wi' the conspirators, an' put myself at thar head. I'd larnt from the talk o' the two Sydney Ducks, there war a split 'mong them, 'bout the dividin' o' the gold-dust. I seed this would gie me a chance to go in along wi' them. Takin' advantage o' it, I broached the bizness to Striker that same night, an' got into thar councils, arterwards obtainin' the influence I wanted. Mind ye, gentlemen, it took a smart show o' trickery an' manœuvrin'. Among other things, I had to appear cool to the cabin people throughout all the voyage, specially them two sweet crecturs. Many's the time my heart ached a-thinkin' o' yourself, sir, as also o' Master Willie, an' then o' your sweethearts, an' what might happen, if I shed fail in my plan for protectin' 'em. When they wanted to be free an' friendly, an' once began talkin' to me, I hed to answer 'em gruff an' growlin' like, knowin' that eyes war on me all the while, an' ears a-listenin'. As to tellin' them what was before, or givin' them the slimmest hint o' it, that would 'a spoilt my plans. They'd 'a gone straight to the old gentleman, an' then it would 'a been all up wi' us. 'Twar clear to me they all couldn't then be saved, an' that Don Gregorio himself would hev to be sacrificed, as well as the skipper an' cook. I thought that dreadful hard; but thar war no help for't, as I'd have enough on my hands in takin' care o' the women, without thinkin' o' the men. As the Lord has allowed, an' thank him for it, all have been saved!"

The speaker pauses in the fervor of his gratitude, which his listeners respecting, in silence wait for him to continue. He does so, saying, "At last, on sightin' land, as agreed on, the day had come for the doin' o' their dark deed. It war after night when they set about it, myself actin' as a sort o' recognized leader. I'd played my part so's to get control o' the rest. We first lowered a boat, puttin' our things into her. Then we separated, some to get out the gold-dust, others to seize the saynorectas. I let Gomez look after them, for fear of bringin' on trouble too soon. Me an' Davis — who chances to be a sort o' ship's carpenter — were to do the scuttlin', an' for that purpose went down into the hold. There I proposed to him to give the doomed ones a chance for their lives by lettin' the 'Condor' float a bit longer. Though he be a convict, he warn't nigh so bad as the rest. He consented to my proposal, an' we returned on deck 'ithout tappin' the bark's bottom timbers. Soon's I had my head over the hatch-coamin', I seed them all below in the boat, the girls along wi' them. I didn't know what they'd done to the Don an' skipper. I had my fears about 'em, thinkin' they might ha' been murdered, as Padilla had proposed. But I daren't go down to the cabin then, lest they might shove off, an' leave us in the lurch, as some war threatenin' to do; more than one wantin' it, I know. If they'd done that — well, it's no use sayin' what might ha' been the upshot. I seed 'twould 'a knocked all my plans on the head, an' tharfor hurried down into the boat. Then we rowed right away, leavin' the bark just as she'd been the whole o' that day. As we pulled shoreward, we could see her standin' off, all sails set, same as tho' the crew war aboard o' her, workin' 'em."

“But her ensign reversed?” asks Cadwallader. “She was carrying it so when we came across her. How came that, Harry?”

“Ah! the bit o’ buntin’ upside down! I did that overnight myself in the dark, thinkin’ it might get them a better chance o’ bein’ picked up.”

“And you did the very thing!” exclaims Crozier. “I see the hand of Providence in that surely! But for the distress-signal, the ‘Crusader’ would have kept on without giving chase; and — But proceed! Tell us what happened afterwards.”

“Well, we landed on the island, not knowin’ it to be a island. An’ theer’s another o’ the chances, showin’ we’ve been took care o’ by the little cherub as sits up aloft. If’t hed been the mainland — well, I needn’t tell ye things would now be different. Arter landin’, we staid all night on the shore; the men sleeping in the biggest o’ the caves, while the ladies occupied a smaller one. I took care ’bout that separation myself, detarmined they shouldn’t come to no harm that night. There war a thing happened which I daresay they’ve told you; an’ ’twar from them I afterwards larned that Gomez an’ Hernandez war no other than the two chaps you’d trouble wi’ at San Francisco. They went into the cave, an’ said some insultin’ things to the saynoreetas; but I warn’t far off, an’ would a made short work wi’ them, hed it goed further than talk. Up at a early hour next mornin’, we found the boat hed drifted off seaward, an’ got bilged on the breakers. But, supposin’ we shouldn’t want her any more, nobody thought any thin’ about it. Then comed the dividin’ o’ the gold-dust, an’ after it the great ques-tyun — leastwise, so far as I war consarned — as to who should take away the girls. I’d been waitin’ for

this ; an' now, for the settlin' o't, I war ready to do or die. Gomez an' Hernandez war the two who laid claim to 'em, as I knowed, an' expected they would. Pretendin' a likin' for Miss Carmen myself, an' puttin' Davis up to what I wanted, we, too, made our claim. It ended in Gomez an' me goin' in for a fight, which must 'a tarminated in the death o' one or other o' us. I hed no dread o' dyin', only from the fear o' its leavin' the poor creeturs unprotected. But thar war no help for't ; an' I agreed to the duel, which war to be fought, first wi' pistols, an' finished up, if need be, wi' the steel. Every thin' settled, we war 'bout settin' to, when one o' the fellows — who'd gone up the cliff to take a look ahead — just then sung out that we'd landed on a island. Recallin' the lost boat, we knew that meant a drea'ful danger. In coorse it stopped the fight ; an' we all rushed up to the cliff. When we saw how things stood, there war no more talk o' quarellin'. The piratical scoundrels war scared nigh out o' thar senses, an' would 'a been glad to get back aboard the craft they'd come out o' ; the which all, 'ceptin' Davis an' myself, supposed to be at the bottom o' the sea. After that, 'twar all safe, as far as consarned the say-noreetas. To them as would ha' took 'em, they war but a second thought in the face o' starvation, which soon tamed the wolves down, an' kep 'em so till the last o' the chapter. Now, gentlemen, ye know how Harry Blew hav behaved, an' can judge for yourselves whether he's kep the word he gied you 'fore leavin' San Francisco."

“ Behaved nobly, grandly ! ” cries Crozier. “ Kept your word like a man, like a true British sailor ! Come to my arms, to my heart, Harry ! And forgive the suspicions we had, not being able to help them. Here.

Cad! Take him to yours, and show him how grateful we both are to the man who has done more for us than saving our lives."

"Bless you, Blew! God bless you!" exclaims Cadwallader, promptly responding to the appeal, and holding Harry in a hug that threatens to strangle him.

The affecting scene is followed by an interval of profound silence, broken by the voice of Grummet, who, at the wheel, is steering straight into the port of Panama, now in sight.

"Mr. Crozier!" calls out the old cockswain, "ye see that craft, sir, the one riding at anchor out yonder in the roadstead?"

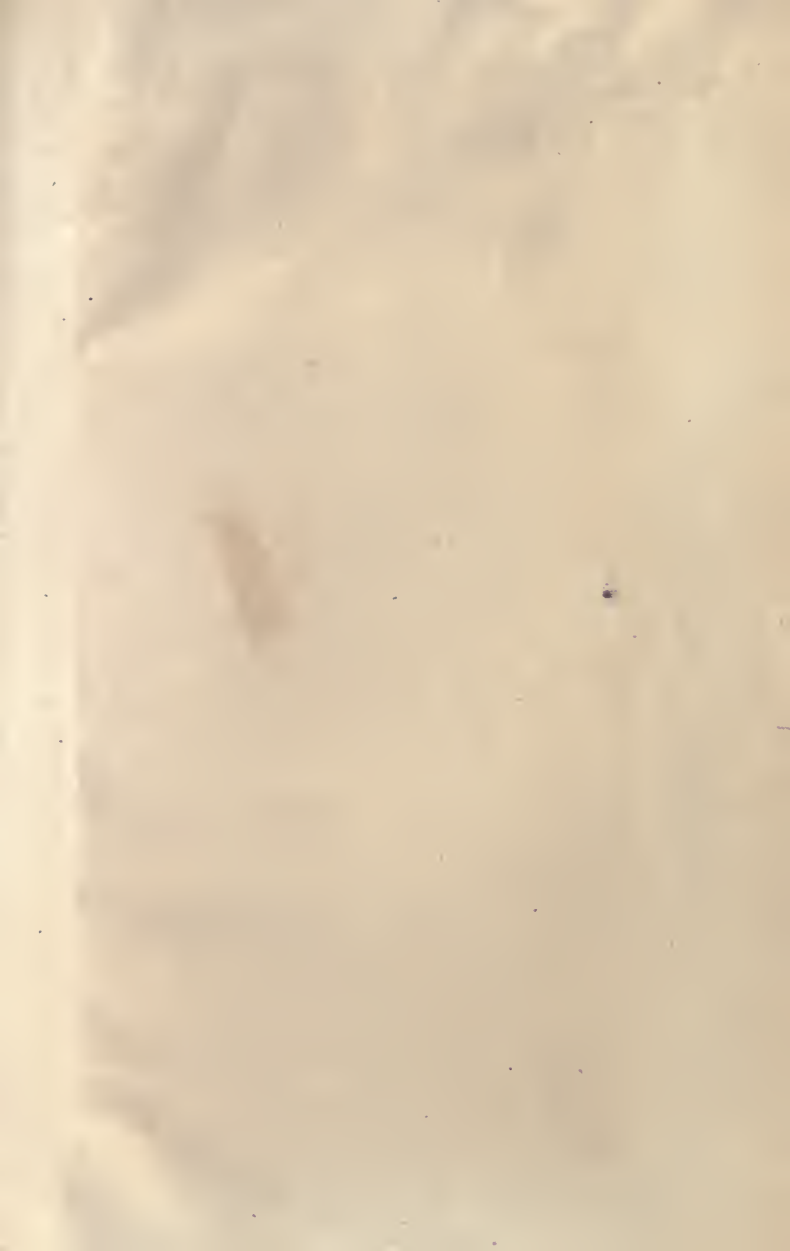
All turn their eyes in the direction indicated; soon as they have done so, together exclaiming, the "Crusader!"

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The last scene of our story occurs at Cadiz, in a grand cathedral church. Before its altar stand two English naval officers, alongside each a beautiful Spanish damsel, soon to be his wedded wife. It scarce needs to tell that the bridegrooms are Edward Crozier and Willie Cadwallader. Nor need it be told who are the brides, since they are to be given away by Don Gregorio Montijo. Nor is it necessary to describe the ceremonial splendor of that double wedding, for long time the great topic of Cadiz. Enough to say that present at it are all the wealth and fashion of the old Andalusian city, with foreign consuls, and the commanders of war-ships in the port, conspicuous amongst these, Capt. Bracebridge, and the officers of H.B.M. frigate "Crusader." Also two other men of the sea, — of its merchant-service, to hear of whose presence there will no doubt make the reader happy, as it does

both brides and bridegrooms to see them. They belong to a ship lying in the harbor, carrying polacca-masts, on her stern lettered "El Condor;" one of the two being her captain, called Lantanas, the other her chief officer, by name Blew. The good fates have been just and kind to the gentle Chilian skipper, having long since lifted from his mind the cloud that temporarily obscured it. He now knows all, above all, Harry Blew in his true colors; and though on the "Condor's" deck they are still captain and mate, when below by themselves in her cabin, all distinction of rank disappears, and they are affectionate friends, almost as brothers. In the prosperous trading-craft "Condor," reconverted into her original ship-rig, regularly voyaging between Valparaiso and Cadiz, exchanging the gold and silver of Chili for the silks and sweet wines of Spain, but few recognize a bark once chased over the South Seas, believed to be a spectre; and it is to be hoped no one will ever again see her sailing under a **FLAG OF DISTRESS.**





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