

# **The Sea-Witch**

## **The African Quadroon A Story of the Slave Coast**

**by Maturin Murray Ballou, 1820-1895**

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## **Preface**

LET the reader peruse the following story with the same spirit in which it was written, and not conceive that it is either a pro-slavery or anti-slavery tale. The "peculiar institution" which is herein introduced, is brought forward simply as an auxiliary, and not as a feature of the story. It is only referred to where the plot and locality upon the slave coast have rendered this necessary, and the careful reader will observe that the subject is treated with entire impartiality. These few remarks are introduced, because we desire to appear consistent. Our paper shall neither directly nor indirectly further any sectional policy or doctrine, and in its conduct shall be neutral, free and independent.

*Editor of The Flag of our Union.*

## **Chapter I**

### **Outward Bound.**

OUR story opens in that broad, far-reaching expanse of water which lies deep and blue between the two hemispheres, some fifteen degrees north of the equator, in the latitude of Cuba and the Cape Verd Islands. The delightful trade

winds had not fanned the sea on a finer summer's day for a twelvemonth, and the waves were daintily swelling upon the heaving bosom of the deep, as though indicating the respiration of the ocean. It was scarcely a day's sail beyond the flow of the Caribbean Sea, that one of those noblest results of man's handiwork, a fine ship, might have been seen gracefully ploughing her course through the sky-blue waters of the Atlantic. She was close-hauled on the larboard tack, steering east-southeast, and to a sailor's eye presented a certain indescribable something that gave her taut rig and saucy air a dash of mystery, which would have set him to speculating at once as to her character and the trade she followed.

Few things can be named that more potently challenge our admiration than a full-sized ship under way; her myriad of ropes, sails and appointments, all so complete and well-controlled, the power of her volition, the promptness with which she obeys the slightest movement of the helm, the majestic grace of her inclination to the power of the winds, and the foaming prow and long glistening wake, all go to make up the charm and peculiarity of a nautical picture. There is true poetry in such a scene as this, beauty fit to move the heart of an anchorite. No wonder the sailor loves his ship like a mistress; no wonder he discourses of her charms with the eloquence of true love and confiding trust; no landsman can be more enamored of his promised bride.

But the craft to which we especially refer at the present writing, was a coquette of the first class, beautiful in the extreme, and richly meriting the name that her owners had placed in golden letters on her stern—the "Sea Witch." She was one of that class of vessels known as flat upon the floor, a model that caused her to draw but little water, and enabled her to run free over a sandbar or into an inlet, where an ordinary ship's long boat would have grounded. She was very long and sharp, with graceful concave lines, and might have measured some five hundred tons. Speed had evidently been the main object aimed at in her construction, the flatness of her floor giving her great buoyancy, and her length ensuring fleetness. These were points that would at once have struck a sailor's eye, as he beheld the ship bowling gracefully on her course by the power of the trade winds that so constantly befriend the mariners in these latitudes.

We have said that the "Sea Witch" was of peculiar model, and so indeed she was. Contrary to the usual rig of what are called clipper ships, her masts, instead of raking, were perfectly upright, for the purpose of enabling her to carry more press of sail when need be, and to hold on longer when speed should be of vital importance—that the straighter construction of the masts furthers this object, is a fact long since proven in naval architecture. She was very low, too, in her rigging, having tremendous square yards; enabling the canvass to act more immediately upon the hull, instead of operating as a lever aloft, and keeping the ship constantly off an even keel. Though low in the waist, yet her ends rose gracefully in a curve towards the terminations fore and aft, making her very dry on either the quarter-deck or forecastle. She might have numbered fifty men for her crew, and if you had looked in board over her bulwarks you would have seen that her complement was made up of men. There were none there but real able-bodied seamen—sea dogs, who had roughed it in all weather, and on all sorts of allowance.

There was a quiet and orderly mien about the deck and among the watch, that spoke of the silent yet potent arm of authority. The men spoke to each

other now and then, but it was in an under tone, and there was no open levity. A few men were lounging about the heel of the bowsprit on the forecastle, one or two were busy in the waist coiling cable; an officer of second or third caste a quiet, but decided character, to judge from his features, stood with folded arms just abaft the mizzen-mast, and a youthful figure, almost too young seemingly for so responsible a post, leaned idly against the monkey-rail, near the sage old tar who was at the helm. At first you might have supposed him a supercargo, an owner's son as passenger, or something of that sort, from the quite-at-home air he exhibited; but now and then he cast one of those searching and understanding glances aloft and fore and aft, taking in the whole range of the ship's trim, and the way she did her duty, that you realized at once the fact of his position; and you could not mistake the fact that he was her commander.

He wore a glazed tarpaulin hat of coarse texture, and his dress was of little better material than that of the crew he commanded, but it set it somehow quite jauntily upon his fine, well-developed form, and there was an unmistakable air of conscious authority about him that showed him to be no stranger to control, or the position which he filled. The hair, escaping in glossy curls from beneath his hat, added to a set of very regular features a fine effect, while a clear, full blue eye, and an open, ingenuous expression of countenance, told of manliness of heart and chivalric hardihood of character. Exposure to the elements had bronzed his skin, but there were no wrinkles there, and Captain Will Ratlin could not have seen more than two and twenty years, though most of them had doubtless been passed upon the ocean, for his well-knit form showed him to be one thoroughly inured to service.

"She does her work daintily, Captain Ratlin," said he who was evidently an officer, and who had been standing by the mainmast, but now walked aft.

"Yes, Mr. Faulkner, 'daintily' is the word. I wish our beauty could be a little more spunky, time is money in our business, sir," was the prompt reply.

"But the willing craft does all she can, sir."

"I don't know, Mr. Faulkner, we can make her do almost anything."

"But talk," added the mate.

"Ay, she will do that in her own way, and eloquently, too," continued his superior.

"In coming out of Matanzas, when you made her back and fill like a saddle horse, I thought she was little less than a human being," said the mate, honestly.

"She minds her helm like a beauty, and feels the slightest pull upon her sheets."

"I never saw a vessel lie closer to the wind," said the mate; "she eats right into it, and yet has not shaken a foot of canvass this half hour."

"That is well."

"It's uncommon, sir," continued the other.

"She must and can do better, though," said the young commander, with an air of slight impatience. "Call the watch below, Mr. Faulkner, we will treat our mistress to a new dress this bright day, and flatter her pride a little; she is of the coquette school, and will bear a little dalliance."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the officer, without further parley, walking forward to the fore hatch, and with a few quick blows with a handspike, and a clear call, he summoned that portion of the crew whose hours of release from duty

permitted them below. The signal rang sharply through the ship, and caused an instant response.

A score of dark forms issued forth from the forecastle, embracing representatives from nearly half the nations of the globe; but they were sturdy sailors, and used to obey the word of command, men to be relied upon in an emergency, rough in exterior, but within either soft as women or hard as steel, according to the occasion.

Now it was that an observer not conversant with the "Sea Witch," and looking at her from a distance, would have naturally concluded that she was most appropriately named, for how else could her singular manouvres and the result that followed be explained? Suddenly the mizzen royal disappeared, followed by the top-gallant sail, topsail, and cross-jack courses, seeming to melt away under the eye like a misty veil, while, almost in a moment of time, there appeared a spanker, gaff topsail and gaff top-gallantsail in their place, while the vessel still held on her course.

A moment later, and the royal top-gallantsail, topsail and mainsail disappear from the main mast, upon which appears a regular fore and aft suit of canvass, consisting of mainsail, gaff topsail, and gaff top-gallantsail, reducing the vessel to a square rig forward, and a plain fore and aft rig aft. A few minutes more, and the foremast passed through the same metamorphose, leaving the "Sea Witch" a three-masted schooner, with fore and aft sails on every mast and every stay. All this had been accomplished with a celerity that showed the crew to be no strangers to the manouvres through which they had just passed, each man requiring to work with marked intelligence. Fifty well drilled men, thorough sea dogs, can turn a five hundred ton ship "inside out," if the controlling mind understands his position on the quarter-deck.

"She wears that dress as though it suited her taste exactly, Mr. Faulkner," said the captain, running his eye over the vessel, and glancing over the side to mark her headway.

"Any rig becomes the 'Sea Witch,'" answered the officer, with evident pride.

"That is true," returned the captain. "Luff, sir, luff a bit, so, well," he continued to the man at the helm; "we will have all of her weatherly points that site will give."

"The wind is rather more unsteady than it was an hour past," said Mr. Faulkner.

"Rather puffy, and twice I thought it would haul right about, but here we have it still from the north'rd and east'rd," replied the captain.

"Here it is again," added the mate, as the wind hauled once more.

The immediate object of the change in the vessel's rig, which we have described, was at once apparent, enabling the vessel to lie nearer the wind in her course, as well its giving her increased velocity by bringing more canvass to draw than a square rig could do when close hauled. But a shrewd observer would have been led to ask, what other reason, save that of disguise, could have been the actuating motive in thus giving to the "Sea Witch" a double character in her rig? For though temporary and somewhat important advantage could at times be thus gained, as we have seen, yet such an object alone would not have warranted the increased outlay that was necessarily incurred, to say nothing of the imperative necessity of a vessel's being very strongly manned in order to enable her to thus change her entire aspect with any ordinary degree of celerity, and as had just been accomplished.

## Chapter II

### Captain Will Ratlin.

THE watch below, after completing the work which had summoned them for the time being on deck, tumbled helter-skelter down the fore hatch once more, and left on the deck of the "Sea Witch" about a dozen able seamen who formed the watch upon deck. A number of these were now gathered in a knot on the fore-castle, and while they were sitting cross-legged, picking old rope, and preparing it in suitable form for caulking the ship's seams, one of their number was spinning a yarn, the hero of which was evidently him who now filled the post of commander on board their vessel. The object of their remarks, meanwhile, stood once more quietly leaning over the monkey-rail on the weather side of the quarter-deck, quite unconscious that he was supplying a theme of entertainment to the fore-castle.

There was an absent expression in his handsome face, a look as though his heart was far distant from the scene about him, and yet a habit of watchful caution seemed ever and anon to recall his senses, and his quick, keen glance would run over the craft from stem to stern with a searching and comprehensive power that showed him master of his profession, and worthy his trust. Trust?—what was the trust he held? Surely, no legitimate commerce could warrant the outfit of such a vessel as he controlled. A man-of-war could hardly have been more fully equipped with means of offence and defence. Amidship, beneath that long boat, was a long, heavy metalled gun that worked on a traverse, and which could command nearly every point of the compass, while the ship kept her course. Just inside the rise of the low quarter-deck—the cabin being entered from the deck by the descent of a couple of steps—there were ranged boarding pikes, muskets, cutlasses and pistols, ready for instant use. In shape they formed stars, hearts and diamonds, dangerous but fantastic ornaments.

The brightness of these arms, and the handy way in which they were arranged in the sockets made to receive them, showed at once that they were designed for use, while the various other fixtures of the cabin and docks plainly bespoke preparation for conflict. A strong and lofty boarding-netting being stowed, also, told of the readiness of the "Sea Witch" to repel boarders. That all these preparations had been made merely as ordinary precautions in a peaceful trade was by no means probable; and yet there they were, and there stood the bright-eyed, handsome and youthful commander upon the quarter-deck, but he did not look the desperado—such a term would have poorly accorded with his open and manly countenance, his quiet and gentlemanly mien. A pirate would hardly have dared to lay the course he steered in these latitudes, where an English or French cruiser was very likely to cross his track.

"He handles a ship as prettily as ever a true blue did yet," said one of the fore-castle group, in replying to some remark of a comrade concerning the commander.

"That's true," answered another; "he seems to have a sort of natural way with him, as though he'd been born aboard and never seed the land at all; and as to that matter, there may be them on board who say as much of him."

"That isn't far from the truth," answered Bill Marline, "seein' he started so arly on the sea he can't tell when he wasn't there himself."

"How was that matter, Bill?" asked one of his messmates. "They say you have kept the captain's reckoning, man and boy, these fifteen years."

"That have I, and never a truer heart floated than the man you see yonder leaning over the rail on the quarterdeck, where he belongs," answered Bill Marline.

"How did you first fall in with him, Bill?—Tell us that," said one of the crew.

"Well, do ye see, messmates, it must have been the matter of thirteen years ago, there or thereabouts, but I can't exactly say, seein' I never have kept a log and can't write; but must have been about that length of time, when I was a foremast hand on board the 'Sea Lion,' as fine an Indiaman as you would wish to see. We were lying in the Liverpool docks, with sails bent and cargo stowed, under sailing orders, when one afternoon there strolled alongside a boy rather ragged and dirty, but with such eyes and such a countenance as would make him a passport anywhere. Well, do ye see, we were lazing away time on board, and waiting the captain's coming before we hauled out into the stream, and so we coaxed the lad aboard. He either didn't know where he came from or wouldn't tell, and when we proposed to take him to sea with us, he readily agreed, and sure enough he sailed in the 'Sea Lion.'"

"Well, heave ahead, Bill," said one of the group, as the narrator stopped to stove a fresh instalment of the Virginia weed in his larboard cheek.

"Heave ahead."

"We hadn't got fairly clear of the channel," continued Bill Marline, "before the boy had become a general favorite all over the ship. We washed him up and bent on a new suit of toggery on him, with a reg'lar tarpaulin, and there was almost a fight whether the forecastle or the cabin should have him. At last it was left to the boy himself, and he chose to remain with us in the forecastle. The boy wasn't sick an hour on the passage until after we left the Cape of Good Hope, when the flag halliards getting fouled, he was sent up to the peak to loosen it, and by some lurch of the ship was throw upon deck. Why it didn't kill him was the wonder of all, but the boy was crazy for near a month from the blow on his head, which he got in falling, but he gradually got cured under our captain's care.

"Well, do ye see, our captain was a regular whole-souled fellow, though he did sometimes work up a hand's old iron pretty close for him, and so he took the boy into the cabin and gave him a berth alongside his own, and as he grew better took to teaching him the use of his instruments, and mathematics, and the like. The boy they said was wonderful ready, and learned like a book, and could take the sun and work up the ship's course as well as the captain; but what was the funniest of all was that, after he got well, he didn't know one of us, he had forgotten or even how he came on board the ship, the injury had put such a stopper on his brain that he had forgotten all that ever occurred before it. To my mind, howdsoever, it wasn't much to forget, seein' he was little better than a baby, and hadn't been to sea at all, and you know there aint anything worth knowing on shore, more'n one can overhaul in a day's leave, more or less, within hail of the sea."

"That's true," growled one or two of his messmates.

"Our ship was a first class freighter and passage vessel, and on the home voyage we had plenty of ladies. 'Twas surprisin' to see how natural like the boy took to 'em, and how they all liked him. He was constantly learning something, and soon got so he could parley vou like a real frog-eating Frenchman. And then, as I said before, he took the sun and worked up the the ship's reckoning like a commodore. Well, do ye se, messmates, we made a second and third voyage together in that ship, and when master Will Ratlin—for that was a name we give him when he first came on board, and he's kept it ever since—was a matter of fourteen years, he was nearly as big as he is now, and acted as mate, and through I say it, who ought to know somewhat about those things, I never seed a better seaman of twice his years, always savin' present company, messmates."

"In course, Bill," growled three or four of his messmates, heartily.

"Well, do ye see, messmates, we continued together in the same ship for the matter of five years, and then master Will and I shipped in another Indiaman, and we were in the 'Birmingham' for three years or more. One day we lay off the Cape on the home passage, and a half dozen of us got shore leave for a few hours, and I among the rest, and somehow I got rather more grog aboard than I could stow, and when I came off, the captain swore at me like a pirate, and after I got sober triced me up to the main rigging for a round dozen. When all hands were called to witness punishment, shiver my timbers, if master Will Ratlin, who was the first mate, didn't walk boldly up to the captain, and say, blunt and honest:

"'Captain Brace, Marline is an old and favorite seaman, and if you will let this offence pass without further punishment, I will answer for his future good behaviour, at all times. I ask it, sir, as a personal favor.'

"'But discipline, discipline must be observed, Mr. Ratlin.'

"'I acknowledge he's in fault, sir,' said our mate.

"'And deserves the punishment,' said the captain.

"'I fear he does, sir; but yet I can't bear to see a good seaman flogged, said the mate, apologetically.

"'Nor I either,' said the captain; 'but Bill Marline deserves the cat, though as you make it a personal matter, why I'll let him off this time, Mr. Ratlin.'

"The captain didn't wish to let me go, but he said he wished to gratify his mate, and so I was cast loose, and after a broadside of advice, and a hurricane of oaths, was turned over to duty again. I didn't forget that favor, messmates, and sink me if I wouldn't go to the bottom to serve him any time. He commanded a brig in the South American trade after that, and would have made a mate of me, but somehow I've got a weakness for grog that isn't very safe, and so he knows 'twont do. You see him there now, messmates, as calm as a lady; but he's awake when there's need of it. The man don't live that can handle a ship better than he; and as for fighting, do ye see, messmates, we were running on this here same tack, just off the—but avast upon that, I haven't any more to say, messmates," said the speaker, demurely.

Bill Marline evidently found himself treading upon dangerous ground, and wisely cut short his yarn, thereby creating a vast amount of curiosity among his messmates, but he sternly refused to speak further upon the subject. Either his commander had prohibited him, or he found that by speaking he should in



some way compromise the credit or honor of one upon whom he evidently looked as being little less than one of a superior order of beings to himself.

"But what do you bring up so sudden for? Pay out, old fellow, there's plenty of sea-room, and no land-sharks to fear," said one of the group, encouragingly.

"Never you mind, messmates, there's nothing like keeping a civil tongue in your head, especially being quiet about other people's business," added Bill.

"What think you, Bill, of this present vocation, eh?" asked another companion.

"I shipped for six months, that's all I know, and no questions asked. I understand very well that Captain Ratlin wouldn't ship me where he wouldn't go himself."

"Well, do you see, Bill, most of us are new on board here, though we have knocked about long enough to get the number of our mess and to work ship together, and don't perhaps feel so well satisfied as you do."

"Why, look ye, messmates, arnt you satisfied so long as the articles you signed are kept by captain and crew?" asked Bill Marline, somewhat tartly.

"Why, yes, as to that matter; but where are we bound, Bill?" asked the other.

"Any boy in the ship can make out the 'Sea Witch's' course," said the old tar, evasively. "We're in these here Northern Trades, close-hauled, and heading, according to my reckoning, due east, and any man who has stood his trick at the wheel of a ship, knows that such a course steered from the West Indies will, if well followed, run down the Cape Verds; that's all I know."

"Port Praya and a port; that was in the articles sure enough," answered he who had questioned Bill Marline; "but the 'Sea Witch' will scarce anchor there before she is off again, according to my reckoning."

That the old tar knew more than he chose to divulge, however, was apparent to his comrades, but they knew him to be fixed when he chose, and so did not endeavor by importunity to gather anything further from him; so the conversation gradually changed into some other channel.

In the meantime, while the crew gathered about Bill Marline were thus speculating, the vessel bowled along gracefully, with a speed that was in itself exhilarating to her young commander, who still gazed idly at the passing current. Once or twice a slight frown clouded his features, and his lips moved as though he was striving within himself either against real or imaginary evil, and then the same calm, placid manliness of countenance radiated his handsome features, and his lips were composed.

Now he turned to issue some necessary order, which was uttered in that calm, manly distinctness that challenges obedience, and then he resumed his idle gaze over the vessel's side, once more losing himself in his day dream.

## **Chapter III**

### **The Gale.**

"THE Wind seems to be hauling," said the mate, walking aft, and addressing his superior.

"Keep her a good full," said the captain, to the man at the helm.

"Ay, ay, sir," said the old tar, as he tried to make the sails draw by altering the vessel's course a point or two more free.

"Here it is, sure enough," said the captain, "from the southwest. Up with the men forward once more, Mr. Faulkner!—we must humor our beauty."

"All hands oil deck!" shouted the mate at the hatch—an order which as before was perfectly obeyed.

Almost as quickly as the foremast had been stripped of the square rig it had at first borne, it was once more clothed again with its topsail and mainsail, and in less than fifteen minutes the "Sea Witch" was under a cloud of canvass, with studd'nsails out on both sides, while the fore and aft sails on the main and mizzen were boomed out wing and wing dead before the wind. The staysails and jibs were hauled down now as useless, and the vessel flew like a courser. The change of wind had brought the sea up, and the vessel had a gradual roll, causing the waves now and then to come gracefully in over the waist, while the extreme fore and aft parts of the handsome craft were perfectly dry.

"It has set her to waltzing, Mr. Faulkner," said his superior; "but she improves her speed upon to it, and I think the breeze freshens from this new quarter."

"Yes, sir. Do you see the long bank of white hereaway to the south-southwest; it looks like a fog bank, but may be a squall," said the mate.

"There are few squalls in these latitudes, Mr. Faulkner, and yet I don't like the looks of the weather in the southern board," said the captain, as he gazed to windward, with a quick, searching glance.

While he spoke, the wind came fresher and fresher, and now and then a damp puff and lull, that were too significant tokens for a seaman to disregard. Captain Ratlin jumped upon the inner braces of the taffrail, and shading his eyes with his hands for a moment, looked steadily to windward, then glanced at his well-filled sails as though he was loth to lose even a minute of such a fair wind. He delayed, however, but a second, when jumping down to the deck again, he issued his orders in those brief but significant tones of voice, which at the same time imparts promptness and confidence in a waiting crew on shipboard.

"In studd'nsails, gaff-topsails, fore royal and top-gallantsails, with a will, men, cheerily, cheerily O!"

These were tones that the crew of the "Sea Witch" were no strangers to, and sounds they loved, for they betokened a thorough and complete feeling of confidence between commander and men, and they worked with spirit.

"Lay aft here, and brail the spanker up!" continued the captain, promptly.

"Ay, ay, sir!" was the response of a half dozen ready hands, as they sprang to do his bidding.

The vessel was thus, by the consummation of these orders, quickly reduced to her mainsail, foresail, and foretopsail, while she flew before the on-coming gale at the rate of seventeen or eighteen knots an hour, being actually much faster than the sea. It was now evident to every one on board that a severe gale of wind was gathering, and its force was momentarily more powerfully exercised upon the vessel.

"She staggers under it, Mr. Faulkner," said his superior, with a calmness that evinced perfect self-reliance and coolness, while he regarded the increasing gale.

"Ay, sir, you can drive her at almost any speed," answered the mate. "She's like a mettled courser, sir, and loves the fleet track."

"Scud while you can, Mr. Faulkner, it's a true nautical rule. Some men will always heave a ship to if there is a cap fill of—"

"Double-reef the mainsail!" shouted the captain, interrupting himself, to give an order that he saw was imperative.

"—Wind, but I believe in scudding, if you can," he added.

"Double-reef foretopsail! and look ye, Mr. Faulkner, have presenter sheets bent on the foresail, this wind is in earnest," said his superior, more seriously, as he jumped into the mizzen shrouds and scanned the sea to windward again.

The gale still increased, and everything being now made snug on board the "Sea Witch," she was run before it with almost incredible speed. It would have been a study to have regarded the calm self-possession and complete coolness of the young commander during this startling gale; he never once left his post, every inch of the vessel seemed under his eye, and not the least trifle of duty was for a moment forgotten. If possible, he was more particular than usual that his orders in the smallest item were strictly observed, and thus with his iron will and strong intelligence he mastered every contingency of the hour, imparting that indispensable confidence among his people so requisite to perfect control. There was a firmness now expressed in the compressed lips, and a sternness in the eye, that had not before been manifested, while there was a breathing of authority in his smallest order.

In an instant more the scene was changed! With terrific violence the vessel flew up in the wind with the rapidity of thought, and a report like that of a score of cannons fired at the same moment, was heard above the roar of the winds.

"What lubberly trick is this?" shouted the captain, fiercely, to the old tar who held his station at the wheel, and on whose faithfulness everything depended.

"The wheel rope has parted on the larboard side, your honor," was the reply.

"That is no man's fault," said his commander. "Bear a hand here, Mr. Faulkner, and bend on a fresh wheel rope. Be lively; sir, be lively!"

The sails had been blown from the bolt-ropes, in an instant of time, and the vessel now lay wallowing in the sea. Now once more was seen the power of discipline and the coolness of the young commander, whose word was law in that floating community. Fifty voices were raised in shouts above the storm, suggesting this expedient and that, but that agile figure, which we have already described, sprang lightly into the mizzen shrouds, and with a voice that was heard by every soul on board the "Sea Witch," shouted sternly:

"Silence in the ship!"

Not a voice was heard, and every man quietly awaited his order, looking abashed that there had been a tongue heard save his who had the right alone to speak.

"Cast the gasket off the foot of the fore and aft foresail."

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded the mate, who having secured the rudder, now hastened by his commander, followed by a dozen hands, to execute the order.

"Haul the sheet to port!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Belay that!"

As the vessel felt the power of the canvass thus opportunely loosed and brought to bear, she gradually paid off before the wind, and once more had steerage way. Another foresail was now bent, and this time double-reefed, the

foretopsail, too, was bent, close-reefed and furled, while the fore and aft foresail was once more stowed, leaving the "Sea Witch" to scud under double-reefed foresail.

Five days of steady blow continued before the vessel could again show more than a small portion of her canvass. Then the wind once more hauled to the northwest, and the "Sea Witch" donned her fore and aft rig on all her masts steering close-hauled again due east, until the lofty headlands of the Cape de Verdes hove gradually in sight, and the fleet clipper craft made her anchorage in the harbor of Port Praya.

The "Sea Witch," whatever her business in this harbor, seemed able to transact it without venturing inside the forts, or taking stronger moorings than a single anchor could afford her. At this she rode with mysterious quiet. Not a soul of the full complement of men on board were visible from the shore; now and then perhaps the head of some taller hand than his fellows might loom up above the bulwarks at the waist, or a solitary seaman creep quietly aloft to reave a sheet through some block, or secure some portion of the rigging. The captain scarcely waited for his land-tackle to hold the vessel before a quarter-boat was lowered away, and with a half-dozen sturdy fellows as its crew pulled boldly towards the main landing, where he stepped ashore and disappeared.

A suspicious eye would have marked the manner in which the sails upon the "Sea Witch" had been secured, and the way in which she was moored. If need be, three minutes would have covered her with canvass, and slipping her cable she could in that space of time, had the order been issued from her quarter deck, have been under way and looking once more seaward. Whatever her business, it was very clear that promptness, secrecy, and large precaution were elements of its success.

Nor had these characteristics, which we have named, escaped entire observation of the people on shore, for at the nearest point of land a group of idlers were visible, who stood gazing at and discussing the character of the vessel, while at the same moment her young commander was seen with his boat's crew pulling back from the landing to his craft. His business was brief enough, for even now the anchor is once more away. The gallant ship spreads her broad wings one by one, and gracefully bending to the power of the breeze, glides, like a fleet courser, over the fathomless depths of the sea, while the mind that controls her motions again assumes his reverie on the quarter-deck.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Bramble Park.**

CHANGING the field of our story from the blue waves to that of land, we must ask the reader to go back with us for a period of years from that wherein our story has opened, to the fertile country and highly-cultivated lands in the neighborhood of Manchester, England. Sir Robert Bramble's estate was some eight miles from the large manufacturing town just named, and embraced within its grounds some of the most delightfully situated spots within a day's ride in any direction. Parks, gardens, ponds, groves, stables and fine animals; in short, every accompaniment to a fine English estate. Sir Robert was a man of

not much force of character, had inherited his estates, and had partly exhausted his income so far as to render a degree of economy imperatively necessary, a fact which was not calculated to render any more amiable a naturally irritable disposition.

The family at Bramble Park, as the estate was called, consisted of Sir Robert and his lady, a weak-minded, but once beautiful woman, and two sons, Robert and Charles, the eldest at this period some twelve years of age, the youngest about nine; the usual number of servants, in doors and out; made up the household. Sir Robert's could hardly be said to be a very happy household, notwithstanding there seemed to be every element and requisite to be found there for peaceful domestic happiness; and perhaps it would have puzzled a casual observer to have ascertained wherein laid the root of that evil, which, like a poisonous upas, seemed to spread its branches through the household.

There was a cloud apparently shadowing each face there; there was constantly some trouble of a domestic character. Sir Robert and Lady Bramble seemed to be not on the best of terms with each other, and the servants wore a hang-dog look, as though they expected at any moment to be called to account for some piece of rascality. There was, however, one pleasant face in that household, though even that seemed tempered by sadness; this was the youngest brother, Charles. He was, or rather would have been, a cheerful, happy boy, but for the malign influence of his brother Robert, who seemed his opposite in almost everything. Robert was jealous, irritable and revengeful; Charles was open-hearted, mild and forgiving. Robert was cruel to both servants and animals; Charles was kind to all, and a favorite with all; even the dumb animals avoided one and adhered to the other, instinctively knowing a friend.

Robert was the first born and the favorite with his mother, whom he ruled literally in all things, while Sir Robert, looking upon him as the legal heir and representative of his name, of course considered him in a somewhat different light from that in which he regarded Charles. At times it seemed as though an evil spirit had taken possession of Robert's heart, and he delighted in oppressing, domineering over and abusing his brother, who, though he did not lack for spirit, yet could never bring it to bear against Robert. He meekly bore his reproaches and abuse, and even at times had suffered personal chastisement at his hands without complaint to his parents, rather than irritate both them and himself by referring to so disagreeable a matter. With a naturally patient disposition, he suffered much without complaint.

Sir Robert and Lady Bramble seemed blind to the fact that the unbounded indulgence which they yielded to their eldest child was rendering still worse a disposition and habit which were already an affliction in themselves. But Robert was persevering, and would always carry his point, let it be what it might, teasing and cajoling the mother until she granted his wishes however absurd they might be. He domineered over every one, mother, father, servant maids and servant men; he was the terror of all.

Charles added to his light-heartedness and cheerfulness of spirit, great agility, and for a boy of his age, remarkable strength, in which matters Robert was deficient, and here his jealousy found ample scope. Charles, too, was remarkably apt with his studies, whereas Robert generally ended his lessons by quarrelling with his tutor, and setting both father and mother against him, by which reason the worthy who filled that post at Bramble Park was usually

changed at least once in six or eight weeks, and thus were matters at the period to which we refer. It seemed as though Robert was never happy unless he was doing some one harm, or distressing some of the many pet animals about the spacious grounds; in this latter occupation he passed much of his leisure time, and was a great adept at the business.

A fine St. Charles spaniel, belonging to Lady Bramble, had one day, after being teased beyond forbearance by Robert, at last in self-defence, snapped at and lightly bit him, in revenge for which the violent tempered boy vowed to kill him, and the very next opportunity he had, he seized upon the little pet, and tying a string and stone about its neck, bore the dog to the large pond in the centre of the part, where he threw him into the deepest part. Charles at that moment came in sight, and at once saw the act. Without pausing to take off his clothes or any part of them, he sprang at once into the pond and dove down for the dog; but he found the stone about its neck too heavy for him to bring to the surface, though he struggled long and stoutly to do so before he yielded.

Swimming to the shore, Charles took his knife from his pocket, and once more dashed in; and this time diving down he cut the cord, and releasing the dog from the bottom swam with him to the opposite shore from where Robert stood, all the while threatening him. Here his younger brother smoothed the water from the dog's coat, and instinctively rubbing its benumbed limbs until it became quite resuscitated, and after a short time, following close to Charles for protection, it returned to his mother's side in her boudoir. But Robert had been there before him, and had already manufactured a story redounding to Charles's discredit, and provoking both his mother's and father's anger, the latter of whom at Robert's instance, even struck the gallant-hearted boy a severe blow with the flat of his hand as a punishment for what he denominated an interference with his brother's sport.

Charles said nothing; he knew the prejudice which Robert's constant misrepresentations had created against him in his parents' breasts; he realized too, young as he was, that it was useless for him to attempt to explain, though he felt the injustice of this treatment; and so with a quivering lip he turned away from the scene and went in his wet clothes to the servants' hall where he might dry them. He said nothing, but looked much sadder than usual as he stood there before the fire. A coarse but honest servant, Leonard Hust, who had been born on the estate, and whose father before him had been a servant in Sir Robert's household, came stealthily to Charles's side and busied himself in helping him to arrange his clothes and dry them, while he smoothed the boy's hair and wiped his face.

"Never mind, master Charles," said the honest fellow, noticing the trembling lips of the handsome boy; "never mind, it's a gallant act in you, and though I say it, who shouldn't, perhaps, master Robert never would have dared to do it; he hasn't got half your courage and strength, though he's bigger and older."

A tear was all the answer that the boy vouchsafed to his honest effort at consolation. He too proud to make a confidant of the servant, or to confide to him of his father's conduct, or even that of Robert. Leonard Hust watched the boy carefully, and entered keenly into his feelings, until at last he said:

"I wasn't the only one who saw you save her ladyship's pet, master Charles."

"It wasn't father or mother that saw it?" asked Charles, quickly, as he recalled the injustice he had just experienced at their hands, under Robert's prompting.

"No, master Charles."

"Was it cousin Helen?" continued the boy.

"Yes, master Charles," answered Leonard Hust, with a knowing smile.

"O," said the boy, as a glow of pleasure lit up his features for a moment.

It was evident that the knowledge of the said cousin Helen's having seen his exertions to save the little favorite spaniel, gave Charles not a little satisfaction. Now cousin Helen—as a little blue-eyed child of eight years, the daughter of the family whose estate joined that of Bramble Park, was called—was no cousin at all, but the children had thus nicknamed each other, and they were most happy playmates together. Robert, who was three years his brother's senior, was more fond of little Helen than of anybody else; indeed, in spite of his ill temper, he was wont to try and please her at any cost. But the child, who was as beautiful as a little fairy, did not respond at all to his advances of friendship, while to Charles she was all tenderness and confiding in everything, kissing him with childish fervor and truth whenever they parted, a familiarity she never permitted to his brother.

The truth was, Robert to his great discomfiture, was aware that Charles's manly and courageous act of saving the dog had been witnessed by Helen, though his brother knew it not until told by Leonard Hust. This had aggravated Robert so much that he had hastened home, and fabricating a story of Charles having thrown the dog into the pond, and wet himself completely, preparing his parents for a rough reception of his brother when he should return, and hence the treatment he received. Leonard made his young master change his clothes, and after making him comfortable, left him to amuse himself in the open park with his ball, where the light-hearted Charles was soon thoughtlessly happy, and forgetful of the unkindness of Robert and the injustice of his parents. So light are the cares and mishaps of youth, so easily forgotten are its hardships, either seeming or real. Happy childhood!

Whether little cousin Helen had been on the watch for Charley, or whether she was there by accident, it matters not, suffice it to say that the two soon met in their headlong career of fun and frolic, and two more joyous or merry spirits never met on the soft green sward than these. Now they tire of the play at ball and sit down together close by the brink of the clear, deep pond, next the rich flower beds that shed their grateful fragrance around the spot. Cousin Helen, still panting from the exertion of the play, looked thoughtfully into the almost transparent water, and involuntarily heaved a sigh that did not escape her companion's notice.

"Art sick, cousin Helen?" asked Charles, quickly.

"Nay, not I," said the pleasant-voiced child, "not I, Charley."

"But you sighed as though you were very tired or in pain," he continued.

"Did I?" said the child, thoughtfully; "well, I believe I did."

"And what for, cousin Helen?" said Charles, tenderly, parting her natural ringlets back from her beautiful and radiant face—doubly radiant now as she looked up into his, so confidingly and so affectionately.

"I was thinking," she said, ingenuously, "how cruel Robert was to your mother's pet. I don't see how he could do such a thing, do you, Charley?"

"Robert is quick-tempered," said his brother, "and perhaps regrets it now. I guess the dog bit him, or something of that sort."

He was too generous, too manly, to complain of Robert's cruel treatment of him, or to mention the unkindness he had experienced from his parents. But

he had not forgotten these occurrences, and his lip once more quivered with emotion, and his clear, handsome eyes were suffused with tears. Quick as thought his little companion divined with womanly instinct the cause, for she was not ignorant of the state of affairs, young as she was, that existed at Bramble Park. Drawing nearer to his side, she threw one arm tenderly and with childish abandon over his neck, and with the other brushed away the gathering tears, until Charles smiled again and leaned over and kissed her sweet little lips as a brother might have done! And then together they plucked a beautiful bouquet, and busied themselves in arranging it and classifying the various plants by their botanical names, for both children were well versed in this delightful study, young as they were.

While they were thus engaged, Robert came up and angrily discovered the two children thus happy together. Saying some rude things to Charles, he pushed him away from his playmate's side with rude and brutal force, throwing Charles to the ground. This was too much, even for his forbearing spirit, and the injured and outraged boy, smarting under the previous injury he had endured, rose quickly to his feet, and with one blow knocked Robert heavily upon the ground. The blow had been a severe one, and the boy was faint and unable to stand for a moment. Charles looked at him for an instant, then helped to raise him up, and waited until he was again sufficiently conscious to walk. Then he saw him walk angrily toward the house, where he knew very well what would follow on his return there. All the while his little companion had stood regarding first one and then the other. Now Charles stepped to her side, and said:

"I am sorry, Helen; but it is very, very hard to bear."

She shook her little head as he spoke, but held up her lips for the kiss he offered, and saw him turn away from home towards the distant town.

## **Chapter V**

### **The Naval Officer.**

THE reader will think that seven league boots—the storyteller's prerogative—are in special demand as it regards our story, for once more we must return through a period of years to the date, or thereabouts, on which our story opens. It was on one of those close, sultry afternoons that characterize the climate of summer in India, that two of our characters were seated together in a graceful and rather elegant villa in the environs of Calcutta. The air of the lady—for the couple were of either sex, was one of beauty in repose. She was evidently listening to the gallant speech of her companion with respect, but without interest, while on his part the most casual observer might have read in his voice, his features, and his words, the accent, the bearing, the language of love.

The lady was a gentle being of surpassing beauty, with black eyes, jetty hair and brilliant complexion; there was little of the characteristics of the East in her appearance, though she seemed to be quite at home beneath the Indian Sun. She was of the middle height, perhaps a little too slender and delicate in form to meet a painter's idea of perfection, but yet just such an idol as a poet would have worshipped. She was strikingly handsome, and there was a brilliancy and



spirit in the glance of her dark eyes that told of much character, and much depth of feeling; and while you gazed at her now, sitting beneath the broad piazza, you would have detected a shadow ever and anon cross her brow, as though the words of him by her side aroused some unpleasant memory, and diverted her thoughts rather to past scenes than to the consideration of his immediate remarks.

The gentleman who seemed to be pleading an unsuccessful suit, wore the undress uniform of the English navy, and in the outer harbor, in view of the very spot where they sat, there rode a sloop-of-war with St. George's cross floating at her peak. The officer was young, but bore the insignia of his rank upon his person, which showed him to be the captain of yonder proud vessel. He might have been five or six and twenty, but scarcely more, and bore about him those unmistakable tokens of gentle birth which will shine through the coarsest as well as the finest attire. The lady was not regarding him now; her eyes were bent on the distant sea, but still he pleaded, still urged in gentle tones the suit he brought.

"I see, Miss Huntington has some more favored swain on whom to bestow her favors; but I am sure that she has no truer friend, or more ardent admirer."

"You are altogether mistaken in your premises," she said, coolly, as she tossed her fragrant fan of sandal wood, perfuming the soft atmosphere about them.

"A subject who sues for a favor at court, Miss Huntington, if he is unsuccessful, thinks himself at least entitled to know the reason why he is denied."

"But suppose the Court declines to give him a reason," said the lady, still coolly.

"Its decision admits of no appeal, I must acknowledge," replied her suitor.

"Then reason I have none, captain; and so pray let that suffice."

"But, Miss Huntington, surely—"

"Nay, captain," she said, at last, weary of his importunity, "you know well my feelings. Far be it from me to play for one moment the coquette's part. I thank you for the compliment you pay me by these assurances, but you are fully aware that I can never encourage a suit that finds no response in my heart. I trust that no word or act of mine has ever deceived you for one moment."

"No, Miss Huntington, you have ever been thus cold and impassive towards me, ever turning a deaf ear to my prayer. Why, why can you not love me?"

"Nay, captain, we will not enter into particulars; it is needless, it is worse than needless, and a matter that is exceedingly unpleasant to me. I must earnestly beg, sir, that you will not again refer to this subject under any circumstance."

"Your commands are law to me, Miss Huntington," answered the discomfited lover, as he rose from the seat he had occupied by her side, and turned partially away.

It was well he did so, for had she seen the demoniac expression of his countenance as he struggled to control the vehemence of his feelings, she would have feared that he might do either her or himself violence.

"May I not hope that years of fond attachment, years of continued assiduity, may yet outweigh your indifference, Miss Huntington?" he said earnestly.

"Indeed, indeed no. You do but pain me by this continuance of a subject that—Ah, mother!" she said, interrupting herself, "I have been looking at the

captain's ship, yonder; is she not a noble craft? And how daintily she floats upon the waters?"

"A ship is always a beautiful sight, my child; and especially so when she bears the flag that we see flaunting gracefully from that vessel."

"When do you sail, captain?" asked Mrs. Huntington, who had just joined her daughter on the piazza, and did not observe the officer's confusion.

"The ship rides by a single anchor, madam, and only waits her commander," he replied, rather mechanically than otherwise, as he turned his glance seaward.

"So soon? I had hoped you were to favor us with a longer stay," said she mother.

The officer looked towards the daughter, as though he wished it had been her that had expressed such a desire. But she still gazed at the distant ship, and he saw no change in her handsome features.

"We officers are not masters of our own time, madam, and can rarely consult our own wishes as to a cruising ground; but I frankly own that it was something more than mere accident which brought me this time to Calcutta."

As he said this, his eyes again wandered towards her daughter's face, but it was still cold, impassive and beautiful as before, while she gazed on that distant sea. He paused for a moment more, almost trembling with suppressed emotions of disappointment, chagrin and anger, and seemed at a loss what to say further; he felt constrained, and wished that he might have seen the daughter for a moment more alone.

"Farewell is an unpleasant word to say, ladies," he said, at last, still controlling his feelings with a masterly effort. Then offering a hand to the mother, he bowed respectfully and said "Good-by;" and to her, who now turned with evident feeling evinced in her lovely face at the idea of a long parting, he offered his hand, which was frankly pressed, while he said: "I carry away a heavy heart to sea with me, Miss Huntington; could it be weighed, it would overballast yonder ship."

"Farewell, captain; a happy and safe voyage to you," she answered, with assumed gaiety of tone; but there was no reply. He bowed low and hastened away, with a spirit of disappointment clouding his sun-burned features.

The view which might be had from the window commanded a continuous sight of the road that the young officer must traverse to reach the ship, and though she had treated him thus coldly, and had so decidedly declined his suit, yet here lingered some strange interest about him in her mind, as was evinced by her now repairing to the window, and sitting behind the broad shadow of its painted screen, where she watched his approach to the landing, near the city gates, and saw the sturdy boatmen dip their oars in regular time, propelling the boat with arrow-like speed to the ship's side, where its master hastened upon deck and disappeared, while the boat was hoisted to the quarter-davits.

Anon she saw the sheets fall from the ponderous yards, and sheeted home, the anchor gradually raised to her bow, the yards squared to bring her with her head to the sea, and then a clear white cloud of smoke burst from her bows as she gathered steerage-way, and a dull heavy report of distant ordinance boomed upon the ear of the listening girl, unanswered by a deep sigh from her own bosom—a sigh not for him who had just left her, but for some kindred association that his presence aroused.

The villa where we have introduced the reader was that of the late Edward Huntington, a successful English merchant, who had resided many years in India and had realized a fortune, which he had proposed to return to his native land to enjoy with his wife and only child. But death had stepped in to put an abrupt end to his hopes, and to render abortive all his well-arranged plans, some twelve months previous to the period of which we have spoken. Mrs. Huntington, the widow, had remained in Calcutta to settle up her husband's affairs, and this done, she determined to embark at once with her daughter for England, where her relatives, friends and early associations were all located.

Miss Huntington, as the reader may have gathered, was no coquette; her great beauty and real loveliness of character had challenged the admiration of many a rich grandee and many an eminent character among her own countrymen in this distant land. But no one had seemed to make the least impression upon her heart; the gayest and wittiest found in her one quite their equal; the thoughtful and pathetic were equally at home by her side; but her heart, to them, seemed encased in iron, so cold and immovable it continued to all the assaults that gallantry made against its fastness, and yet no one who knew her really doubted the tenderness of her feelings and the sensibility of her heart.

Her beauty was quite matured—that is she must have numbered at least twenty years; but there was still a girlish loveliness, a childlike parity and sincerity in all she said and did, that showed the real freshness of her heart and innocence of her mind. Far too pure and good and gentle was she for him who had so earnestly sued for her hand, as we have seen. Beneath a gentlemanly exterior, that other, whom we have seen depart from her side under such peculiar circumstances, hid a spirit of petty meanness and violence of temper, a soul that hardly merited the name, and which made him enemies everywhere, friends nowhere.

Robert Bramble—for this was he, the same whom the reader has seen as a boy at home in Bramble Park—had not improved in spirit or manliness by advance in years. The declining pecuniary fortune of his father's house, to which we have before alluded, had led him early to seek employment in the navy, and by dint of influence and attention to his profession, he had gradually risen to the position in which we have found him, as a commander in her majesty's service on the India station. That he loved the widow's daughter was true—that is to say, as sincerely as he was capable of loving any one; but his soul was too selfish to entertain true love for another.

The same spirit that had led him to the petty oppressions and the ceaseless annoyances which he had exercised towards his younger brother in childhood, still actuated him, and there was not a gleam of that chivalric spirit which his profession usually inspires in those who adopt it as a calling, shining within the recesses of his breast. Entirely unlike Miss Huntington in every particular, we have yet seen that he exercised some singular power over her—that is, so far as to really interest her beyond even a degree that she was willing to exhibit before him. What and why this was so must more clearly appear in the course of the story as it progresses.

Mrs. Huntington was a lady of polished manner and cultivated intellect, belonging to what might be termed the old school of English gentlewomen. She had reared her only child with jealous care and assiduous attention, so that her mind had been richly stored in classic lore, and her hands duly instructed in

domestic duties. There was no mock-modesty about the mother, she was straightforward and literal in all she said or did; evidently of excellent family, she was sufficiently assured of her position not to be sensitive about its recognition by others, and preferred to instil into her daughter's mind sound wholesome principles to useless and giddy accomplishments. And yet the daughter was accomplished, an excellent musician upon the piano and harp, and a vocalist of rare sweetness and perfection of execution, as well as mistress of other usual studies of her sex.

But the idea we would convey is, that the mother had rather endeavored to fill her child's mind with real information and knowledge, than to teach her that the chief end and aim of life were to learn how to captivate a husband; she preferred to make her daughter a true and noble-hearted woman, possessed of intrinsic excellence, rather than to make her marketable for matrimonial sale; to give her something that would prove to her under any and all circumstances, a reliance viz., sound principles and an excellent education.

"Mother, how long before we shall turn our face towards England?" said the daughter, soon after the scene which we have described of the sailing ship and her commander.

"Within the month I hope, my child. I have already directed the solicitor to close up all his business relative to your father's estate, and the next homeward-bound ship may bear us in it."

"I shall feel sad to leave our peaceful home here, mother, for, save my dear father's death, has been very pleasant, very happy to be here."

"There are many dear associations that must ever hang about its memory, my dear; but after all, we shall be returning to our native land, and that is a sweet thought. It is some twelve years since we lost sight of English soil."

"I remember it most vividly," said the child, recalling the past; "ay, as though it were but yesterday!"

That night, as she lay sleeping in her daintily-furnished apartment, into which the soft night-air was admitted through sweet geranium and mignonette, which bloomed and shed their perfume with rare sweetness, she dreamed of her native land, of him who had that day left her so disappointed, of her childhood, and all its happy memories, and of much that we will not refer to lest we anticipate our story.

## **Chapter VI**

### **The Wreck.**

ABOUT a fortnight subsequent to the period of the last chapter, Mrs. Huntington and her daughter, with a single attendant found themselves embarked on board the Bengal, a large, well-found Indiaman, bound for Liverpool. The ship belonged to the East India Company, was a good carrier, but calculated more for freight than speed. She was a new ship and strong as iron and wood could be put together, and the widow and her child found their quarters on board of an exceedingly comfortable nature. They were the only passengers on board, but the vessel had a heavy freight list, and as she moved

out from her anchorage to lay her course to sea, her draft of water was very deep.

The Bengal fortunately encountered none but the most favorable winds and tides for many a long and to those on board somewhat monotonous days, and the sun rose out of the sea clear and bright, and sunk again beneath its surface in gorgeous splendor with every diurnal rotation, until at length the ship touched at the Cape of Good Hope, where, having taken fresh water and provisions on board, she cleared direct for Liverpool. Every hour now seemed more especially to draw the ship nearer her port of destination, and a fresh spirit was infused among passengers and crew, in cabin and forecastle; but it was a long distance yet, and the widow and her daughter found time for much study and reading, for which they were amply supplied, and thus the time was lightened in its progress and also well improved.

But the ocean is a treacherous element, and the fair weather which had so long characterized their voyage, was to be varied now by fierce and angry gales. It was the season of the year when they might expect this, and the captain had kept a sharp lookout. It was the middle of a fine afternoon that there was observed a singular phenomenon in the wind which appeared to come from half a dozen points at the same moment. The ship of course lost her steerage way, and the sea began most singularly to get up from all points in heavy cross waves. It was evident that they were either in the course of a whirlwind or close to its track, and every now and then gusts came first larboard then starboard, and again bows on and stern on, with a force that snapped the rigging like pipe stems, and tore the canvass from the bolt ropes, notwithstanding the prompt orders and nimble efforts of the seamen, before it could be secured. Half an hour of this strange weather nearly stripped the ship of her standing rigging, leaving her comparatively a helpless wreck upon the waters, a mere log at the mercy of the wind and waves.

The worst had not yet come, however, for the ship was sound still in her hull, and save that she was now wallowing in the trough of the sea, she was comparatively safe; she had sprung no leak, but her heavy freight tested her powers fearfully, and the captain was fain to acknowledge that there was nought to be done but abide the raging of the storm until it was over. His attempt to rig a jury mast, on which to bend sail enough to give the ship steerage way, was perfectly fruitless; she rolled and pitched so fearfully that no effort of the kind could succeed, but the crew were kept busy throwing over the heavier at tiles of freight to case the ship.

As night came on with its intense darkness relieved only by now and then a terrible flash of liquid fire, all on board expected each moment might be their last. Prayers were said, and all tried to compose their minds as far as possible to meet that death which seemed to be fast approaching them, when suddenly the cry ran, fore and aft that the captain was lost overboard! This added to the general gloom; and now a cry was heard "there goes the Flying Dutchman," as was seen by several on board the Indiaman, during the interval of the vivid lightning, a large ship dash by them almost within cable's length, with a single topsail close reefed running before the gale with the speed of the wind. It did indeed look like a phantom craft. All was snug on board, not a soul was in sight, everything battened down, save one dark form apparently lashed to the wheel stanchions and steadily bent upon keeping the ship before the storm; it

was a sight that added to the terror of those on board the Indiaman, and its effect was at once visible.

The ignorant and superstitious seamen, ever ready to argue evil from any strange occurrence, now felt assured of their destruction, declaring that the strange appearance of the phantom-ship was but a warning to foretell the fate that was preparing for them. Thus actuated, all discipline was gone, and no connected efforts were further made to protect the ship or render her in any degree safer from the power of the storm. To add still more to the critical condition on board, the ship after straining and laboring so long, now began to leak and rapidly to fill. In this desperate state of affairs several of the crew, whose numbers were already thinned by being washed overboard, got into the spirit room and in a condition of wild desperation became beastly intoxicated, resolving to die insensible to danger! and at intervals their crazy oaths and incoherent songs were heard above the gale.

At this crisis, as is generally the case, two or three sterling spirits among the crew (and there is never a ship's company without some such among its members), one, the second mate, and a couple of foremast hands, came into the cabin and assured the widow and her daughter that they would protect them to the last, and that they were even now preparing the long boat with compass, water and food, so that should the storm abate and the sea become less agitated before the ship should fill and go down, they might launch it, and with the ladies and such of them as desired, attempt to save themselves in this frail bark. With heartfelt gratitude the mother and child accepted their protection and awaited the crisis; but not without solemnly kneeling together upon the cabin floor and committing themselves to the care of Divine Providence.

The second mate of the Bengal was the only officer left, but he was a good sailor, a man of cool nerve and great personal strength. He now went calmly to work, sounded the well and found four feet of water in the ship, made his calculations how long it would require for the ship to fill at the rate she then made water, and then set to work with his two companions to rig a triangle with spars above the long boat, so as to lift and launch it just when the proper moment should arrive, but this he found to be impracticable. As the morning broke in the east the gale subsided, but the sea still kept up its angry commotion, though that too, gradually subsided, the waves growing less and less, and the ship becoming more and more quiet, enabling those on board to keep at least upon their feet.

In the meantime, the ship had gradually settled so that the water was already on the cabin floor. In vain were the entreaties of the mate and his companions for the four or five hands who had possessed themselves of the key of the spirit room to come on deck and save themselves; they could neither be persuaded nor forced to move, but lay in a state of beastly intoxication. Everything had been done that was possible, to prepare for launching the long boat, and the widow and her daughter had already by the mate's sanction taken their seats within it, while one of the seamen secured and carefully stored the few articles of necessity which had been selected.

The two masts of the boat were stepped and carefully secured, the gripes that secured the boat in its place were cut, leaving it standing upright in its wooden bed, but entirely free from the deck of the ship. Already had the ship sunk so low that all communication with the cabin was cut off, and the poor inebriated wretches who had there sought oblivion in intoxication also found their tomb.

Food, water and compass were properly disposed, so that any sudden movement of the boat should not dislodge them, oars and sails in readiness, and a careful examination had, lest some straggling rope might in some way connect the boat with the wreck, so as to draw them under when the floundering mass should at last go down. The crisis which they now expected seemed strangely protracted, and their fearful suspense was almost unbearable. The mate had placed one of his hands at the bows, another amidships, while himself and the two passengers occupied the stern; the precaution having also been taken to secure the ladies by ropes to the boat.

The weather had now entirely moderated, and the sea was comparatively calm, except that now and then a heavy swell would lift the waterlogged craft and surge about the hull, causing it to groan as though conscious of its approaching fate. Moments assumed the length of hours now, and the countenance of each was a picture of agonized suspense and momentary expectation, no one spoke above their breath. Again the heavy swell caused the hull to lurch and pitch until her bows were almost buried, and the water was even with the scuppers—the moment was approaching.

"Steady, all," said the mate, calmly, as he saw another approaching swell, which he knew must cause the vessel to lift and settle again, and probably this time prove the signal for her final plunge altogether. "Steady, I say, and hold on to the boat stoutly now. Don't let go, ladies, for an instant!"

The seaman was right, the heavy hull was full this surge came on, burying her for an instant, and actually sweeping the boat clear of her bulwarks out upon the sea, a most fortunate circumstance, which was instantly taken advantage of, by pulling with the oars for a single instant, and still further clearing the wreck, which now rose high at the bows for a moment as the stern settled and gradually sunk, causing a vortex which would certainly have engulfed the boat, had it not been able thus to pull a short distance away, and which even now drew it rapidly back to the spot where the ship had laid, and causing it to toss fearfully for a while, but in a few moments more all was quiet.

"Thank God, that is over," said the mate, earnestly; "it was little short of a miracle that we did not all of us go down with the ship."

The widow covered her face with her hands and breathed a silent prayer of thankfulness. It was already night again, and steering by the stars the mate laid his course, after affording a spare sail to cover the mother and her daughter, who having partaken of some needed refreshment, the first for many hours, were soon lost in sleep, induced by the great bodily fatigue and physical exertion they had so lately encountered in this emergency.

The men stood watch and watch, relieving each other at intervals throughout the night, while the boat with its two lugger sails crept on steadily upon its course.

It was remarkable to observe the delicacy observed by those three seamen towards the widow and her daughter, to mark their assiduity towards them as to their necessities and their wants; while they, on their part, were patient, uncomplaining and grateful. The second and third day passed on, when the mate calculated they were steering direct for the nearest point of land which they could not fail to reach in another day, it being the coast of Africa. His calculations were made under disadvantages, but he felt confident of their correctness. The weather, fortunately, had been very calm and pleasant thus far, since the gale had subsided, and the frail craft thus exposed upon the

ocean had really proved quite comfortable and weatherly for the time being. A snug little apology for a cabin had been constructed over the forward part of the boat, into which the ladies could retire at nightfall, and become secure from the weather and be entirely by themselves; and under the circumstances they were really quite comfortable, that is to say, they experienced little exposure to the elements at night, and slept securely in their narrow quarters.

In leaving the ship, the mother had been more thoughtful than many persons would have been, and had taken the box which contained her valuables and such papers as comprised her heavy bills of credit on England, in which way she was transporting the bulk of her husband's late valuable estate to her native land. At first she had taken especial pains not to have the fact known to the men that she had any great amount of valuables with her, lest it should prove a temptation to them, and lead to some tragical result as it regarded the safety of herself and child. But she need not have feared, those hearty sons of the ocean were true as steel; and it was only the second day that having laid the casket down carelessly in the boat, she had retired to the little fore-castle forgetting it, when it was brought to her again by one of them who remarked, that he presumed it was something of particular value by its appearance.

According to the mate's reckoning, the time had already arrived when the land should heave in sight, and the three seamen were constantly on the lookout for it in the supposed direction where it should appear; but all their search for it proved in vain, there was the same endless expanse of ocean before them day after day, bounded only by the dim horizon, and unrelieved by any object, while the same hope reigned in their hearts. The exposure they endured, though not very severe, yet began to tell upon them all, and especially the mate and two seamen, and the cheeks of the seamen already looked sunken, their eyes less spirited. This was the combined result of their feelings of disappointment with physical labor, for they worked several hours at the oars every day, aiding the sailing power of the boat, in the hopes of reaching the land before another gale or storm should occur. Now, however, they began to discard the oars, and to feel less and less courage to labor in propelling the boat.

The widow who was not a little of a philosopher and a woman of good sound mind, determined to do something to amuse the men, and cheer them up in their emergency; she saw how sadly they needed some such influence, and telling her daughter of her purpose, when night again came on she induced her to sing some of her sweetest airs with all her power of execution, and to repeat them to the real joy and delight of these hardy men, who at once gathered an agency from this music, and declared it was the harbinger of good. Whether it was so in the way they supposed or not, it certainly was a harbinger of good as it regarded its cheering effects upon them, and their hearts were again filled with hope, and their sinews bent once more to toil at the oars.

## **Chapter VII**

### **The SEA WITCH.**

WHILE those sweet notes were being uttered under these peculiar circumstances, and the soft thrilling voice of, the English girl floated over the



sea, and the stars looked down coldly upon those wrecked adventurers, the mate who sat at the helm was observed to be peering in the boat's wake, as though looking for some coming object that would soon overtake them. Leaning over the boat's stern, he placed his ears as near the surface of the water as possible and listened. This he repeated several times, with increased earnestness, then partially shading his eyes with his hands, he gazed back into the dim night air with intense interest, while the rest in the boat regarded him silently, wondering what could be the import of his movements.

"Either there is a big fish in our wake, or I hear the ripple of a ship's cut-water. But I cannot see hull or canvass in this darkness," said the mate, after a brief but searching gaze in the direction from whence they had come.

"It cannot be that you could hear the movement of a ship upon the water, farther than you could see her even in this light," said the mother.

"It may have been the hauling of a ship's yards, or some rickety block, but sound I did hear that came from on ship board," said the mate, with assurance.

"See, see," said the daughter, at that moment, "what is that?" pointing off nearly in the wake of the boat into the darkness.

"A ship!" said the mate, quickly; "a ship, as true as heaven!" adding, "shout, shout together now, or she will run us down."

As he spoke, all eyes were bent on the dim object that was now fast approaching them, and steering as nearly on the same course with themselves as possible. Only a cloud of canvass was visible now, but soon the dark hull of a vessel appeared, and the mate hastened to light a lantern and hoist it to attract their attention. The signal was seemingly observed in an instant on board the stranger, and the hoarse deep order to heave the ship to, rolled over the waters and rang a welcome sound in the ears of those in the boat.

"I know not what sort of craft she is," said the mate; "and this is a latitude where pirates intercept the homeward bound ships sometimes, though according to my reckoning, we are too well in for the land to be in that track."

"I trust there is no danger in accepting the assistance that the ship appears willing to give?" said the mother anxiously, to the mate.

"It is not more dangerous than to pass another night in this open boat, madam, at all events," replied the mate, frankly.

"Stand by, to take this tow-line," shouted a voice from the bulwarks of the ship, as the vessel drifted with a side impetus towards the tiny craft, while the figure of a man was observed in the mizzen shrouds with a coil of line ready to heave, at the word of command.

"Ay, ay," answered the mate, steering his boat so as to bring her side on to the ship, and opening his arms to catch the line, which he saw was about to be thrown.

"Heave, heave clear of all," shouted a stern, manly voice from the quarter-deck of the ship at this moment; "heave with a will."

And a stout tow-line rattled through the air with a whizzing sound and lay between the mate's extended arms. This was instantly seized upon, and while one of the men took a turn about the stanchion in the bow of the boat, those on board the ship gathered in the line until the boat was safely moored under her quarter. No words were exchanged, until the ladies, first, and the seamen next, were taken on board: the fact of their being wrecked and in distress being too apparent to require questioning. The valuables in the boat were quickly transferred to the ship, and the little craft which had proved an ark of safety to

the adventurers, was then cut adrift, and soon lay a mere speck upon the waters, unguided and alone.

As the boat drifted for a moment astern of the vessel before the party were taken on board, the mate rend her name on the stern in golden letters, "The Sea Witch." The foremast hands who had been saved from the wreck soon mingled with the crew on the forecabin of the "Sea Witch," and told their story there, while the mate and the ladies were received in the most hospitable manner in the cabin, where the captain endeavored to offer them every comfort the ship afforded, and to place every resource entirely at their command.

Mrs. Huntington and her daughter were at first too tearful and full of gratitude for their preservation to converse, and soon took advantage of the kind offer which placed the captain's private apartments entirely at their service, while the mate explained their adventures in detail, not forgetting the phantom ship which passed them in the gale, and which had caused such consternation on board the wrecked Indiaman. But his story in this particular was unfortunately spoiled, when Captain Ratlin told him positively that he was at that moment on board the very craft which he had designated as the Flying Dutchman. A remark that for a moment puzzled the honest seaman and led him to look suspiciously about him; but a few corroborating remarks soon placed the subject at rest in even the mate's credulous mind.

The fact was, that the same gale which had made a wreck of the Indiaman, had driven the "Sea Witch" two days' sail or more out of her course, and had thus brought her in sight of the Bengal at that critical moment when it would have been impossible to have rendered her the least assistance. The continuance of the gale had carried the ship far to the southward, from whence she was now returning.

It was early morning upon the day succeeding that auspicious night for the party in the boat, that Miss Huntington and her mother made their appearance upon the quarter-deck, and tendered their thanks for the service rendered. Captain Ratlin received them there with a frank, manly air, assured them of full protection, and that he would land them at some port from whence they could take ship for England. A very few hours placed him on the best of terms with his passengers, for there was that frank, and open discourse of manner with him, which his countenance promised, while he felt irresistibly drawn towards the gentle and beautiful girl whose protector he had thus strangely and suddenly become. Not one point of her sweet beauty was lost upon the young commander, and her every word and movement he seemed to dwell upon, and to consider with a tenacious degree of interest.

On her part, Miss Huntington looked upon him as her preserver, and did not hesitate to accord him that confidence which the circumstances of her situation would so naturally lead to, being delighted and entertained by the sketches he gave her of sea life and wild adventure upon the ocean, elicited by her suggestion. The mother, too, was well-pleased with the profound respect and polite attention which herself and daughter received from him, and accorded him that cordial countenance in his intercourse with her child which placed him quite at ease.

"We have not even asked you, Captain Ratlin, what trade you are in," said the mother, as they sat together, her daughter and the young commander, upon the quarter-deck beneath an awning which had been rigged for their comfort.

"Ahem! madam!" hesitated the young officer, "we are, that is, yes, we are on a trading voyage to the coast—just at the present time."

Whether the mother saw that the subject was not one which was of an agreeable nature to him, or otherwise, she at once changed the subject, and congenial themes were discussed, to the delight of the daughter, who dwelt with evident pleasure upon the manly tones of the captain's voice, which seemed to have some secret charm upon her. Even her mother noticed this, and seemed to regard her with sensitive watchfulness while the captain was near, though there was no well defined suspicion or fear in her mind.

"Is it customary for traders upon these seas to go so thoroughly armed, Captain Ratlin?" asked the daughter, one day, after she had been shown about the decks, at her own request, where she had marked the heavy calibre of the gun amidship, its well as the neat and serviceable array of small arms within the entrance to the cabin.

"It is a treacherous latitude, lady, and the strong arm often makes the right," he answered again, evasively, as he called her attention to some distant object in the horizon, while at the same moment there was shouted from aloft:

"Land O!"

"Land, land!" repeated the gentle being by his side, "what land?"

"Africa," quietly responded the captain, without a token of satisfaction.

"Africa? that is indeed an inhospitable shore; can we land there?"

"Yes, I shall make sure that you land safely, and can despatch you to Sierra Leone, from whence you can take ship for England, but—"

"Sail O!" shouted the lookout.

"Whereaway?" asked the captain promptly, seizing a deck trumpet and abruptly turning from her to whom he had been speaking, while his whole manner changed at once.

"A couple of points on the larboard beam, sir," answered the seaman.

"All hands, Mr. Faulkner, and 'bout ship; that square rig and the heavy lift of those topsails tell what there must be below to sustain them. Lively, sir, the 'Sea Witch' must show her qualities."

Miss Huntington had watched with some amazement these orders, and the result of the same, and as she saw the beautiful craft in which she was put at once on the opposite tack and steer boldly away from the shore which had just been made, she could not help for a moment remembering the words of the mate in the boat, that pirates sometimes were found in these latitudes!

After a moment's thought she felt that she did Captain Ratlin injustice, for whatever might cause him to flee from the sight of what she presumed by his remarks to be a man-of-war, yet she felt that he could not be a pirate. True, the vessel even to her inexperienced eye was very strongly manned, and there was a severity of discipline observed on board that was very different from what she had seen while they were in the Indiaman, but that man could not be a pirate, she felt that he could not—she would not do him the injustice to think it possible.

Let the stranger be whom he might, the "Sea Witch" seemed to have no intention of making his acquaintance, and as easily dropped the topsails of the vessel again as she had made them, while from the manner in which the stranger steered, it was doubtful whether his lookout had made out the "Sea Witch" at all—and so Captain Ratlin remarked to his first officer, while he

ordered the ship to be kept on her present course for an hour, then to haul up on the wind and run in shore again.

"Is it usual, Captain Ratlin," asked the young and beautiful girl, "for vessels on the coast to so dread meeting each other as to deliberately alter their course when this seems likely to be the case?"

"Trade is peculiar on this coast, and men-of-warsmen take extraordinary liberties on board such vessels as they happen to overhaul," was the reply. "I always avoid their company when I can do so conveniently."

As Captain Ratlin said this, his eyes met those of his companion for a moment, which were bent anxiously upon his face, as though she would read his inmost thoughts. He noted the expression, and replied at once:

"Whatever suspicion or fear may have entered Miss Huntington's mind, I beg of her to dispel, as it regards her own and her mother's safety and comfort. Both shall be my sole care until you are safely landed upon shore, where I shall at the earliest moment place you in a situation to reach your homes in England."

"I know you will do this," she replied, "and if my looks betrayed any anxiety, it was not for our safety, but for your own, Captain Ratlin."

"My safety, lady? do you then consider that worth your anxiety?" he asked, with unmistakable earnestness in his voice.

"You have been more than kind to us, sir," she continued, "you have been preserver, protector, and friend, and it were strange if I did not feel an interest for your welfare."

This she uttered so ingenuously, so frankly, that it seemed not in the least indelicate or forward, while it thrilled the young commander's heart.

"Lady, since the moment you came on board, and I heard the tones of your voice, a strange interest sprang up in my heart, an indescribable one, and now that you express an interest in a poor wanderer's fate, you attach to it a value that he himself has never regarded it as possessing. But I read your suspicions, you have feared the worst—your looks have betrayed it, and you were ready to believe that I am a—"

"Pirate!" almost groaned his companion, "You are not, pray say you are not."

"Not so bad as that, lady."

"But you are then—"

"A slaver!" said the young commander, turning from her and moodily walking the deck; with a contracted brow and uneven step.

## **Chapter VIII**

### **The Quadroon.**

FOR several days succeeding that upon which Captain Ratlin had avowed himself to his fair young companion to be engaged in the slave trade upon the coast of Africa, the "Sea Witch" was occupied in running in towards the land and exchanging signals with friends on shore, and then standing off and on to watch a favorable moment for running to an anchorage, without encountering one of the English or American cruisers stationed on the coast. During this time the young commander and his fair passenger found much time for

conversation, and she strove with all that power of persuasion and delicacy of tact peculiar to her sex, to point out to the adventurous and generous-hearted commander the fearful responsibility of the course he was pursuing.

Perhaps no other agent would have accomplished so much as she did—indeed, no other could for a moment have gained his ear, and the result even to herself was very apparent, very satisfactory. He, all unconsciously yielded every argument to her, was only too ready and willing to grant her the fullest accordance in what she asked or argued, for though he dared not to say so, yet he felt that already he loved the mild yet eloquent and lovely girl with a devotion that caused all other interests to fade in importance. It was a novel idea to him to realize that so fair and gentle a creature could entertain such sufficient interest in him, a rough sailor, to strive and mould his conduct for good.

On her part, it would be difficult for us to define the exact state of feelings which actuated the beautiful girl whom we first introduced to the reader in India. She felt an interest in the commander of the slaver that she was afraid to acknowledge not only to her mother, but indeed to herself. The tones of his voice came over her heart like the memory of music that we have heard at some distant time, and in some forgotten place; his eyes betrayed to her the love he dared not speak, and when she did pause to consider their relation towards each other, she half shuddered, and said to herself, "Would to heaved this man was a poor mechanic, anything but a slaver! How can I give my confidence to him, and yet how can I withhold it, for he wins from me my very thoughts!"

One evening just after sunset, Miss Huntington and her mother had been tarrying on the quarter deck for a long while, watching the conversation going on between the ship and the shore by means of flags, and observing that the "Sea Witch" had run in closer than usual, the mother asked:

"Shall we not land before long, Captain Ratlin? We have been in the vicinity of the shore so long, that I begin to feel quite impatient."

"To-night, madam, we shall be on shore. I cannot offer you very good quarters at first, but you shall find conveyance to Sierra Leone shortly, from whence you can sail for England."

"We have to thank you for much kindness, sir," she continued, gratefully.

"Nay, madam, necessity and duty to my owners has rendered it imperative for me to approach the coast cautiously, and hence a delay I could not avoid."

"You are too honest and manly a spirit, sir," said the mother, frankly, "to be engaged in such a trade. Ah, sir, why not turn your talents to a more fitting purpose? The field of commerce is extensive, and such as you need not look for command."

"Madam, your daughter has already caused me to behold my position in a very different light from what I did when I cleared my ship from the last port."

"I rejoice, Captain Ratlin, to hear you say so," was the frank rejoinder of the mother, as she extended her hand to him, and which he pressed respectfully.

"She is thus frank and open with me," reasoned the young commander to himself, "because she has no reason for restraint; but were I to tell her that I loved her child, that she was already so dear to me that I would relinquish all things for her, that face, so friendly in its expression now, would be suffused with disdain and scorn. No, no! such a fate is not in store for me; a sailor should know but one mistress, and she should be his ship. But the heart is a stubborn thing. I would not have believed that such a change could come over me."

"Stand by to let go the starboard bow anchor," he shouted, as the vessel gradually crept shoreward with the oncoming of night, and, assumed the position in which he desired to place her.

Her sails were gradually furled, and as she drew to her anchorage ground, a quarter-boat was lowered from the davits, while the chain cable rang its loud report as it ran out at the hawser hole, and the ship swung gradually with the set of the current, leaving her stern towards the shore. But a few moments elapsed before Capt. Ratlin and his two passengers, with such articles as they had brought on board, were skimming over the short space between the ship and the shore, propelled by a half-dozen stout rowers. It had already been explained to them that at first it would be necessary to land them and offer them shelter at Don Leonardo's slave factory, until a mode of conveyance could be procured for them to reach Sierra Leone, so they were not surprised, but placing full confidence in Captain Ratlin, were satisfied.

At the house of Don Leonardo, they were hospitably received, and found the proprietor to be a rough Spaniard, with a dark quadroon daughter, whose mulatto mother was dead. The household, though primitive, in many particulars, was yet profusely supplied with every necessity, and even many luxuries. In the rear of the house was a spacious barracoon, where the slaves were collected and kept for shipment, and where they were plentifully supplied with rice and vegetables, with salt meats, and the means of doing their own cooking. All these things the new comers noted at once, and indeed were very curious in fully understanding. There seemed to be little restraint exercised about the place; the slaves were looked at in the light of prisoners of war, and did not attempt escape. They seemed to be quite indifferent themselves as to their fate, and were very happy, with good food to eat, and a plenty of it.

One thing that both Mrs. Huntington and her daughter marked well was the fact that Don Leonardo greeted Capt. Ratlin as one whom he had met before, and that Maud, his daughter, also sprang forward to meet him with unmistakable tokens of delight. On his part, both were cordially greeted, and they spoke together like people whose time was precious and whose business required despatch. Mrs. Huntington gathered enough from their open and undisguised talk to learn, that as there was not a sufficient number of negroes at the present moment on hand, that the "Sea Witch," with her light draft of water, must be run up a neighboring river and be there moored away from the prying eyes of the cruisers on the coast, until the proper hour should arrive for shipping her freight. Therefore when Captain Ratlin left them, it was with a promise to return and join them again within a few hours. He resolved to moor his vessel under the shelter of the present favoring darkness, to which end he at once repaired on board.

The two English ladies, both mother and daughter, found much to interest them in Maud Leonardo. She seemed to be a strange girl, a rough diamond, with all the tact and ready invention of her mulatto mother, and all the fire of her Spanish father. They soon learned that this was not Captain Ratlin's first visit to the coast, and that her father, as well as herself, considered him the finest seaman and gentleman in the coast trade. It was impossible not to see with what feeling Maud the Quadroon dwelt upon the good qualities of him she referred to, declaring that he was a father to all the people he took away in his ship, and how kind he was to them; that he always knocked off their shackles at once and made friends of them by real kindness.

Mrs. Huntington, to say nothing of her daughter, saw something more than mere honest admiration in the enthusiastic girl's remarks about the young commander, and the mother shrewdly determined to question her upon the theme, and to weigh well her answers.

"Captain Ratlin is very friendly to you, I suppose, Maud?" said Mrs. Huntington.

"He is friendly to father, and that is the same thing," she replied, simply.

"Has he not brought you presents across the ocean?" continued the mother.

"One," said Maud, with evident pleasure, rolling back a long sleeve, and discovering to her new-made friends a rich golden bracelet, set with pearls, a rare and beautiful ornament.

"This is indeed beautiful," said the mother.

Mrs. Huntington examined the jewel, while her daughter turned thoughtfully away! She could not be mistaken; she saw at once that this rude, uncultivated girl loved the commander of the "Sea Witch," nor did she wonder at such a fact; but yet she found herself musing and asking within her own mind whether such a being could make him happy as a wife. She felt that he was worthy of better companionship, and that, notwithstanding Maud evidently loved him, he could hardly entertain any peculiar regard for her. Could he have deceived the girl? she thought. No, deceit was no part of his nature; that she felt sure of, and thus she mused alone to herself, placing the relationship of the two in all manner of lights, until she saw him again.

Having moored the "Sea Witch" safely amid the jungle of one of the many winding rivers that indent the coast of Africa, and sent down her upper spars to prevent her from being discovered by any exhibition of the top-hamper above the trees and jungle growth, Captain Ratlin left his crew under charge of the first officer, Mr. Faulkner, and returned once more to the seaboard and the establishment of Don Leonardo. Here it would be necessary for him to remain for a week or more, while the Spaniard sent his runners inland to the chiefs of the various coast tribes to forward the prisoners of war to his barracoons. This period of time was passed in various domestic amusements, in observing the sports and games of the natives, their habits, and studying their nationalities—for the slaves in Don Leonardo's barracoons represented a score of different tribes, each characteristic of its origin.

Mrs. Huntington regarded Captain Ratlin's intercourse with Maud with much interest, which she did not attempt to disguise, while her daughter did so under the disguise of indifference, but with the most intense interest. Not a word, look, or sign between them betrayed the least token of any understanding or peculiar confidence as existing between the commander and the Quadroon.

Maud, on her part, began to change somewhat since the first day of the arrival of the strangers. Then she was as free and unconstrained as innocence itself—now she seemed to regard the new-comers with a jealous eye, for she saw the deep feeling evinced by the young commander towards the fairest of the two; she heard a strange charm in the tone of his voice when he addressed the daughter, and at such moments Mrs. Huntington more than once saw her bosom heave quickly, and her eye flash with a wild and startling fire that made her tremble. This was jealousy, plain and unmistakable, a fact that no woman would have been at a loss to understand.

It was not possible that the mother should be blind to the feeling evinced by Captain Ratlin towards her daughter, and she thought, so long as this

sentiment maintained the respectful and solicitous character which it now bore, that it would redound to their security and future safety, as they were in one sense completely in his power. But as it regarded the idea of her daughter's entertaining any affection for him, or seriously considering his advances, the idea could not for a moment enter her head. She did not at all consider that there was any danger of her daughter's losing her heart—no, no! Had not she been accustomed to attention from earliest girlhood, and from the most polished men? She did not even think it necessary to speak to her upon the subject; she might be as friendly as she pleased with him under the circumstances.

But the daughter herself, who to her mother's eye was so indifferent, was at heart deeply and strangely impressed by the frank, chivalrous and devoted attention of the commander of the slaver. His attention was characterized by the most unquestioned delicacy and consideration; he had never uttered the first syllable to her that he might not properly have used before her mother—indeed, he had not the boldness or effrontery to urge a suit that he knew was out of the question, and yet he felt irresistibly drawn towards the English girl, and could not disguise from her the true sentiments that so plainly filled his inmost heart; she must have been less than woman not to have read his very soul, so bared to her scrutiny.

It was the first time that she had ever deceived her mother, because it was the first time that she had loved. Yes, loved, for though she would as soon have sacrificed her life as to have acknowledged it, yet she did love him, and the poor untutored Quadroon girl read the fact that the mother could not, with all her cultivation and knowledge of the world, detect. But jealousy is an apt teacher, and the spirit of Maud Leonardo was now thoroughly aroused; she sighed for revenge, and puzzled her brain how she might gain the longed-for end.

Captain Ratlin had eyes for only one object, and that was the young and beautiful English girl. He never gave a thought to Maud; he had never done so for one moment. As a friend of her father, or rather as a dealer intimately connected in a business point of view with him, he had given a present to his daughter, and had endeavored to make himself agreeable to her at all times, but never for one moment with a serious thought of any degree of intimacy, save of the most public and ordinary character. Probably Maud herself would have never thought seriously about the matter had she not felt how much the English girl surpassed her in beauty, in accomplishment, and in all that might attract the interest of one like Captain Ratlin.

Jealousy is a subtle poison, and the Quadroon was feeding upon it greedily, while its baleful effect was daily becoming more and more manifest in her behaviour.

## **Chapter IX**

### **The Attack.**

DON LEONARDO was no favorite among the tribes and chiefs of the region which was his immediate neighborhood, and he lived within the walls of his well-arranged residence, more like one in a fort than in his own domestic



dwelling, maintaining himself, in fact, by a regular armament of his servants and a few countrymen whom he retained in his service. With the negroes he was, therefore, no friend, save so far as he purchased their prisoners of them, whom they secured in their marauding inroads upon the interior tribes. They feared Don Leonardo because he was a bold, bad man, and cared not for the spilling of blood at any time, for the furtherance of his immediate gain in the trade he pursued. It was for his interest to make them fear him, and this he contrived to do most effectually.

As Don Leonardo always paid for the slaves he purchased of the coast tribes in hard Spanish dollars, they believed him to possess an inexhaustible supply of specie, and the idea of robbing him had more than once been broached among them in their counsels; but feat and want of tact as to proper management in conducting an assault, they felt would insure the defeat of such a purpose, and thus the Spaniard had remained unmolested for years in his present position, but in no way relaxing the necessary degree of vigilance which should render safe his household, for he knew full well the treacherous character of the negroes, and that they were not for a moment to be trusted.

Maud, his daughter, was in no way ignorant of this state of affairs. She fully understood the entire matter. Perhaps the fact that some portion of the blood of that despised race ran in her own veins, led her to conceive a plan for revenge which should embrace not only the party who was the grave object of her hate, but even every person of white blood in her father's household, not even excepting her father! No one, save a North American Indian, can hold and nourish a spirit of revenge like a Quadroon. It seems to be an innate trait of their nature, and ever ready to burst forth in a blaze at any moment.

It was impossible to understand exactly by what course of reasoning Maud had arrived at the purpose of attempting the destruction of the household as she did. One would have supposed that she would have been apt to adopt the easiest mode of arriving at the desired result, and that with even her simple knowledge of poison, she might, with a little adroitness, have taken the lives of all who were gathered under her father's roof at a single meal; but the revengeful girl evidently had some secret feeling to gratify, in the employment of the agents whom she engaged for her purpose, and the blow she resolved should be struck, and decisively, too, by the negro enemies of her father, who were his near neighbors.

For this fell purpose, Maud held secret meetings with the chiefs, represented that her father's strong-boxes were full of gold and silver coin, and that the negroes had only to effect an entrance at night, means for which she was herself prepared to furnish them, and at the same time representing to them that they would have it in their power to revenge themselves for all their past wrongs at her father's hands, fancied or real. The negroes and their chiefs were only too intent upon the treasures their fancy depicted, to think or care for Maud herself, or to question the reason of her unnatural treachery. So they promised to enter the stockade under her direction, rob the house, and then screen the deed they had committed by burning the dwelling and all within its precincts.

While this diabolical plan had been thoroughly concocted, Captain Ratlin and the two English ladies had passed many pleasant hours together, all unconscious of there being any danger at hand, and even Maud, with subtle treachery, seemed more open and free than she had been in her intercourse

with them at first. But when she thought herself unobserved, she would at times permit a reflex of her soul to steal over her dark, handsome features, and the fire of passion to flash from her eye. At such moments, the Quadroon became completely unsexed, and could herself scarcely contain her own anger and passion so far as not to spring, tiger-like, upon the object of her hatred. But the hour for the attempt upon the dwelling, and the destruction of its inhabitants, drew near. The negroes had sworn to stand by each other, and had sacrificed an infant to their deity, to propitiate him and insure success.

It was long past midnight that the blacks might have been seen pouring out of the adjacent jungle nearest to the house. They had selected the hour for their attack when they supposed the dwellers in the stockade-house would be soundest wrapped in sleep, and they had indeed chosen well, and all their plans had been carefully arranged. But just as Maud opened the secret entrance for them to pass in, and she herself passed out, to flee for the time being from the scene, Don Leonardo came out from his sleeping-apartment, followed by a trusty slave, and promptly shot down the two first figures that entered by the door, causing them to fall dead. This unexpected repulse caused those behind to retreat for a while to the jungle, where they might consult under cover as to what this unexpected opposition to their plans indicated.

The reader may as well be here informed that a faithful slave, who had been long with the Spanish trader, and who had been confided in by the robbers, at last could not keep the secret, but just at the opportune moment aroused her master, while he, by his promptness, for the moment stayed the attack, until the door could once more be fastened, and the people awakened and armed to repel the congregated mass of the enemy. The father did not for one moment suspect his child's treachery, and was amazed and alarmed by her absence; but there was little time for speculations upon that or any other matter, since the large numbers of the negroes had rendered them bold, and they seemed determined, now they were partially foiled in their purpose as to entering the place by stratagem, to carry the house, at all hazards, by actual storm, while they rendered the air heavy with their yells.

Don Leonardo was not at all alarmed—he had fought too many battles with the negroes to fear them. He quietly prepared his fire-arms, and loaded to the muzzle a heavy swivel-gun he kept mounted at one of the main windows, while he gave arms to such of his slaves as he felt confidence in, and to his immediate retainers. The negroes had never seen nor heard the swivel fired, as it was a late importation. They had become somewhat accustomed to small arms, and though they had a dread of them, yet it was not sufficient to deter them from making the attack after having congregated in such numbers, and having become so wrought up by each other. But as they made a rush bodily towards the stockade, Don Leonardo fired the swivel, which had been loaded with shot, slugs, and bullets, into their very midst, every missile telling on the limb or body of one or more! The effect was electrical and the slaughter large.

The astonished savages rapidly gathered up their wounded companions and returned to the jungle once more. At first this terrible slaughter among them seemed to deter them from the idea of a second attack, but the loud report of the gun rapidly augmented the numbers of the blacks, until they made a second onslaught, with almost precisely the same effect. They could scale the stockade only on this side, while on the other, or opposite side, Captain Ratlin kept up such a deadly and accurate fire of musketry, that every one who

approached the buildings was sure to forfeit his life. It was fortunate that this arrangement had been made, for the negroes twice attempted to set the dwellings on fire from the rear, but were instantly repulsed by Captain Ratlin's double-barrelled gun, which was ready loaded by his side, and which he used with fearful accuracy of aim on every approaching object.

The negroes seemed to be wrought up to such a state of excitement that they would not give over their purpose, though it involved such immense risk and sacrifice of life, and the attack was continued, at intervals, far into the morning, and long after the regular course of duty, until at last the negroes divided their mutilated numbers into four parties, and it was evidently their last and most determined attempt. They did not hurry this, but seemed to pause and take refreshments and rest for a couple of hours, when once more the onslaught commenced, and the inhabitants of the stockade found it a desperate fight, and one even of doubtful result, if long continued as it began.

"Keep the black imps clear, don, for a short half-hour longer, and it will be all up with them," shouted Captain Ratlin, from the rear. "I see a heavy square-rig rounding the point and standing in for an anchorage; we shall find civilized help."

"That is lucky," growled the Spaniard, as he coolly shot down a negro; "our powder is fast giving out."

The inhabitants of the stockade sadly needed assistance at this critical juncture, for the infuriated savages had become desperate and reckless in their attack, and must soon have carried the building by storm. But there soon pulled to the beach a half-dozen boats, with a detachment of marines and seamen, led on at full speed by an officer, before whose approach the angry negroes retired exhausted, leaving many dead upon the ground, and many too severely wounded to effect their retreat to the jungle. The fight had been a very sanguinary one to the half-witted creatures outside the stockade.

The new comers were an officer and part of the crew of a man-of-war that was cruising upon the coast, and which had been attracted to the harbor by the firing of the heavy swivel. They were admitted within the stockade. That they were English was at once observable, by the flag that floated from the graceful craft that had now rounded to and come to an anchor within blank cartridge shot of the factory or barracoons. The officer felt authorized to interfere, as we have seen, but his power of search and of interference in the peculiar trade of the coast ceased the moment he touched the land. His jurisdiction did not extend over any residents on their property, unless it was afloat; over the coast and rivers he claimed jurisdiction only.

The new comers were hospitably entertained by Don Leonardo, while the officer who had led them, and whose insignia of rank betrayed his station as captain, was introduced into the more private apartments of the place, where were the ladies and Captain Ratlin, the latter trying to re-assure them, and to quiet their fears on account of the late fearful business of the fight. He was thus engaged when the English captain entered, and was not a little astonished to hear the mutual expressions of surprise that were uttered by both the ladies and the officer himself, while a moment sufficed to show them to be old acquaintances! The reader would here recognize, in the new comer, Captain Robert Bramble, whom we saw paying suit to Miss Huntington, not long previous, on the shady verandah of her mother's house, in the environs of Calcutta.

Notwithstanding the excitement of the moment, and the joy felt on all sides at the timely arrival of the English officer and his people,—notwithstanding the surprise of the moment, that filled all present at the singular melting of old friends under such extraordinary circumstances, yet a close observer might have noticed an ill-suppressed expression of dissatisfaction upon Captain Ratlin's face, as he saw the English captain in friendly and even familiar intercourse with mother and daughter.

"Who could have possibly foreseen this strange, this opportune meeting?" said the mother.

"It is as strange as agreeable, I assure you," replied the new comer. "And you were wrecked and picked up at sea, you say, and brought here by—"

"Captain Ratlin," interrupted the daughter, fearing that her mother would have introduced a word that would have betrayed their protector.

"Yes, by Captain Ratlin," continued the mother, "permit me to introduce you, gentlemen. Captain Bramble, this is Captain Ratlin; you are both seamen, and there is no need of compliments, though I am seriously indebted to you both."

"Of the merchant service, I presume?" said the English officer, regarding the young and handsome commander of the "Sea Witch" with a somewhat suspicious eye.

"From childhood," was the cool reply, while, as though by a feeling of common content, both turned away from each other, to other objects.

Captain Bramble saw that she whom he had so profitlessly saved,—she whose smile would have been invaluable to him, now spoke low and gently to the merchant captain; and even smiled kindly upon his remarks to her, of whatever nature they might be. Doubtless, from the moment of their introduction, a vague suspicion of his true character crossed the English officer's thoughts, but now he needed no other incentive, than the fact that Miss Huntington received and entertained his addresses so agreeably, and with such evident pleasure, to make him more than watchful, and resolved to find out the truth.

"You are not long arrived, Captain Ratlin?" asked the other.

"Within these two weeks," was the calm reply.

"Not seeing your vessel, I presume she has gone to the windward, for ivory."

"Or perhaps to leeward for other cargo," answered the other, somewhat haughtily.

The hint was sufficient, and the English officer saw that, let his trade be what it might, he had one to deal with who was master of his own business, and who feared no one.

It was nearly night when Maud Leonardo reappeared, expressing profound surprise at what had occurred, and feigning well-assumed grief and regret, so honestly, too, as to deceive all parties who observed her. But her secret chagrin could hardly be expressed. Indeed, her father, who knew her better than any one else, saw that there was something wrong in his daughter's spirit, that some event had seriously annoyed and moved her. He knew the child possessed of much of her mother's wild, revengeful disposition, and though even he never for a moment suspected her unnatural treachery, yet he resolved to watch her.

The negroes she had joined in the attack were completely routed and disheartened, and fearing the power and cunning of Don Leonardo, retreated far inland and incorporated themselves with the tribes that gather their wild and precarious living in the depths of the jungle.

## Chapter X

### The Duel.

AFFAIRS in the immediate vicinity of Don Leonardo's residence began to assume a singular and very peculiar aspect. In the first place, there was within doors, and under his immediate roof, four new comers, nearly each of which was actuated by some contrary purpose or design. Mrs. Huntington was exceedingly desirous to obtain passage up the coast to Sierra Leone, and thence home to England; her daughter secretly dreaded the approach of the hour that was to separate her from one whom in her unrevealed heart she devotedly loved. Captain Ratlin was, of course, all impatience to have the English cruiser up anchor and leave the harbor, her proximity to his own fleet clipper ship being altogether too close, while, Captain Bramble felt in no haste to leave port for several reasons. First, he had a suspicion that he should soon be able to trip up the heels of his rival, as it regarded this business on the coast; and secondly, he was very content to have Miss Huntington remain here, because he knew if she was once landed at Sierra Leone, she would directly sail for England.

Don Leonardo heartily wished them all at the bottom of the sea, or any other place except his house, with the exception, of course, of Captain Ratlin, whose business with him was seriously impeded by the presence of these parties. Maud, too, was not a disinterested party, as the reader may well imagine, after the audacious treachery which she had already evinced; but she was comparatively passive now, and seemed quietly to bide her time for accomplishing her second resolve touching him she once loved but now hated, as well as satisfying her revengeful spirit by the misery or destruction of her rival. We say affairs in Don Leonardo's residence had assumed a singular and peculiar aspect, and the dull routine of everyday life that had characterized the last year was totally changed.

The singular coincidence of the meeting between Miss Huntington and her rejected lover, Captain Bramble, under such singular circumstances, led him once more to press this suit, and now, as she regarded him largely in the light of a protector, the widow quite approved of his intimacy, and indeed, as far as propriety would permit, seconded his suit with her daughter. When in India, she had looked most favorably upon Captain Bramble's intimacy with her child, where there were accessory circumstances to further her claims; but now she soon told her daughter in private, that Captain Bramble was a match fit and proper in all respects for such as she was.

"But, mother—"

"Well, my child?"

"Suppose, for instance, that I do not like Captain Bramble, then is he a fitting match for me?"

"Not like him, my child?"

"Yes, mother, not like him."

"Why, is he not gentlemanly?"

"Yes."

"And of good family?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And handsome, and—"

"Hold, mother, you need not extend the catalogue. Captain Bramble can never be my husband," she said, in a mild but determined tone that her mother understood very well.

But Captain Bramble himself could not seem to understand this, notwithstanding she was perfectly frank and open with him. He seemed to be running away with the idea that if he could but get rid of Captain Ratlin, in some way, he should then have a clear field, and be able to win her hand under the peculiar circumstances surrounding her. Thus moved, he redoubled his watchfulness touching the captain's movements, satisfied that he should be able ere long to detect him in some intrigue, as to running a cargo of slaves, and doubtless under such circumstances that he could arrest and detain him, if not, by some lucky chance, even have him tried and adjudged upon by the English commission upon the coast.

To suppose that Captain Ratlin did not understand entirely the motives and conduct of his enemy and would-be rival, would be to give him less credit for discernment than he deserved. He understood the matter very well, and, indeed, bore with assumed patience, for Miss Huntington's sake, many impertinences that he would otherwise have instantly asserted. But he marked out for himself a course, and he resolved to adhere to it. Captain Bramble was not only a suitor of Miss Huntington's, but an old and intimate friend, as he learned from her family, and therefore he should avoid all quarrel whatever with him, and so he did on his own part; but the English officer, enraged by his apparent success, took every occasion to disparage the character of Captain Ratlin, and even before Miss Huntington's own face, declared him no gentleman.

"You are very severe, Captain Bramble," said the lady, "upon a person whom you acknowledge you have not yet known a single calendar month."

"It is long enough, quite long enough, Miss Huntington, to read the character of such an unprincipled fellow as this nondescript captain."

"I have known him about twice as long as you, Captain Bramble," replied Miss Huntington, calmly, "and I have not only formed a very different opinion of him, but have good reasons to feel satisfied of the correctness of my judgment."

"I perceive that Miss Huntington has taken him under her protection," replied the discomfited officer, sarcastically, as he seized his hat and left her.

While in this spirit, the two rivals met in the open space before the hose of Don Leonardo, when the English officer vented some coarse and scurrilous remarks upon Captain Ratlin, whose eyes flashed fire, and who seized his traducer by the throat and bent him nearly double to the earth, with an ease that showed his superior physical strength to be immense, but as though impressed with some returning sense, Captain Ratlin released his grasp and said:

"Rise, sir, you are safe from my hand; but fortunate it is for you that you can call this lady whose name you have just referred to, friend; the man whom she honors by her countenance is safe from any injury I can inflict."

"A very chivalric speech," replied the enraged and brow-beaten officer. "But you shall answer for this, sir, and at once. This is not the spot—you must give

me satisfaction for this base insult, or by the heaven above us I will shoot you like a dog!"

"As you will, sir. I have spoken openly, and I shall abide by my word. I am no boaster, nor do I expect any especial favor at the hands of the lady whom you have named; but I repeat, sir, that my respect for her renders her friend safe from any injury that I might otherwise, in just indignation, inflict."

Little did either know that the object of their remarks had been a silent but trembling witness of the entire scene, from the first taunting word Captain Bramble had spoken.

Early the subsequent morning, even before the sun had risen, a boat might have been seen pulling from the side of the English sloop-of-war, propelled by the stout arms of a couple of seamen, while two persons sat in the stern, a closer examination of whom would have revealed them to be the captain of the ship and surgeon. At the same moment there shot out from a little nook or bay in the rear of the barracoons, a light skiff propelled by a single oarsman, who rowed his bark in true seamen style, cross-handed, while a second party sat in the stern. The rower was Captain Ratlin, and his companion was the swarthy and fierce-looking Don Leonardo. That the same purpose guided the course of either boat was apparent from the fact that both were headed for the same jutting point of land that formed a sort of cape on the harbor's southern side.

"That is the fellow, he who pulls the oars," said Captain Bramble to his surgeon.

"He must be a vulgar chap, and pulls those instruments as though bred to the business."

"Not so very vulgar, either," said the other; "the fellow has seen the world and has his notions of honor, and knows how to behave, that is plain enough."

"Egad, he shoots that skiff ahead like an arrow; the fellow could make his fortune as a ferryman," continued the surgeon, facetiously.

"Give way, lads, give way," said the English captain, impatiently, to his men, as he saw that the skiff would reach the point long before he got there himself.

A short half-hour found the two rivals standing opposite to each other at some twelve paces distance, each with a pistol in his hand. The preliminaries had been duly arranged between the surgeon and Don Leonardo, the latter of whom had not ceased up to the last moment to strive and effect a reconciliation. Not that he dreaded bloodshed, it was a pastime to him, but because it jarred so manifestly with his interests to have his friend run the risk of his life. Both of the principals were silent. Captain Bramble was exceedingly red in the face, and evidently felt the bitterness of anger still keenly upon him; while the open, manly features of his opponent wore the same placid aspect as had characterized them while he leaned over the side of his own ship, or gazed idly into the rippling waters that laved the dark hull.

It had been arranged that both parties should aim and fire between the commencement and end of pronouncing the words, "one, two, three," by the surgeon; and that individual, having placed his box of instrument with professional coolness upon the ground, took his position to give the signal agreed upon, when he said, in a preparatory tone:

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

To which both answered by an inclination of the head, and then immediately followed:

"One, two, three!"

Almost before the first word was fairly articulated, the sharp quick report of Captain Bramble's pistol was heard, and the next moment he was observed gazing intently upon his adversary, to see whether he had wounded him, and observing that he had not, he dashed his weapon to the ground, uttering a fierce oath at his luck.

In the meantime Captain Ratlin had not moved an inch, not even a muscle; his hand containing the pistol had hung quietly at his side, and his face still remained undisturbed. He had kept his word, and would not fire upon the friend of the woman whom he truly respected, and earnestly, devotedly, though hopelessly loved.

Captain Bramble paced back and forth like a caged lion, until at last, coming opposite and near to his adversary, he coarsely remarked:

"It is much easier for a trembling hand to retain a perpendicular position than to assume a horizontal one!"

Captain Ratlin understood the taunt, and stepping to where the English officer had thrown his discharged weapon, he threw it high in the air, and at the exact moment when the power of gravitation turned the piece towards the earth, he quickly raised his arm and fired, sending the bullet in his own pistol completely through the wooden stock of the other. Then turning coolly to Captain Bramble, he said:

"A trembling hand, sir, is hardly so sure of its aim as that."

"This fellow is the evil one himself," whispered the surgeon to his principal. "Come, let us on board, if he should insist upon a second shot, we should be obliged to give him the chance, since he did not fire at you, and he would drop you in spite of fate."

"Curse his luck; I am sure I had him full in the breast—such a miss, and I, who am so sure at a dozen paces;" and the English officer continued to chafe and growl until he had got into his boat, and was out of hearing from the shore.

Captain Ratlin and Don Leonardo quietly pulled back towards the barracoons, and as they neared the shore they saw the form of a female, which both at once recognized to be that of Miss Huntington, who stood there pale as death, and who gazed intently at the young commander as he drew nearer and nearer, and as he jumped upon the shore, said, hastily:

"You have been on a fearful errand. Have either of you been hurt?"

"Nay, lady, it was but a bit of morning sport," said Captain Ratlin, pleasantly.

"Answer me, was he injured, for I see you are not?"

"There has been no harm done to flesh and blood, lady."

"Heaven be praised!" said the half-fainting girl, as she leaned upon the young commander's proffered arm, and they together approached the house of Don Leonardo.

There had been another witness of the affair, one who was secreted on the very spot where the meeting took place, one who had overheard the arrangements for the same, and one who had secretly repaired thither with hopes to have seen the blood of one, if not both, flow, even unto death. And this was Maud, poor deluded, revengeful girl, who had permitted one passion to fill her every thought, and who now lived and dreamed only for revenge upon one who was as innocent of any intended slight or wrong to her as he was to the being he really loved.

Maud, with the fleetness of an antelope, had ran by the land-path from the spot of the contest, and reached home nearly as quick as the boat containing



her father and Captain Ratlin had done, and now, as she saw her hated white rival leaning upon his arm, so pale, so confiding, and he addressing her with such tender assurance, a fresh wound to her already rankled and goaded feelings was imparted, and once more she swore a fearful and quick revenge.

Captain Bramble, too much chagrined to make his appearance, at least for a few days, did not soon land from his vessel, but mused alone in the solitude of his cabin upon the obduracy of Miss Huntington's heart, and the good luck which had saved his rival's life.

## **Chapter XI**

### **The Hues of Love.**

CAPTAIN BRAMBLE did not long remain contented on board his ship. This he could not do while he realized that Miss Huntington was so near upon the shore; for, so far as such a being could really love, he did love the lady; and yet his sentiment of regard was so mixed up with selfishness and bitterness of spirit, and pride at being refused, that the small germ of real affection which had found birth in his bosom was too much corroded with alloy to be identified. He felt that he had been overreached by Captain Ratlin, and also that he had good grounds of suspecting his successful rival of being either directly or indirectly engaged in the illegal trade of the coast, and, determined, if possible, to discover his secret, he again became a frequent visitor of Don Leonardo's house, where he was sure to meet him constantly.

There were two spirits whom we have introduced to the reader in this connection, who were fitting companions for each other; but they had not as yet been brought together by any chance so as to understand one another. We refer to Captain Bramble and Maud the Quadroon. Both now hated Captain Ratlin, and would gladly have been revenged in any way for the gratification of their feelings upon her whom he so fondly loved. With this similarity of sentiment it was not singular that they should ere long discover themselves and feelings to each other. Indeed Maud, who had been a secret witness of the deed, already realized that Captain Bramble was the enemy of him whom she had once loved, and whom she now so bitterly despised.

Untutored in the ways of the world and fashionable intrigue, yet the Quadroon saw very clearly that through Captain Bramble she might consummate that revenge which she had so signally failed in doing by the agency of the hostile negro tribes she had treacherously brought to her father's doors. He had not been long at the factory, therefore, on landing after the duel, before Maud sought a private interview with him, on pretext of communicating to him some information that should be of value to him in connection with his official duty. To this, of course, the English officer responded at once, shrewdly suspecting at least a portion of the truth, and he therefore met Maud at an appointed spot in the jungle hard by her father's house.

"You will speak truly in what you tell me, my good girl?" he said sagaciously, as he looked into her dark spirited eyes with admiration he could not avoid.

"Have I anything to gain by a lie?" responded Maud, with a curling lip.

"No, I presume not," he answered. "I merely ask from ordinary precaution. But what do you propose to reveal to me? Something touching this Captain Ratlin?"

"Ay," said the girl quickly. "It is of him I would speak. You are an English officer, agent of your government, and sent here to suppress this vile traffic?"

"True."

"And have you suspected nothing since your vessel has been here?"

"I suspect that this Captain Ratlin is in some way connected with the trade."

"He is, and but now awaits the gathering of a cargo in my father's barracoons, to sail with them to the West Indies. It is not his first voyage, either."

"But where is his vessel? he cannot go to sea without one," said the Englishman.

"That is what I would reveal to you. I will discover to you his ship if you swear to arrest him, seize the vessel, and if possible hang him!"

"You are bitter indeed," said the officer, almost startled at the fiendish expression of the Quadroon's countenance as she emphasized those two expressive words.

"I have reason to be," answered Maud, calming her feelings by an effort.

"Has he wronged you?"

"Yes, he loves the white woman whom he brought to my father's house."

"Thus far, at all events, my good girl, we have mutual cause for hate, and we will work heartily together. You know where his vessel lies?"

"I do."

"Is it far from here?"

"Less than a league."

"Indeed! These fellows are cunning," mused the officer. "When will you guide me and a party of my people thither?"

"To-night."

"It is well. I will be prepared. Where shall we meet?"

"At the end of the cape, where you and he met a few days since."

"Where we met?" asked the other, in surprise. "How knew you of that?"

"I saw it."

"The duel?"

"Yes."

"It is strange. I thought none but ourselves were to be there."

"He has moved in no direction since this woman has been here that I have not followed. There I hoped to see him fall; but he was strangely preserved."

"You are a singular girl, Maud," replied the officer. "Take this and wear it for my sake," he added, unloosing a fine gold chain from his watch and tossing it around her neck, "and be punctual at that spot to-night after the last ray of twilight."

"I will," answered the Quadroon, as she regarded the fine workmanship of the chain for a moment with idle and childlike pleasure, then turning from the spot, they both returned, though by different paths, from the jungle towards the dwelling of her father.

Captain Bramble dined with Don Leonardo that day, and his good spirits and pleasant converse were afterwards the subject of comment, exhibiting him in a fair more favorable light than he had appeared in since his arrival at the factory. Maud, too, either for sake of disguise, or because the knowledge of her

plan imparted exhilaration of spirits to her, was more agreeable, seemingly frank and friendly than she had been for many a long day, if we except the day before the late attack of the negroes upon the house, when the same treacherous assumption of cheerfulness and satisfaction with all parties was similarly assumed.

Captain Ratlin, on his part, was ever the same; he found that he must wait some weeks even yet before he could prosecute the purpose of his voyage, and indeed he seemed to have lost all interest in it. His thoughts were full of too pure an object to permit him to participate to any extent in so questionable a business. Gladly would he at any moment have thrown up his charge of the "Sea Witch;" and he had indeed promised Miss Huntington that for her sake, and in honor of her friendship (for he had never aspired to any more intimate relationship), he would ignore the trade altogether, and that he would despatch Mr. Faulkner, his first officer, to the owners in Cuba with the ship he had himself taken in charge.

Having been brought up from childhood upon the sea, he had never studied the morality of the trade in which he was now engaged. But the nice sense of honor which was so strong a characteristic of his nature, only required the gentle influence of a sweet and refined nature like her with whom providence had so opportunely thrown him, to reform him altogether of those rougher ideas which he had naturally imbibed in the course of his perilous and daring profession. In the presence of that fair and pure-minded girl he was as a child, impressible, and ready to follow her simplest instructions. All this betokened a native refinement of soul, else he could never have evinced the pliability which had rendered him so pleasant and agreeable a companion to her he secretly loved.

"Lady," he said to her as they sat together that afternoon, "Heaven has sent you for a guardian angel to me; your refining influence has come to my heart at its most lonely, its most necessary moment. I have done with this trade, never more to engage in it."

"That is honorable, noble in you, Captain Ratlin, so promptly to relinquish all connection with a calling, which though it affords fortune and command, can never permit you self-respect."

"The ship will probably be despatched within these two weeks, and then I will take any birth in legitimate commerce, where I may win an honorable name and reputation."

"There is my hand on so honorable a resolution," said Miss Huntington, frankly, while a single tear of pleasure trembled in her clear, lustrous eyes.

The young commander took the hand respectfully that waits extended to him, but when he raised his eyes to her face and detected that tear, a thought for a moment ran through his brain, a faint shadow of hope that perhaps she loved him, or might at some future time do so, and bending over the fair hand he held he pressed it gently to his lips. He was not repulsed, nor chided, but she delicately rose and turned to her mother's apartment.

How small a things will affect the whole tenor of a life time; trifles lighter than straws are levers in the building up of destiny. Captain Ratlin turned from that brief interview with a feeling he had never before experienced. The idea that Miss Huntington really cared for him beyond the ordinary interest, that the circumstances of their acquaintances had caused, had not thus far been entertained by him; had this been otherwise he would doubtless have

differently interpreted many agreeable tokens which she had granted him, and to which his mind now went back eagerly to recall and consider under the new phase of feeling which actuated him.

How else could he interpret that tear but as springing from a heart that was full of kindly feeling towards him. It was a tell-tale drop of crystal that glistened but one moment there. Could it have been fancy? was it possible he could have been mistaken? The matter assumed an aspect of intense importance in his estimation, and he paced the apartment where she had left him alone, half in doubt, half hoping. In one instant how different an aspect all things wore; life, its aims, the persons he met at the door as he now passed out. Even the foliage seemed to partake of the freshness of his spirit, and the world to become rejuvenated and beautified in every aspect in which he could view it.

This was the bright tide of the picture which his imagination, aided by that gaudy painter and fancy colorer, Hope, had conjured up before his mind's eye, but the reverse side of the picture was at hand, and now he paused to ask himself seriously: "Can this be? Who am I? a poor unknown sailor, fortuneless, friendless, nameless. Who is she? a lady of refined cultivation, high family, wealth, and beauty. Is it likely that two such persons as I have considered should be joined by intimate friendship? can such barriers as these be broken down by love? Alas, I am not so blind, so foolish, so unreasonable, as to believe it for a moment." So once more the heart of the young commander was heavy within his breast.

In the mean time Captain Bramble had found an opportunity that afternoon to see Maud, and to learn from her that Captain Ratlin almost always slept on board his ship, departing soon after dark for the spot through the jungle. Satisfied of this, Capt. Bramble once more proceeded to make his arrangements, for to have seized the vessel without her commander on board would have been to perform but half the business he had laid out for the night's engagement. But all seemed now propitious, and he awaited the darkness with impatience, when he might disembark a couple of boat loads of sailors and marines, and with the Quadroon for guide follow the path through the jungle to where the "Sea Witch" lay.

"Why do you muse so long and lonely, my child?" asked Mr. Huntington of her daughter that afternoon, as she came in and surprised her gazing out at a window vacantly.

"O, I hardly know, dear mother. I was thinking over our strange fortune since we left Calcutta, the wreck, the nights in the boat, and our fortunate rescue."

"Fortunate, my dear? I don't exactly know about that. Here we have been confined at this slave factory, little better than the slaves themselves, these four weeks."

"Well, mother, Captain Bramble says he shall sail soon, and then we can go round to Sierra Leone, and from thence take passage direct for England."

"For my part I can't understand why Capt. Bramble insists upon staying here so long. He don't seem to be doing anything, and he came into the harbor by chance."

"He says that business and duty, which he cannot explain, detain him here, but that he will soon leave, of which he will give us due notice."

"Heaven hasten the period!" said the mother, impatiently; "for I am most heartily tired and worn out with the strange life we lead here."

This conversation will explain to the reader in part, the reason why Mrs. Huntington and her daughter, English subjects and in distress upon the coast, had not at once gone on board the vessel of their sovereign which lay in the harbor, and been carried upon their destination. From the outset Captain Bramble had resolved not to let his rival slip through his fingers by leaving port himself, and thus he had still remained to the present time, though without any definite plan of operation formed until he availed himself of Maud's proposal.

"Why, bless me, my child, you look as though you had been crying," said the mother, now, catching a glance at her daughter's face.

"Do I, mother?" she answered, vacantly.

This was just after she had returned from the meeting with Captain Ratlin as already described, and whether, she had been crying or not, the reader will probably know what feelings moved her heart.

## Chapter XII

### The Conflict.

CAPTAIN BRAMBLE knew very well that he had desperate men to deal with in the taking of a slaver on the coast, but he had gathered his evidence and witnesses in such a strong array that he felt warranted in going to any length in securing possession of a clipper craft which had been so fully described to him. He was not wanting in personal courage, and therefore, with a well-selected body of sailors and marines, and one or two officers, he quietly pulled away from the ship's side, under cover of the night, and landed at the proposed spot. Here he found Maud patiently awaiting his coming, and ready to lead him to the hiding-place of the "Sea Witch" and her crew. The men were all well armed, and instructed how to act in any possible emergency that was to be met with in the business which brought them on shore.

On the whole body pressed in silence, through a tangled and narrow path, being more than once startled by the growl of some wild animal, whose haunts they disturbed. It was weary struggling by this path through the wood, but it was the only way to approach the desired point by land. Maud hesitated not, but stole or glided through the tangled undergrowth, as though she had passed her whole life-time in the deep, tangled ways of the jungle. As they went on, the moon gradually rose and lifted up the dark path by little gleamings which stole in through the thick leaves and close-turning branches of the lofty vegetation.

On, on they press; and now they pause at a sign from Maud, and listen to the sound of voices, which have a strange and echo-like sound in that wild and tangled spot. Hark! those voices are not from the tongues of natives; that is English which they speak.

"Hist! hist!" whispered the Quadroon, "we are almost upon them!"

"In which direction?" asked the English officer.

"Here, see you not those bright, silver-like scales through the leaves?"

"Yes."

"That is the river's bed, and they lie on board their craft, moored close to us."

"How many do they number?"

"I know not."

"It is not important," continued the Englishman, turning to his followers, and in a low voice bidding them look to their weapons, for the game was near at hand.

A few more steps brought the party to the skirts of the thicket, where it bordered on a small clearing, opening upon the river, and looking across which—while they were themselves screened by the jungle—they discovered the dark hull of the "Sea Witch," with her lower masts and their standing rigging. The vessel was moored close to the shore, with which a portable gangway connected it. Shallow as the water was, yet so light was her draft that she evidently floated upon its sluggish current. Voices were heard issuing from the fore hatch, and two or three petty officers were seated about the entrance to the cabin, smoking cigars and pipes, all unconscious of any danger.

"There is your prey! Spring upon it, and be quick, for they will fight like mad, and he will lay a dozen of you by the heels before you take the 'Sea Witch!'" said Maud.

Captain Bramble rushed forward to the attack, followed by his men, and was soon on the deck of the vessel; but though he took Mr. Faulkner and his crew by surprise, he did not find them entirely unprepared, and after dropping eight of his people upon the slaver's deck, and being himself, severely wounded in the arm, Captain Bramble thought it best to beat a retreat, at least for a few moments, and so sought again the shelter of the jungle.

The conflict, which was very brief, was also a very sanguinary, and five of the slaver's people had been either mortally wounded or killed outright; but from the habit of constantly wearing their arms, even to pistols, when on the coast, they had been found in a very good situation at even the shortest notice for defending themselves. Captain Bramble now saw evident tokens of a purpose to unmoor the vessel, and let her drift out into the river, which would at once place her beyond his reach, as he had no boats within a league of the spot; and therefore he resolved upon a second onslaught, and this time divided his men into three parts—one to board at the bows, one at the stern, and himself leading a dozen picked men at the waist.

This division of his forces was the best manouvre he could possibly make, and succeeded admirably, since his own people outnumbered the slavers, and by dividing them he strengthened his own power and weakened theirs. Once more upon their deck, the hand-to-hand battle was short, bloody and decisive, until towards its close, Captain Bramble found himself driven into the forecabin with a number of his followers, and at the same moment saw the mate of the "Sea Witch," with those of his people that were left alive hastening to embark in a quarterboat, and pull away from the vessel's side with great speed.

A sort of instinct explained to him the meaning of this, and hurrying his people on shore with the wounded, they sought the shelter of the jungle once more. Scarcely had they gained the shade of the thick undergrowth, when a report like that of a score of cannons rang upon the night air, and high in the air soared a body of flame and wreck in terrific confusion. The slavers had placed a slow match in connection with the magazine, and had blown in one instant of time that entire and beautiful fabric into ten thousand atoms!

Even Maud, with all her hatred and passion, quailed at the shock, and trembled as she crouched to the ground with averted face. She realized the result of her treachery, but looked in vain for the object on whom she had

hoped to reckon the strength of her indignation and her hate. Where was he? This was a question that Captain Bramble had several times asked; but in vain, until now, when suddenly there appeared before their eyes, hastening towards the scene, Captain Will Ratlin.

"Seize him, my men! seize him, and bind his arms!—he is our prisoner," said the English officer.

"By what authority do you give such an order as that, Captain Bramble?" asked the young commander.

"In the queen's name, sir; in the name of the English people, who abhor pirates and slavers!" was the taunting reply of the Englishman.

"Stand back!" said Captain Ratlin, felling two seamen to the earth who approached him to lay hands upon his person, and at the same time drawing a revolver from his pocket. "Stand back, I say! I carry the lives of six of you in this weapon, and I am not one to miss my aim, as your valiant leader yonder well knows.—Now, Captain Bramble, I will surrender to you, provided you accede to my terms, otherwise you cannot take me alive!"

"Well, sir, what have you to offer?" said the English officer, positively quailing before the stern and manly front of the young commander.

"That you accept my word of honor to obey your directions as a prisoner, but that you shall not bind my arms or confine me otherwise."

"Have your own way," replied the Englishman, doggedly; "but give up your weapons."

"Do you promise me this, Captain Bramble?"

"I do."

"It is well, sir; there goes my weapon;" saying which he hurled it far into the river's bed.

As soon as Maud saw him, she sprang to her feet, and with all the bitterness of expression which her countenance was capable of, she scowled upon his upright figure and handsome features. It was evident she felt a bitter disappointment at his absence from the late affray, and would only have rejoiced had she believed he was blown to atoms with his vessel by the wild explosion which had so lately shaken the very earth upon which she now stood. It was plain that up to this very moment, however, that the young commander had never suspected her of treachery, or even jealousy, towards himself; but now, he would have been worse than blind not to have seen and realized, also, the deep malignant feeling which was written on her dark, but handsome face.

"Maud," he said, in a low, but reproachful tone, "is it you who have betrayed us?"

"Ay," said the girl, quickly, and with a shrill cadence of voice, "a double heart should be dealt doubly with. It was I who led these people hither, and I hoped the fate of so many of your ship's company might have been yours!—but you are a prisoner now, and there's hope yet!"

"Maud, Maud! have I ever wronged you or your father?" asked Captain Ratlin, reproachfully.

"Do you not love that white-faced girl you brought hither?"

"And if I did, Maud, what wrong is that to thee? Did I promise thee love?"

"Nay; I asked it not of you," said the angry girl.

"But you have done me a great wrong, Maud; one that you do not yourself understand. I forgive you though, poor girl; you are hardly to blame."

These kindly-intended words only aggravated the object to whom they were addressed, and she turned away hastily to the shade of the thick vegetable growth, where he lost sight of her figure among the branches and leaves, while he walked on with the English officer and his people over the ground they had just passed, towards Don Leonardo's. There being now no further cause for secrecy, they marched openly, and enlivened the way with many a rude jest, which grated harshly upon the ears of the wounded, who were borne upon litters made from branches of the hard, dry leaves of the palm.

As they came upon the open spot where stand the barracoons and Don Leonardo's dwelling, they found the entire family aroused and on the watch, the heavy explosion of the "Sea Witch's" magazine having seemed to them like an earthquake. Don Leonardo, who shrewdly suspected the truth, seemed satisfied at a single glance as to the state of affairs, and walking up to the young commander, and watching for a favorable opportunity, when not overheard, he asked, significantly: "Treachery?"

"Yes."

"Whom?"

"It matters not," was the magnanimous reply; for Captain Ratlin was too generous to betray the Quadroon to her father, though she had proved thus treacherous to him.

As he now recognized himself to be a prisoner, and had been told by Captain Bramble that he must go forthwith on board his ship as such, he desired to say a few words to Mrs. Huntington and her daughter, a request which his rival could hardly find grounds for refusing, and so he took occasion to explain to them the state of affairs, and to advise them to the best of his ability, touching their own best course in order to safely reach England. They felt that his advice was good, as truly disinterested, and both agreed to abide strictly by it; but doubted not that as Captain Ratlin had not been engaged in any slave commerce, and indeed had not been in the late action at all, that he would be very soon liberated, and free to choose his own calling.

Captain Ratlin was conveyed on board the ship in the harbor, and Mrs. Huntington and her daughter also, with Maud and some other witnesses that Captain Bramble desired; and the vessel shaped her course along the coast towards Sierra Leone, where there was sitting an English court of admiralty, with extraordinary authority relative to such cases Captain Bramble was now about to lay before them, and who would be only too much gratified at the bringing before them of an offender to make an example of him.

Captain Bramble of course offered to Mrs. Huntington and her daughter his own cabin for their greater comfort, and strove to make their position as comfortable as possible for them while they were on board; but he had not the nice sense of honor, that true delicacy of spirit, which should have led him to remember they were his guests from necessity, and that to push a suit under such circumstances was not only indelicate but positively insulting. And yet he did so; true, he did not actually importune Miss Huntington, but his attentions and services were all rendered under that guise and aspect which rendered them to her most repulsive.

Captain Bramble took good care that his prisoner and rival should have no degree of intercourse with her whom he knew very well Captain Ratlin loved. Under pretence that he feared his prisoner would attempt to escape, he kept him under close guard, and did not permit him once upon deck during the



entire trip from the factory of Don Leonardo to the harbor of Sierra Leone. This chafed the young commander's spirit somewhat, but yet he was of too true a spirit to sink under oppression; he was brave and cheerful always. Of course, Miss Huntington saw and understood all this, and the more heartily despised the English officer for the part he played in the unmanly business.

Maud kept by herself. She felt miserable, and as is often the case, realized that the success of her treachery, thus far, which, in her anticipation, had promised so much, had but still more deeply shadowed her heart. The English officer looked upon her with mingled feelings of admiration for her strange beauty, with contempt for her treachery, and with a thought that she might be made perhaps the subject of his pleasure by a little management by-and-by. It was natural for a heart so vile as his to couple every circumstance and connection in some such selfish spirit with himself; it was like him.

"Maud," he said to her, one day.

"Well," she answered, lifting her handsome face from her hands, where she often hid it.

"You have lost one lover?"

The girl only answered by a flashing glance of contempt.

"How would you like another?"

"Who?" she said, sternly.

"Me!" answered Captain Bramble.

"You!" she said, contemptuously, and with so much expression as to end the conversation.

No, he had not rightly understood the Quadroon; it was not wounded pride, that sentiment so easily healed when once bruised in the heart of a woman; it was not that which moved the laughter of the Spanish slaver—it was either love, or something very like it, turned to actual hate, and the native power of her bosom for revenge seemed to be now the food upon which she sustained life itself. Taking her lonely place in the cabin, after the conversation just referred to, she again hid her face in her hands, and remained with her head bowed in her lap for a long, long while, half dreaming, half waking. Poor, untutored, uncivilized child of nature! she was very, very unhappy now.

## **Chapter XIII**

### **The Trial.**

AT the immediate time of which we now write, there had been some very aggravated instances of open resistance to the English and American cruisers on the African station by the slavers who thronged the coast, and the home government had sent out orders embracing extraordinary powers, in order that the first cases that might thenceforth come under the cognizance of the court might lead to such summary treatment of the offenders, as to act as an example for the rest, and thus have a most salutary effect upon the people thus engaged. It was under these circumstances that Captain Will Ratlin found himself arraigned before the maritime commission at Sierra Leone, with a pretty hard case made out against him at the outset of affairs.

The truth was, he had not been taken resisting the attack of Captain Bramble and his men, but his accusers did not hesitate to represent that he was thus guilty, and several were prepared, Maud among the rest, to swear to this charge. Indeed, Captain Bramble found that he had people about him who would swear to anything, and he had little doubt in proving so strong a case as to jeopardize even the life of his prisoner, since many of his crew had died outright in the attack upon the "Sea Witch," to say nothing of the seriously wounded. All that could prejudice the court against the prisoner was duly paraded before the eyes and ears of the individual members ere yet the case was brought legally before them, and at last when Captain Ratlin was formally brought into court, he was little less than condemned already in the minds of nine-tenths of the marine court.

He was rather amazed to see and to hear the free way in which evidence was given against him, corroborating statements which amounted to the most unmitigated falsehoods, but above all to find Maud unblushingly declare that she saw him in the fight, and that he shot with a pistol one of the men whose name had been returned as among the dead, and that he had wounded another. The girl avoided his eyes while she uttered her well-fabricated story, but had she met the eyes of the young commander, she would have seen more of pity there than of anger, more of surprise than of reproach, even. But in the meantime, while these feelings were moving him, the case was steadily progressing, and began to wear a most serious aspect as it regarded the fate of Captain Will Ratlin.

There still remained one other witness to examine, whose illness had kept him on board ship up to the last moment, and who it was said could identify the prisoner as one of the party engaged in defending the deck of the slaver. He was a servant of Captain Bramble's, had attended his master in the attack, but having received a blow from a handspike upon the head, was rendered insensible at the first of the action, and had been carried on board his ship in that condition, from which state he had gradually recovered until it was thought he would be able to testify before the court at the present time. After a few moments of delay, the man made his appearance, evidently not yet recovered from the fearful blow he had received, but yet able to take his place at the witness's post, and to perform the part expected of him.

No sooner had the court, through its head, addressed the witness, than he answered promptly the preliminary queries put to him, while the effect upon Captain Ratlin seemed to be like magic. Was it guilt that made him start so, rub his eyes, look about him so vaguely, and then sitting down, to cover his face with his hands, only to go through the same pantomime again? We ask, was it guilt that made him act thus? The judges noted it, and even made memorandums of the same upon their record of evidence. It was observed as significant also by every one present. Captain Bramble himself looked at the prisoner with surprise to see him thus effected by the presence of his servant.

"For the love of Heaven!" exclaimed the prisoner aloud, as though he could bear this intensity of feeling no longer, "who is this man?"

"It is my servant—an honest, faithful man, may it please the court. Leonard Hust, by name, born in my father's service," said Captain Bramble.

"Leonard Hust," mused the young commander, thoughtfully; "Leonard Hust!"

"Ay, sir," added Captain Bramble, somewhat pertly, "do you find any objection to that name? If so, sir, I pray you will declare it to the court."

"Leonard Hust!" still mused the prisoner, without noticing this interruption. "There is a strange ring upon my ears in repeating that name!"

"Prisoner," said the judge, "do you recollect having done this man a severe and almost fatal harm in the late conflict?"

"I—I," said the young commander, somewhat confused in his mind from an evident effort to recall some long-forgotten association.

"You will be so good as to answer the question put by the court," repeated the judge.

"The court will please remember that I hurt no one, and that I was not even engaged in the action referred to. These good people are mistaken."

Now it was that the attention of all were drawn towards Leonard Hust, who in turn seemed as much surprised and as much moved by some secret cause as the prisoner had been. He hastily crossed the court room to where the prisoner sat, and looking full into his eyes, seemed to be for a moment entranced, while the court remained silent, observing these singular manifestations, which they could not understand.

"Leonard—Leonard, I say!" repeated Captain Bramble, "what trick is this?"

"Trick!" whispered the man; "trick, Captain Bramble! Tell me, sir, who is that man?"

"Why, they call him Captain Will Ratlin, and we know him to be a slaver."

The servant still hesitated, looking from the prisoner to his principal accuser, the English officer, then at the court, and finally drawing his master a little on one side, the man again went through the pantomime described, and placing his mouth to his master's ear whispered something which startled him as though a gun had been fired at his very ear. The shock was like electricity, and made him stagger for support. Two or three times he repeated "Impossible! impossible!" and finally begged the court to stay the proceedings, as he was taken suddenly ill, and should not be able to attend until to-morrow. Being the principal prosecutor and witness, of course his presence was requisite to the progress of the trial, and therefore as he made this request it was at once formally granted, and the court adjourned for the time, while the prisoner was remanded on ship-board for safe keeping until the next day.

That the reader may understand the singular conduct of both the young commander and Leonard Hust, he must follow the latter worthy into his master's private room in the government house, where they proceeded at once after the occurrences described.

"In Heaven's name, Leonard, what do you mean by such an assertion?" asked Captain Bramble, throwing himself into a chair, and wiping the cold perspiration from his face.

"I mean, sir, that the man on trial to-day is no more nor less than your brother!"

"Charles Bramble?"

"Yes, sir."

"How strange is all this. How know you beyond all cavil, Leonard?"

"By the scar over the right eye. You gave it to him yourself. Don't you remember, sir, just previous to the dog affair, for which he ran away from home!"

"By Heaven! I believe you speak truly; and yet how strange, how more than strange it all is, that we should meet again in this way!"

"It quite nonplussed me, sir. I thought he was a ghost at first."

"Strange, strange!" mused the elder brother. "In those days, long ago in our childhood, he crossed my path constantly, and here he is again athwart my hawse. By Heaven! but it is strange—wonderful, that fate should have thrown him and Helen Huntington together again, and that neither should know the other; and yet not so very strange, for she was but eight years old when Charles ran away. Yes, he thwarted me then, for even in childhood the girl fancied him above me, and now she affects him even in his fallen fortunes."

"What shall we do, sir, now that master Charles has turned up again?" asked Leonard Hust, in his simplicity. "We cannot testify against him now, sir."

"No, no, no!" said the elder brother, hastily, "he must not be further examined."

"How he has altered, sir, only to think," continued the servant; "why, when he went away from Bramble Park, sir, he wasn't much more than nine years old."

"Yes. I remember, I remember, Leonard," replied his master, hurriedly, while he walked the apartment with quick, irregular steps. "I remember only too well."

This was indeed that elder brother who had, when a boy, so oppressed, so worried, and rendered miserable his brother Charles, as to cause him in a fit of desperation to stray away from home, whither he knew not. His parents saw now—alas! too late—their fatal error; but the boy was gone, no tidings could be had of him, and they believed him dead. The honest tar, whose yarn the attentive reader will remember, as given on the deck of the "Sea Witch," spoke truly of his commander. He had, years before, strayed alongside a vessel, as has been related, from whence he hardly knew himself, or was afraid to say. Hunger and neglect even then had greatly changed him, and he shipped, as has been related. The fall he got at sea threw a cloud over his brain as to past recollections up to that time, and here if the wish ever possessed him as to returning to his early home, he knew naught of it.

When he heard the voice of Leonard Hust in the court, it seemed to strike upon some string in memory's harp, which vibrated to old familiar recollections, and the more he heard him speak the more the sensation came over him which led to the demonstrations which we have already witnessed. And yet he could not recall aught that would serve him as a clue—the early injury to his brain seemed to have obliterated the connecting links that memory could not supply. The reason, probably, why the servant's voice and not the brother's thus recalled him was, that the former had been kind, and his voice had ever sounded like music in the neglected boy's ears, but the brother's voice had never had that charm or happy association connected with it. As to little cousin Helen,—as she was then called,—it was not strange that Miss Huntington, after years of estrangement in India, meeting him under such circumstances, himself so changed, should not have recalled enough of the past to recognize him; and yet we have seen that at times she dwelt upon the tender accents of his voice like sleeping memories, herself quite ignorant of the cause of this peculiar influence.

She was now with her mother on shore at the mission house, in an agony of suspense as to the result of the trial which was taking place. She feared the worst, for Captain Bramble had taken measures to instruct those about her to their effect that the prisoner would be found guilty, and either strung up by the neck at once, or be sent home to England for the same purpose. Mrs. Huntington felt sad and borne down by the position of affairs—for although she

did not understand her daughter's sentiments towards Captain Ratlin, yet she recognized the fact of her and her child's indebtedness to him, and that he had evinced the characteristics of a gentleman.

"Mother, if they find Captain Ratlin guilty, what can they, what will they do with him?" asked Helen Huntington anxiously of her mother, on the day of the trial.

"Why, my dear, it is terrible to think of, but the penalty of such a crime as is charged to him, is death; but we must hope for the best, and—why Helen, how pale you look!"

"It was only a passing spasm, mother. I am—I believe I am already better," said the daughter, in an agony of suffering that she dared not evince.

"Come, Helen, lean on me and go to your bed for a while; these sudden changes and so much exposure has rendered you weak. Come, my dear, come."

And the poor girl, all trembling and pale, suffered her mother to lead her to her chamber, where a gentle anodyne soothed her nerves, and she soon fell to sleep. Had her mother not been little better than blind, she would have easily read her daughter's heart, and have seen that she loved with all her woman's soul the man who was that day on trial for his life. What mattered it to her that he was nameless, a wanderer, a slaver? She loved him, and that covered each and all faults, however heinous in the sight of the law. She felt that it was not the outward associations which made a man. She had looked beneath the surface of his soul, and had seen the pure crystal depth of his manly heart—frank, open, and as truthful as day itself. To her he was noble, chivalric and true, and if all the world had blamed him, if all had called him guilty, her bosom would have been open to receive him!

Could he have realized this as he lay in chains on board his elder brother's ship—could he have known that he was really loved by that fair, sweet and gentle creature, how it would have lightened the weight of the iron bands he bore—how cheered his drooping spirits.

## **Chapter XIV**

### **The Brothers.**

Now commenced a struggle in the bosom of Robert Bramble. It was some hours before he could recover from the first blush of amazement at the strange discovery he had made. Not to have had something of a brother's feelings come over him at such a time, he must have been less than human; and it was between the promptings of blood, of early recollections of childhood, before he grew to that age when his disposition, ruined by indulgence, had led him so bitterly to oppress and injure his brother as to drive him from the home of their youth, and the recollection of those little more matured years, when jealousy at his superior aptness, strength, and success with "cousin Helen," had made him hate him.

It was impossible for the man to forget the bitterness of the child; besides, had not the same spirit of rivalry ripened, until he found his brother in manhood still his successful rival with Helen Huntington? The reader will remember that they had all three been children together, and that the last time

Charles had looked back at his home, as he started away from it, his eye detected the little form of Helen, where she stood gazing after him.

If there had been any better promptings in the heart of Robert Bramble, they would have turned the balance in favor of his brother, and he would have befriended him; but this he did not do. He walked his room, bitterly musing upon the singular position of affairs, while he knew very well that Charles lay in chains on board his ship in the harbor. Then he recalled the memory of his parents, as connected with this state of affairs. The father was dead, the mother, a weak-minded woman, was also bowed by ill-health; indeed, their early lives had few happy associations. Robert himself had embittered all its relations.

It was nearly midnight, and the moon had sunk behind the hill that sheltered the harbor on the north, leaving the dark water of the bay in deep shadow. At long gunshot from the shore lay the ship in which Charles Bramble was confined. All was still as death, save the pace of the sentinel in the ship's waist, and a ripple now and then of tide-way against the ship's cable. An observant eye, from the leeward side of the ship, might have seen a dark form creep out from one of the quarter ports, and gradually make its way along the moulding of the water-lines toward the larboard bow ports, one of which it stealthily entered.

Entering with this figure, we shall soon find it to be Leonard Hust, who now, watching an opportunity, slipped into the apartment where the young commander had been confined since he left the factory of Don Leonardo. No sooner was the door closed quietly, so as to avoid the observation of the watch between decks, than the new comer opened a secret lantern and discovered himself to the prisoner, at the same time cautioning him to silence.

"Who are you?" coolly asked Charles Bramble, for thus we must know him in future.

"Leonard Hust," was the reply; "your friend, as I will soon prove."

"But it is only a few hours since you were giving witness against me."

"That is true; but bless you, sir, there has been a great change in matters since that."

"So I thought, by the movements I observed, though I did not understand them."

"Hist! speak low, sir," said the other, "and while I am talking to you, just let me, at the same time, be filing off these steel ornaments upon your wrists!"

"File them off? Well, then, you must, indeed, be a friend," said the prisoner.

"Leave me to prove that. Sit here, so the light will fall on them, with your back this way, that will keep the light from showing between decks. So, that is it."

"But what was it made your voice and the sound of your name affect me so this morning? I could not divest myself of the feeling that, I had heard it somewhere before."

"Heard it? bless you, sir, I rather think you have heard it before," said the fellow, as he worked industriously with his file upon the handcuffs.

"Well, where, and when; and under what circumstances?" asked the prisoner, curiously.

"That is just what I am going to tell you, sir; and you see, master Charles—"

"Master Charles,—Charles,—why do you call me that name?"

"Why, you see, that is your name, to be sure. Charles Bramble, and you are Captain Robert Bramble's brother, and—take care, hold still, or the file will cut you."

"How,—do not trifle with me,—what is this which you are telling me?"

"Indeed, sir,—indeed, it is all true," said the other, half frightened at the effect his words had produced upon the prisoner, who now stepped away from him and stood aloof, withdrawing his wrists from the operation which Leonard Hust was performing.

"Come hither, Leonard Hust, if that be your name," he said; "sit here and tell me what this business is that you refer to. No blind hints, sir, but speak out plainly, and like a man."

Thus interrogated, the man did as he was directed, and went on to tell the commander of the "Sea Witch" his story, up to the time when he was lost to his parents and friends. How he had never been kindly treated by his elder brother, who, indeed, drove him from home by his incessant oppression. He referred to that last gallant act he had performed, by saving his mother's favorite dog, and how little cousin Helen (she is the same as Miss Huntington) had seen it all, and had thanked him over and over again for it, and a thousand other reminiscences, thread by thread, and link by link, filling up the space from earliest childhood to the hour when he had left his home at Bramble Park.

As he went on relating these things, in the same old natural voice that he had poured into the same ears from their infancy, until nearly ten years had passed, a long-closed vein of memory seemed gradually to open in the prisoner's brain; he covered his face with his hands, and for a few moments seemed lost in connecting the various threads of the past, until gradually it all came plainly and clearly back to him. His memory had again by these hints become completely restored, he was himself again!

"Leonard, Leonard, I see all, remember all," he said, while a tear, a man's tear, wet for a single moment his bronzed cheek.

"I am rejoiced, sir, to hear it, I am sure," said the other.

"But, Leonard, where is my brother, and why is it necessary to remove these badges of shame by stealth? Tell me, where is Robert?"

"Alas, sir, you must remember that he never held a brother's regard for you; it was that very thing which drove you from us when you were a wee bit of a boy."

"True, true; but he must see the hand of Providence in all this, and I know he will give me his hand, and we will forgive each other and forget the past."

"Alas! sir, I always befriended you at home, when master Robert had set both the old folk against you, and I would do so now; but as to him, sir, I am sorry to say it, but he's a bad man, and he makes all those who are with him bad men, and I have many a sad thing at heart that I have been guilty of by following his orders, sir. No, no, master Charles, take my advice, don't trust Robert,—make your escape, or you will be hanged at the yard-arm of this very ship ere another twenty-four hours have passed!"

"Is he capable of this?" asked the younger brother, in tones of amazement.

"Nobody should know better than I, sir, and I tell you yes."

"My blood, then, shall not be upon his hands," said Charles, musing, "I will escape. Come, good Leonard, relieve me of these shackles, and quickly."

"Slowly, slowly, master Charles, we must be cautious, there are watchful eyes on board the ship, and sentries who know their duty, so be wary."

The young commander seemed now to stand more erect, there was a freer glance to his eye, his lips were more compressed and firm, he felt that what had been to him heretofore an indelible stain, a stigma upon his character, was now effaced; he was not only respectably born, but even gently and highly so. His father was knighted by his king, his blood was as pure and ancient as any in England. He could now take Helen Huntington to his heart without shame; he could boldly plead a cause that he had not before dared to utter; he could refer her to the dear hours of their childhood, to the tender kiss she gave him when he left that distant home to become a wanderer over half the globe!

He no longer felt the irons that Leonard Hust was filing away. He seemed to feel a strength that would have snapped them like pack thread. He was a man now, a free man, and not a thing of accident; a thing for the world to point at in scorn, not an abandoned child of shame. No, he felt nerved at once by this singular, this almost miraculous discovery, and could hardly restrain his impatience. Yet a shadow for a moment crossed over his brow, as he thought of that brother, who could coldly look on and see him sacrificed, knowing what he must and surely did know. Could he have permitted such a result, had he been in Robert's place? Indeed, he felt he could not.

"Does not my brother know that you are here on this errand, Leonard?"

"If he did it would cost me my life," said the honest fellow.

Charles would have placed some favorable construction upon the case, but, alas, he could not; there was no possible way of disguising the matter. Robert was the same bitter, jealous-spirited soul that had rendered his childhood miserable. Time had not improved him,—it was his nature and could not be eradicated. Charles now realized this, and within a few further inquiries of Leonard, touching matters of vital interest to him, he resolved not to seek Robert, as he had at the outset intended, neither would he avoid him. He knew no other person save him could bring a continuance of the suit against him, but he hardly feared that even he would do that.

"Of course Helen Huntington knows nothing of this development yet, Leonard?"

"No, sir, and master Robert bid me be careful not to let her find it out, or to say one word about the matter to any one whatever. I wonder the lady didn't know you, sir."

"You forget that even Robert did not recognize me."

"And that, too, seemed funny to me. Why, sir, I seemed to know you the instant I set eyes on you in the court, and when I got close I soon settled the doubt in my mind."

"Well, my good fellow, it seems that but for you I might have been hanged, and that, too, by my own bother; but I trust all is set right now."

"I hope so, sir, only you must not let master Robert know that I liberated you from these ruffles, sir, will you, master Charles?"

"Never fear me, Leonard, I shall not do as you were about to do towards me, give testimony that will in any way criminate you."

"But I wasn't, sir, of my own free will, only master Robert had told me what I must say, and stick to it, and swear to it through thick and thin, and I'm afraid not to obey him."

"Poor fellow, I see you are, indeed, his tool; but if I find myself in any sort of a position ere long, I will take care to make your situation more comfortable."



"Thank ye, sir," said Leonard Hust, just as the last shackle dropped from the prisoner's wrists.

In the mean time, let us turn for a moment to the bedside of Captain Robert Bramble, for it is long past midnight, and, weary in mind and body, he had retired to that rest which he most certainly needed. But sleep is hardly repose to the guilty, and he was trebly so. Phantoms of all imaginable shapes flitted across his brain, pictures of suffering, of misery and of danger, to all of which he seemed to be exposed, and from which he had no power to flee. Alas, how fearful the shadows that haunt a bad man's pillow. He writhed like one in physical pain, tossed from side to side, while the cold perspiration stood in big drops upon his brow and temples.

Now his dreams carry him back, far back a score of years, to his childhood at Bramble Park, when all was innocence, and then, with leaping strides, he finds himself, years after, even as to-day, bearing deadly witness against his brother. His dead father seems standing by his bedside, pointing at him a warning finger, and sadly chiding his fearful want of feeling. He tosses and turns and writhes again, then leaping from the uneasy bed, looks bewildered around, and half grows alarmed. Quickly he wraps a dressing-gown about him, and hastily walks back and forth to still the agony of feeling and the bitter phantoms of his dreams. How haggard and wild he looks by that dim candle-light.

Once more he throws himself upon his bed, and, after a while, is again asleep, if such unconsciousness can be called sleep. Again he tosses, and turns, and sighs like one in a nightmare until at last, towards the breaking of day, the quick, startling breathing ceases, and subsides into a regular and equal respiration, and he lies still. Nature overcomes all else, and he now sleeps, indeed, but not until he has passed through a fearful purgatory of dreams, all too real, too trying.—His brother, with soon the prospect of a disgraceful death on the gallows, had not suffered thus. No, he was repentant for the wrong he had done, and had already resolved to completely reform if the opportunity were offered to him; but Robert Bramble was outraging the laws of nature and of God.

## **Chapter XV**

### **The Escape.**

CHARLES BRAMBLE found himself playing a dangerous part. It was true that Leonard Hust had freed his hands from those shackles that had confined them so long, and had pointed out to him the way to retreat and escape; but he must run the gauntlet of dangers in order to do so. This, however, he was prepared to do; as to fear, it was a sensation he knew not; but prudence was much more requisite in this instance than any especial degree of courage. As is always the case on board a man-of-war, especially when lying in port, where the escape to the shore is easy, sentinels were placed at stem, stern and waist of the English ship, at all hours, pacing their allotted round of the deck, and keeping watchful guard over every avenue of exit from the vessel.

The only possible plan of escape that suggested itself to Charles Bramble, under the circumstances, was to place a few necessary articles of clothing in a

small package, and confine it to the back of his neck, while he should divest himself of all garments, slip quietly into the water on the seaward side of the ship, where none of the sentries were immediately placed, the object being to guard the access to the shore more especially. Once in the water he had only to strike out quietly for the shore, trusting the dullness of the sentries and the favoring darkness of the night to enable him to reach the land unobserved.

He had the most to fear from the sentry placed on the top-gallant forecastle of the ship, as that post was so near to his line of passage. He would have to swim around the bows far enough out to clear the land tackle, and when he got on an even line with the ship's bows, this sentry, if he happened to be on the lookout at the moment, could hardly fail to see him on the surface of the water. To obviate this difficulty, Leonard Hust, who was a sort of privileged person on board, being the captain's confidential servant and man of all work, undertook to engage the sentry's attention by sonic device, for a few moments, just at the opportune period, while the prisoner should get fairly clear of the ship.

"See here, Bill," said Leonard Hust, carelessly, as he emerged from the fore hatch; "look ye, old boy, I have had such a dream, hang me if I can sleep a wink."

"What's that to me?" growled the sentry, morosely, and not much more than half awake.

"Why, if you knew what it was I dreamed, you would think it was something to you," continued the other, with assumed mystery and seriousness.

"Look ye, Leonard Hust," said the marine, "do you know you are talking to a sentry on duty, and that it's clearly against the rules of the ship to do so?"

"Why, as to the matter of that, I don't see hut that you are as much to blame as I am," continued the other; "but who is there to peach on either of us?"

"That's true," added the marine, bringing the butt of his musket lightly to the deck; "but for all that, Leonard, it's dangerous business, for you see if—hallo! what's that?"

"Nothing; nothing but me drawing this cork," said the other, quickly producing a small bottle of brandy from his pocket, and urging the marine to drink.

The temptation was too great, and the sleepy and tired sentinel drank a heavy draught of the liquor, smacking his lips, and forgetting the sound he had just heard, and which Leonard Hust very well knew was caused by the prisoner's descent a little too quickly into the water, alongside the ship.

"Now, Bill, what do you think I did dream?" continued the captain's man.

"Bother it, how can I tell?" answered the marine. "Let it out if it's worth telling."

"Why, do you see, Bill, I kept tossing and turning uncomfortable-like for an hour or so, until finally I thought I saw you, with your face as black as the ace of spades, and your body dangling by the neck from the main yard-arm of the ship, a dead man!"

"Well, that's comfortable at any rate," said the marine, "and you needn't trouble yourself in future, Leonard Hust, to repeat your dreams to me, especially if they are personal."

"Never mind, man, it was all a dream, no truth in it, you know. Come, old boy, take another drink for companionship, and then good night to you, and I'll turn in."

The marine greedily drained the rest of the bottle, and with swimming eyes thanked Leonard for his kindness, bade him good night, and with an unsteady step resumed his musket and his walk upon the forecastle. In the meantime, Charles Bramble, who was an expert swimmer, had got out of gunshot and even sight of the ship, or rather where his head could not be discovered from the ship's deck, and was nearing the shore very fast. He had secured, as he proposed, sufficient clothing upon the back of his neck, and in an oil cloth covering, so as to keep it dry, to equip himself quite comfortably on landing, and in these garments he was soon dressed again, and making his way through the town to the mission house, where he knew Helen Huntington and her mother to be, and where he knew, also, that he could find at last temporary lodgings.

He had no longer any fear that his brother would resume the charge concerning him before the court—bad as he knew him to be, he did not believe that he would do this, though he doubted not that he would have managed to have kept him in confinement, and perhaps to have carried him thus to England, partly from revengeful feelings towards him, and partly to keep him out of the presence of her whom he so tenderly loved. But, lest his brother should be betrayed by his feelings into any extremity of action concerning him, he resolved at once to write him a note, declaring that their relationship was known, and that should any further persecution be offered, the same should at once be made public to the oppressor's disgrace.

With this purpose, he hardly awaited the breaking of day before he possessed himself of writing materials, and wrote and despatched the following to his brother:

"CAPTAIN ROBERT BRAMBLE,—About the same time you receive this note, you will also be made aware, doubtless, of my escape from durance vile in your ship. The purpose of my sending you this is not to ask any favors at the hand of one who was never actuated towards me even in childhood by a brother's regard, but whose sole desire and purpose have been to oppress and injure one related to him by the nearest ties of relationship. My object is rather to let you know that any further attempt to arraign me before the court will lead at once to a public declaration of the fact that you are my brother, a relationship which necessity alone will compel me to publish to the people of Sierra Leone.

CHARLES BRAMBLE,  
"Alias CAPTAIN WILL RATLIN."

Charles Bramble felt that he was safe from further immediate oppression on his brother's part, and that it was only necessary for him to keep quietly within doors until some chance for shipping from the port should occur, to enable him to disentangle himself from the singular web of circumstances which chance had woven so net-like about him. In spite of the sad accomplishments of the realization of his condition as it regarded his brother, and the partial danger of his present position, yet there was a lightness to his heart, a buoyancy in his breast, which he had not known for nearly a score of years, for he now felt that all shame of birth was removed from him, that he was respectably and even highly born, and that in point of blood was even the equal, full equal of that fair and lovely girl he regarded so devotedly.

Of course there was no disguise between Charles Bramble and Helen, and her mother, as to the charge brought against him. They knew very well that he had been engaged in the evil trade of the coast, but they knew also that he had conducted his part of the business upon the most humane principles which the traffic would admit, and that he was not a principal, but an agent in the business, sailing his ship as rich owners had directed, and also that besides the fact of his having utterly renounced the trade altogether since he became acquainted with Helen Huntington, his heart and feelings had never been engaged in its necessary requirements. Realizing these facts, we say, neither Helen nor her mother regarded Captain Ratlin (the only character in which they yet knew him) to be actually and seriously culpable as to at charge of inhumanity.

The gratification which Helen evinced on meeting him the next morning after his escape from the ship, was too honest, too unmistakable in its import not to raise up fresh hopes in his heart, that, in spite of his seeming disgrace, his confinement as a prisoner, his trial as an outlaw, and his fallen fortunes generally, still there was one heart that beat purely and tenderly with at least a sister's affection for him, and even Mrs. Huntington, who had not for one moment suspected the true state of her daughter's sentiments towards the young commander, did not hesitate to salute him tenderly, and assure him of her gratification at his release from bondage. She was a generous hearted woman, frank and honorable in her sentiments, and she secretly rejoiced that they had, herself and daughter unitedly, been able to exert a refining influence over so chivalric and noble a character, as she fully realized Captain Ratlin to be at heart, and in all his inward promptings.

Charles Bramble still hesitated as to revealing his relationship to Captain Robert Bramble, from real feelings of delicacy, even to Mrs. Huntington, whom he felt he could trust, partly because he had reason to know that the mother had favored the suit of his brother whom Helen had rejected in India, and partly because at present of his own equivocal situation. But to Helen herself he felt that he might, indeed that he must reveal the important truth, and that very evening as they sat together in one of the spacious apartments of the mission house, he took her hand within his own, and asked her if he might confide in her as he would have done with a dear sister.

"You know, Captain Ratlin, that I feel so much indebted to you, in so many ways, that any little service I am capable of doing for you would be but a grateful pleasure," was the instant and frank reply of the beautiful girl, while a heightened glow mantled her cheek.

"Then, Helen, listen to me, and if I am too excited in speaking of a subject so immensely important to me, I trust you will forgive me. Already I have given you a rough outline of my story, rough and uncouth indeed, since I could give it no commencement. You will remember that previous to the fall I got on ship-board, while a boy in the 'Sea Lion,' I could recall no event. It was all a blank to me, and my parentage and my childhood were to me a sealed book. Strange as it may seem that book has been opened, and the story is now complete. I know all!"

"Indeed! indeed I am rejoiced to hear you say so," was the earnest reply, while the countenance of the fair creature by his side was lighted up by tenderness and hope.

"You look pleased, Helen," he continued; "but supposing the gap in my story, which is now filled up, had better for my own credit have remained blank!"

"That cannot be—I feel that it cannot be," she said, almost eagerly.

"Supposing that it is now ascertained that the parents of the sailor boy, whose story you have heard, deserted him because of necessity; supposing they were poor, very humble, but not dishonest, would such facts rob me of your continued kind feelings?"

"You know, Captain Ratlin, that you need not ask such a question," she replied, as she looked into his face with her whole gentle soul open through her eyes.

"You are too kind, too trusting in your confidence in me, Helen," he said.

The only reply was from her downcast eyes, and a still warmer blush which covered the delicate surface of her temples even, and glowed in silent beauty upon her cheek.

"Helen," continued he by her side in tones of tenderness that were momentarily becoming more and more gentle, more and more expressive of the deepest feeling; "Helen, do you remember the days of your childhood, at home, in far-off England, at home near Bramble Park?"

"Yes, yes," she answered, eagerly. "But why do you speak of those days?"

She looked into his face as she asked, almost as though she could read his meaning.

"Do you remember Robert Bramble then?"

"Well, well."

"And do you remember his brother, Helen?"

"Gracious heavens, yes!" she quickly answered, almost anticipating his words.

"Well, Helen, Charles Bramble is before you!"

She did not faint nor utter a shriek at the effect of the powerfully condensed feelings which crowded upon her heart and senses; but she stood for one moment gazing at him as though a veil had been removed from her eyes, recalling in one instant of time the sweet memories of their childish days together, recalling even the kiss, that last kiss he had given her years, years before, when he saw her for the last time, until they met in the broad ocean; she recalled these things and a thousand more in a moment of time. She remembered how strangely the tones of his voice had affected her from the outset, how they had seemed to awaken dreams of the past nearly every time she listened to him. These things she thought like a flash of mind in one instant, and then, covering her face with her hands, sobbed aloud!

One moment Charles Bramble stood and looked upon that long-loved, beautiful form; one moment, like herself, recalled the past, the sunshine of his childish hours—ay, even the last kiss which she, too, remembered, now that so much had been recalled; and then he tenderly drew the weeping, loving girl to his heart, and whispered to her how dearly he loved her still!

## **Chapter XVI**

### **The Cannibals.**

THE first intimation of his brother's escape from confinement reached Captain Bramble through the letter which we have already given to the reader. His rage knew no bounds; he saw at once that he was foiled completely, that he could do nothing towards his arrest, even, without casting such dishonor upon his own name as would publicly disgrace him for all time to come. In vain were all his efforts to discover the guilty assistants or assistant of the prisoner, as it was not known at what hour he escaped. Even the three sentinels on duty at the time could not be identified, though Leonard Hust's friend, Bill, did more than suspect that some trick had been played upon him during his watch; but he could say nothing about the matter without making such a case of self-crimination as to ensure punishment, and that, too, of the most sanguinary character. Leonard Hust knew this, and feared him not.

There was another party sadly disappointed in this state of affairs, one who only assumed sufficient importance to be noticed when her services were needed, but she nevertheless felt and suffered, probably, as much as any one of our characters. We refer to Maud Leonardo. She had found lodgings in an obscure residence in the town during the course of the trial, and had resolved to remain until the sentence was given (of the result of which no one doubted), and even until the detail of that sentence should be executed, which she had already, learned would doubtless be death by hanging at the yard-arm of the ship in which he was confined. Poor girl! it was sad to think that she could gloat over this anticipated result—such was the power of her revenge.

But in the same ratio to the intensity of her secret satisfaction at the hoped-for execution of Captain Will Ratlin, whom she had once loved, but now so bitterly hated, was her disappointment, vexation, and uncontrollable anger, at the idea of his escape, of which she was one of the first to learn.

Captain Robert Bramble, though he did not attempt to find his brother, would hardly have believed that he would remain openly in town, and at the mission-house; but Maud reasoned more truly. It was the first thought that entered her head that he had probably gone thither to be near and with Helen Huntington, and thither she stealthily crept, and watched until she saw him, and thus satisfied herself. Knowing nothing of the discovery that had been made, she hastened to give information to Captain Bramble, supposing that he would take steps for his immediate arrest; but in this she was disappointed.

She could not understand the apathy which seemed to have come over the English officer who so lately had thirsted for the young commander's blood, and she went away from him amazed and dejected. In vain, thus far, had her attempts resulted as to sacrificing him whom she so bitterly despised. She had trusted to others thus far—this she said to herself, as she mused at the fruitless attempts she had been engaged in—now she would trust to herself. But how to do it she hardly knew. When he was under her father's roof, and she unsuspected of hostility to him, it would have been an easy matter, with her knowledge of poisons, to have sacrificed his life; but now it was not so very easy for her to find an opportunity for any sort of approach to him. But this seemed her last and only resource of vengeance, and she cared to live only to consummate it.

Actually afraid to bring his brother again to trial, for fear of a personal exposure, Captain Robert Bramble was now in a quandary; he was looked to by the court for a conclusion of the suit he had brought, and was now so situated that he found it necessary to screen that brother whom he so bitterly disliked,

from the cognizance of the authorities. Indeed, he became nervous lest the exposure should become public in spite of his efforts at concealing the singular facts. All this, of course, tended to the safety of his brother Charles, who had rightly anticipated this state of affairs in relation to the part that Robert must needs enact; he therefore felt perfectly safe in awaiting an opportunity for shipment to England in the first vessel bound thither, and it was at once agreed between Mrs. Huntington, Helen and himself, that they would go together. The period of the return of Captain Bramble's ship to England was fast approaching, and passage had been offered to Helen and her mother therein; but Helen had promptly declined it, and induced her mother to do so also, though it required some persuasion to bring this result about.

Charles Bramble, of course, kept within doors at Sierra Leone, and did not, by exposing his person, provoke arrest. He was reading aloud to Helen a few days subsequent to his escape from his brother's ship, when the door of the room was stealthily opened, and a person stepped in.

"Well, Leonard Hust," said Charles Bramble, "what has brought you here so clothed in mystery? Art well, my good fellow?"

"Yes, very well, master Charles; but I come to tell you that you must get away from this place, for a few days at least. It is not safe for you."

"What is in the wind, Leonard, now? Have the court scented me out?"

"Yes, mister Charles, and your brother Robert has agreed to deliver you up!"

"Has he?" added Charles Bramble, musing. "I did not expect that."

"Yes, sir; and I thought I would just slip over here and advise you to get off as quick as possible, for the officers will be over here in an hour or so."

"Thank you, Leonard. What is that protruding from your pocket?"

"Pistols, sir."

"Very good, Leonard, I will borrow them."

"They are yours, sir, with all my heart."

"Are they loaded, Leonard?"

"With two slugs each, sir, and as true as a compass."

These formidable preparations startled Helen, who looked beseechingly towards him whom she loved better than her own life. She came and placed a hand timidly upon his shoulder, and looked into his face with all the wealth of her heart expressed in her eyes, as she said:

"Pray, pray, Charles, be cautious, be prudent for my sake, will you not?"

"I will, dearest," he whispered, as he leaned forward and pressed his lips to her pure white forehead. "We shall not long be separated—I feel that we shall not."

Leonard Hust, who had befriended the younger brother while the two were under the parental roof, still clung to the interest of Charles Bramble. He had already procured for him a guide—a negro runner—who knew the coast perfectly, and with him for a companion, and a small pack of provisions, and well armed, Charles Bramble determined to make his way by land back to Don Leonardo's factory on the southern coast. In so doing, he would be able not only to elude all pursuit, but would also be able to further his own pecuniary interest by settling up his affairs with Don Leonardo, and arranging matters as to the property that had been entrusted to him by the owners of the "Sea Witch."

Charles Bramble awaited impatiently the coming of the guide, until indeed he was afraid that longer delay would expose him to the arrest which he so much

desired to avoid, and then telling Leonard that he would hasten forward to the outskirts of the town, where he would await the guide. Leonard Hust promised to bring him directly, and thus they parted; the younger brother, hastening towards the jungle at the environs of Sierra Leone, at length reached the designated spot, where he quietly awaited the arrival of his guide. It was quite dark before the expected individual came; but at length he did arrive, and thrusting a note into the hands of the impatient refugee, waited for orders. Charles opened the paper and read in a rough school-boy hand, that he, Leonard Hast, had intended to come to see him off, but that he could not, and that the bearer was a faithful guide, somewhat eccentric, but reliable.

Charles Bramble looked carefully for a few moments at the companion of his long and dangerous journey. He saw before him the person of a negro, slender, agile, rather below the usual height, and clothed after the style of the settlers, in pants and jacket, but with a red handkerchief bound upon the head. In a coarse, leathern belt, the negro wore a short double-edged knife and a pistol, while in his hand he held a short, sharp spear, which served for staff and weapon both, and was designed more particularly for defence against the wild animals that infested the jungle in all directions.

The guide was painted in the face after fantastic style often adopted by the shore tribes in Africa, in alternate lines of red and yellow and white, so as to give a most strange and inhuman expression to the countenance. But Charles Bramble was familiar with these tricks of the race, and saluting the guide kindly told him his plans, and asked if he could guide him on the route. Being assured in the affirmative, he felt satisfied, and the two, by the light of the moon, which was now creeping up in the heavens, commenced their journey, intending, after passing a few leagues, to make up their camp, light their fires to keep off the wild animals, and sleep.

The resting-place was at last found, and after the usual arrangements had been completed, and a circle of fire built around them, the two lay down to sleep. Fatigue soon closed the eyes of our young adventurer, and he slept soundly, how long he knew not; but after a while he was awakened by the breaking of some decayed branches near him, and partially opened his eyes, half asleep, half conscious, when to his utter amazement he beheld, or fancied he beheld, a dozen pairs of glistening eyes peering at him from out the jungle. He did not stir, but feigning to be still asleep, he cautiously watched to see what all this meant. They surely did not belong to wild animals—those eyes!

He partially turned without moving his body to ascertain if the guide was still by him, but found that he was gone. There was treachery somewhere—there was danger about him—this he seemed to feel instinctively, but still, feigning sleep, he almost held his breath to listen. He soon learned by his sense of clearing that there were some half dozen or more of negroes near to him, and that he was the subject of their conversation. He could even detect his guide's voice among the rest, though the conversation was carried on scarcely above a whisper. He had on a previous voyage taken much pains to familiarize himself with the language spoken by the shore tribes in the south, and he now had little difficulty in understanding a considerable portion of the remarks which were making by the gang who were secreted in the jungle so near to where he was lying, while he pretended sleep.

He soon learned that his guide was followed by a half dozen or more of negroes, who had lately visited Sierra Leone on some business of their own, and



who, in common with the guide, belonged to a fierce and warlike tribe, whose chief village was but a few leagues from Don Leonardo's factory. At first it was difficult to make out the actual purport of their scheme, though Charles Bramble could guess what he did not hear, and was satisfied that the cannibals intended to lead him, apparently in good faith, to the neighborhood of their village, where he was to be seized, sacrificed to some deity of these poor ignorant creatures' manufacture, and afterwards be eaten in council with great ceremony. All this he could distinctly make out, and certainly it was anything but agreeable to him. But Charles Bramble knew the race he had to deal with; he fully understood the fact that one after white man with his wits about him was equal to cope with a dozen of them at any time, and he felt prepared.

He gathered at once that it was their intention to guide him safely until near their own village, where they would seize upon him, and from that moment make him a prisoner. Meanwhile none but his guide was to be seen by the traveller, so it was agreed, and he was to receive care and kind attention until the time appointed. Knowing all this, of course he was prepared for it, and now saw that for the present and the few coming days, he need have no alarm, and beyond that he must trust to his ready wit, personal prowess, and the indomitable courage which was natural to him. It may seem strange, but reasoning thus, he soon fell to sleep again in good earnest.

The next morning, he met his guide with frankness, and the best of feeling seemed to prevail day after day, until suddenly one evening before night had fairly set in, and the day before he had anticipated any such attempt, the negroes suddenly fell upon him, and pinned his arms, and otherwise disabled him, so that he was completely at their mercy. Already they had arrived at the environs of their village, and into it they bore him in great triumph. Council was at once held, and it was resolved that on the morrow the prisoner should be sacrificed, and cooked, and eaten! This was anything but agreeable to our adventurer, but he did not despair. Thrusting his hand into his pack, he discovered an almanac that he had brought with him from Cuba.

Turning over the hieroglyphics and singular figures, to the wonder and amusement of the negroes, he saw that on the morrow an eclipse of the sun would take place, and he immediately resolved to turn the fact to good account. He summoned the chief of the tribe and told him to his no small amazement, in his own tongue, that to-morrow, the Great Spirit that ruled the sun would put a veil over it in displeasure at the detention of his white child by them, but that as soon as they should loose his feet and arms, and set him free, the veil would be removed.

Amazed at such an assertion, the chief consulted among his brethren, and it was agreed that if the white man's story proved true, then he should be released.

At the hour appointed on the following day, the negroes were surprised and terrified to see the gradual and almost total eclipse of the sun, and attributed it to the Great Spirit's displeasure because of their detention of the white prisoner, as he had foretold. They hastened to loose his arms and to set him on his way rejoicing. They even bore him on their shoulders for leagues in a sort of triumphal march, and did not permit him to walk until they had brought him safely and deposited him with his arms and pack before the doors of Don Leonardo!

## Chapter XVII

### The Poisoned Barb.

OF course, Don Leonardo was amazed to see his friend, deeming him by this time either in an English prison or dead. He learned with amazement the part that Maud had performed, for Charles Bramble was forced to reveal to the father, who was eager to inquire after his daughter. Though Charles felt not the least compunctions of conscience as to the matter, yet he now fully realized the cause of all her enmity, though of this he said not a word to her father. Don Leonardo cheerfully joined the new-comer in completing his business arrangements, and Charles Bramble found himself the rightful owner of some eight thousand dollars in gold, the product of the goods which he had landed as his private venture, and he also took good care to forward true bills of credit to his owners in Cuba, for the specie which had been sent out by him to purchase slaves.

These business arrangements consummated, he now began to think seriously of once more revisiting the scenes of his childhood, Bramble Park. He doubted not that Helen and her mother would arrive at their own early home, which adjoined that of Bramble Park, and which, by the way, had been leased during their settlement in India, as early as he could himself procure conveyance which would enable him to reach the spot. With this idea, he eagerly scanned the horizon daily, hoping for the arrival of some craft, even a slaver, that might bear him away, either towards America or Europe, so that he might get into the course of travel.

One morning, when he had as usual gone up to the lookout and scanned the sea view far and near, he at last came down to the breakfast-room with his face quite speaking with inward satisfaction. He had seen a sail, evidently a large merchantman, and begged Don Leonardo to go up and see if together they could not make the stranger out more fully. Charles, himself, thought that she was heavy and evidently steering for the small bay on which the factory stood. But their curiosity was soon to be satisfied, for spar after spar gradually became more and more clearly defined, until at last the deck itself could be seen, and St. George's cross observed flying saucily in the breeze. The ship was a British sloop-of-war, and so it proved.

In an hour more, Captain Robert Bramble came on shore, accompanied by Helen and her mother, with Maud Leonardo. As it afterwards appeared, Maud desired to be brought back to her father, and the English ship was but performing its appointed duty in cruising on the coast; while Helen knowing that Charles had come hither, persuaded her mother that it was best to sail with Captain Bramble, rather than stop in Sierra Leone among utter strangers. For on ship-board they were under his care, and besides, as she admitted to her mother, she had good reason for supposing that Captain Will Ratlin, for thus the mother knew him still, was at Bay Salo, as Don Leonardo's factory was called on the coast. Thus it was that they were once more on this spot.

The brothers met before the collected members of the returning party and those on the shore, and regarded each other with a stern glance. It was the only token of recognition which passed between them; but Charles hastened to

Helen's side, and pressing her hand tenderly, looked the words that he could not speak before others. Mrs. Huntington seemed overjoyed, too, at joining one whom she felt was a true friend to herself and daughter, and unhesitatingly evinced this feeling, while Maud and Captain Robert Bramble walked by themselves filled with bitter thoughts. Robert had at once presumed as to whither his brother had escaped, well knowing that he must here have left unsettled business accounts of great value and importance. He therefore was prepared for the meeting which took place as we have seen. The Quadroon saw Helen and Charles thus together, she saw the delight that this meeting caused to both, she was witness to the eloquent language of the eyes that beamed into each other, and then she hastened from the spot, crazed with bitterness of feeling, and fall of direful purpose. Had she been observed at that moment, it would have been seen that there was danger in her. To her father's kind salute, she turned a deaf ear, and hastened into the dwelling with headlong speed.

Charles and Helen had much to say to each other. Now that he had told his love, now that the dark veil had been removed from the past that had obscured his origin, he felt confidence, and spoke with manly cheer and a light heart. The most indifferent observer would have noticed this, and it waits not without its effect upon Helen, who looked brighter and happier than ever before, and the two succeeded at once in infusing a degree of cheerfulness all around them, reflected by Helen's mother and even Don Leonardo, with his heavy eyebrows and shaggy beard. Captain Robert Bramble and Maud alone seemed unhappy, and they were moody indeed.

It was towards the twilight hour on the very day of the arrival which we have referred to, that Charles and Helen arm in arm started away from the house to the adjacent jungle, where was a pleasant trysting-place, with a seat prepared for resort from the house. Breathing into each other's ears the glad and trusting accents of true love, they sauntered slowly hither and sat down there, Helen upon the rude, but comfortable seat, and Charles at her feet upon the ground. About them grew the rank, luxuriant foliage of Africa; fragrant flowers bloomed within reach of their hands, and luscious fruit greeted the eye in whichever direction it sought. The soft air of the afterpart of the day was laden with sweetness, and they seemed to gather fresh incentive for tenderness and love in the peculiar surroundings of the spot.

"So, you have broken off all connection with this business, and have settled your accounts with Don Leonardo, have you not?" asked Helen, of him at her feet.

"Yes, dearest, all has been done, and I shall have no more to do with the trade of this inhospitable coast, you may be assured. My only hope and desire is once more to see you and your mother safe in England, where I can make you by sacred ties my own."

Helen looked the tender response that beat in her heart, but which her lips refused to pronounce. She was very, very happy, and they talked over olden times, childish recollections, and the memories of their early home.

While Charles and Helen were thus engaged, two other individuals closely connected with the plot of our story were not idle. Captain Robert Bramble was now satisfied that without physical force he could not intervene between his rival brother and Helen Huntington; he would gladly have done this, but policy prevented, for he saw that in doing so, he would but gratify his revenge without approaching a single step nearer the consummation of his wishes. It was nearly

the appointed date for the sailing of his ship from the station for England, and he had made up his mind to return at once to Sierra Leone, and prepare to sail homeward.

He had already taken leave of Mrs. Huntington, and was seeking her daughter to say to her farewell; the wind was fair, he would sail within the hour, and on inquiring for Helen he was told by some one that she had been seen a few moments before walking towards the jungle. The informant did not say in the company of him she so evidently loved, and Robert Bramble hastened forward in hopes that he might meet her there alone; perhaps, even once more press that oft rejected suit; he even thought as he went what he could say to her, and wondered how she would receive him. It was difficult to say what it was in his bosom which caused him so tenaciously to pursue this vain desire; his was not the heart to die for love, it amounted almost to obstinacy. He was self-willed, and was accustomed to have his own way in all things; here he had been thwarted from the very outset.

Maud Leonardo, since her arrival home, was scarcely herself, she avoided all intercourse, spoke to no one, and locked herself in her chamber. But now she started forth intent on some purpose, as was evident from the direct and prompt step she pursued. Yes, from her window she had seen Charles, and Helen wander leisurely and affectionately together towards the jungle, and to the same point she now directed her steps, though by a circuitous path. She muttered to herself as she went, and walked with unwonted speed, as though she feared to lose one moment of time. At this quick pace, she was soon hidden in the paths of the thick undergrowth and forest land.

"Hark! what sound is that?" said Helen, suddenly turning and peering into the thick foliage which surrounded the spot.

"I hear nothing," replied Charles Bramble. "It was some bird perhaps, among these branches. But why do you look so pale, Helen?"

"It is so terrible. I thought the sound was like that of one of those terrible serpents that frequent these parts, the anaconda, creeping towards us."

"Nay, dearest, it was but your imagination; these reptiles avoid the near approach to human habitations, and would not be likely to be here."

"There! there it is again," she said convulsively, drawing closely to his side, while both looked towards the spot from whence at that moment a sound proceeded.

In a moment more there broke forth from the clustering vines and trees the figure of a man, with a drawn sword, who hastened with lowering brow towards them! It was Robert Bramble, incensed beyond endurance at the sight which met his vision through the vista of the foliage on his approaching the spot; he paused but for one single moment, then yielding to the power of his almost ungovernable temper, he drew his sword and rushed forward, determined to sacrifice his brother's life. Helen seeing plainly and instantly the state of affairs, threw herself with a scream of terror before Charles to protect him, unarmed as he was, from the keen weapon that gleamed in his brother's hand.

But strange are the ways of Providence, and past finding out. At that instant he staggered, reeled forward, and placing one hand to his forehead fell nearly at their feet!

Amazed at this, Charles and Helen both hastened to his side, but he was speechless, and ere he could be removed from the position in which he fell, life was wholly extinct. What was it that had so strangely, so suddenly sacrificed

him in the midst of his fell intent? Hark! Charles starts as a shrill, low whizzing sound was heard close to his ear! The mystery is explained, a poisoned barb had killed his brother, entering the eye and piercing the brain, while this second one that had just whistled past his car, had been intended for him. He turned hastily to the direction from whence the missile had come, and there stood or rather staggered Maud Leonardo. He hastened now to her side as she gradually half knelt, half fell to the ground. Her eyes rolled madly in their pockets, her hands grasped vainly at the air, and she muttered incoherently.

"Maud, Maud, what have you done?" asked Charles, leaning over her.

"The barb was poisoned, it—it—was meant for you!" she half shrieked. "I—I—am dying, dying unrevenged—O, this scorching, burning pain!"

"What ails you, Maud—what can we do for you?" asked Charles, kindly.

"I—I am poisoned," groaned the Quadroon, holding up her lacerated hand which she had carelessly wounded with one of the barbs intended to have killed him.

The barb she had wounded and killed Robert with, was blown through a long, hollow reed, a weapon much used in Africa, and the barb had been dipped in poison so subtle, rapid and sure in its effect, that the wound the girl had received accidentally in her hand, was fast proving fatal to her. In Robert Bramble's case, it had reached a vital part at once, and had been almost instantly fatal in its effect. But Maud was dying!

"Poor, poor girl, what shall we say to your father?" asked Charles, for he knew full well the fatal poisons in which the negroes dip their tiny barbs; and he realized that the Quadroon, who was a victim to her own scheme of destruction, could not live but a few moments.

She seemed too far gone to speak now, and turned and writhed in an agony of pain upon the ground, while Helen strove to raise her head and to comfort her. The poison seemed to act upon her by spasms, and she would have a moment now and then, when she was comparatively at ease. The lowering darkness of her face was gone now, a serenity seemed to be gathering there, and leaning forward between the paroxysms, she held forth the hand which was not wounded towards Charles Bramble who stood tenderly over her, and said in a low, gentle voice:

"Forgive—forgive me! will you—will you not forgive me?"

"With all my heart, poor girl, I do sincerely forgive you," said Charles, earnestly.

All was not black in that human heart, the half effaced image of its Maker was there still; and Maud looked tenderly and penitently upon Helen and Charles. The former knelt by her side, and drawing the poor girl's hands together across her breast as she lay upon the ground, lifted her own hands heavenward, moving her lips in prayer as she bent over the sufferer. What little Maud knew of religious instruction, had been taught her in the form of the Episcopal church, and she now listened to the formal prayer from the litany appropriate to her situation. A sweet smile gathered over her face as Helen proceeded, and prayed for forgiveness for all sins committed; and as she paused at the close, three voices repeated the word Amen.

Charles and Helen rose to their feet, but the spirit of the Quadroon had fled!

## Chapter XVIII

### The Denouement.

THE events of the past few weeks seemed to Charles Bramble more like dream than reality; he could hardly compose his mind sufficiently to realize the serious bearings of his present situation. Of course, it was now useless longer to disguise his relationship to Robert, who had lost his life by means of the poisoned barb which Maud had intended for his brother. Charles took possession of his body, and informed all those necessary duties that his own feelings suggested, and form required. The second officer of the ship assumed the command vacated by Captain Robert's death, and as the time had now arrived for the return of the vessel to England, he sailed at once for Liverpool.

Though Charles was loth to be separated from Helen, yet he urged upon herself and mother to join the English man-of-war, in which they could secure the most comfortable and safest passage to Liverpool; while for himself, there was still left business matters which it was imperative for him to consummate before he left the region where he was. It was at last decided that the mother and daughter should improve this mode of conveyance home, and Helen reluctantly bade him she so tenderly loved a tearful farewell, and in secret they pledged to each other their hearts for life.

Charles Bramble watched the receding ship which contained her so dear to him, until it was a mere speck upon the waters, and then felt that it was possibly the last token he might ever see of her. The path before him was not one strewn with roses, he had serious dangers to encounter, a long voyage to make, and an unhealthy climate to endure; for he must cross the ocean, he found, in order to settle honorably with those men who had placed such unlimited faith in his integrity. But he had no ship or craft of any sort at his command, and must wait an opportunity for reaching the West Indies, doubtless, on board some vessel in the trade which he had just abandoned.

Don Leonardo seemed to little heed the death of his daughter. In fact, he did not trouble himself to inquire into its particulars, further than to understand the immediate cause. He was a sensual and intemperate man, half of whose life was passed under the effects of unnatural stimulus, and provided his appetite was not interfered with, cared little what befell others. Since the English man-of-war had sailed, his barracoons began to fill once more with negroes from the interior, and he was now prepared to ship a cargo by the first adventurer's vessel which should arrive. The funds which Charles Bramble had brought out from Cuba to Africa, were consigned to Don Leonardo, and he of course would do with the money as he pleased; he therefore proposed to charter the first vessel that came, and ship a cargo the same as he would have done in the "Sea Witch."

It was not long before one of those flat, low, dark clipper schooners hove in sight and ran into the bay. She was small, sat deep in the water, was scarcely three hundred tons burthen, but managed to stow three hundred and forty negroes with ease, and would have taken more had not intelligence from the lookouts been brought in, that a square rig was coming down the coast. Charles Bramble hesitated whether he should embark in this craft. It was consigned to his former owners, the very men he wished to meet. He might have

to wait for months in order to obtain another chance, it was hardly a matter of choice with him, but became one of necessity, and he embarked accordingly.

Charles Bramble was no sooner fairly at sea than he was filled with amazement at the condition of matters on board the slaver. Himself accustomed to enforce the most rigid discipline, he here saw a perfect bedlam; a crew of some thirty people, composed of the vilest of the vile, who must have been shipped only with an eye to numbers, and no regard for character or stability. Added to this, the captain, though a man of some experience as a seaman, had no control of the crew, and was quite at a loss how to manage them. Twice was Charles Bramble obliged to interfere between the crew and the captain before they were three days at sea; and by his stern, calm will he succeeded in preventing open mutiny by the crew. The fact was, the most desperate part of the foremast hands knew very well that the money sent out to purchase slaves, was still on board in good golden doubloons, and they were secretly scheming to take the schooner, kill the officers and appropriate the gold.

Charles Bramble was accustomed to deal with such spirits; he was well-armed at all hours, and prepared for the very trouble which was to come, inasmuch as he had anticipated it. There were two mates and the captain, beside himself, who might be relied upon to stand by the vessel and the owners' rights, but they had fearful odds against them. There was also a lad who had gone out in the "Sea Witch" as cabin boy, whom Charles Bramble was now bringing back with him to his family in Cuba, the boy having escaped the massacre which occurred when the "Sea Witch" was burned, and who had been living at Leonardo's factory. On him also he felt he could rely. The boy soon discovered the mutiny that was hatching, and told the captain secretly that it would occur at the moment land was announced from the mast-head on making the islands of the West Indies.

This was all the information necessary for Charles Bramble, to whom the captain of the schooner gave up all control, to prepare for the emergency. He completely armed the four parties on whom he could rely, and bade them wait for orders from him, but when he gave those orders to act instantly and without pausing for further consideration. The crew were somewhat puzzled to see their chief officer give up even the sailing of the vessel to him who had come on board as a passenger, but they could not but also perceive that he who acted as the captain now, was a very different man to deal with, and one who knew his business. They saw that the schooner was made to sail better than ever before, that the crew were kept in their places and busy, an important thing at sea, and though they were still resolved to make the attempt, they did not like the appearance of matters.

Scarcely had the lookout after a short passage descried the first land, and hailed the deck with "land ho!" when a change was instantly observed among the crew. Captain Bramble, however, was on the watch, and so were his backers; and seeing this, he instantly called one of the ringleaders aft, and bade him sternly to lay his hand to a rope and pull it taut. The man instinctively obeyed at first, subdued by the calm, stern front of the man who addressed him, but in a moment more he ceased and turned towards the officer flatly declining duty, at the same time beckoning the hands forward to come to the quarter-deck. Captain Bramble paused one second of time and repeated his order. It was not obeyed, and in the next instant the man lay a corpse with a bullet through his brains at the feet of his officer!

This prompt punishment for a moment checked the action of the rest, but it was only for a moment when they moved aft in a body.

"Hold, where you are!" shouted the young but determined commander. "The man who advances another step dies!"

All paused, save two of the most daring of the rascals who continued to press on. Captain Ratlin now bade the mates to shoot the first man who came aft unbidden, while he marched a few paces forward, and once more bid them stand. They heeded him not, and the foremost one fell with a bullet through his heart! Captain Ratlin instantly drew a fresh weapon from his bosom and presented it at the other foremost man, "fall back, fall back, you imps of darkness, fall back, I say, or you die!"

The crew had not counted on this summary treatment, they were beaten and mastered; the culprit addressed sneaked back among the crew trembling with fear.

Captain Ratlin returned to the quarter-deck, received fresh arms from one of the mates, and then calmly began to issue orders for the sailing of the vessel, as though nothing had occurred to interfere with the business routine of the day. Those orders were promptly obeyed. The master spirit there had asserted its control, and established it, too; and a more orderly crew never moored a slave ship on the south side of Cuba, than were soon busily engaged in that duty after the set of sun on the day when this bold attempt at mutiny had occurred.

This little affair, which came very near to costing Charles Bramble his life, was in one sense a fortunate one, since it put him on the best of terms with the owners, who had entrusted him with the "Sea Witch," and who now pressed a gratuity of \$2000 upon him for his part of the present voyage, and forwarded him safely without expense on his return voyage to England. This additional amount of funds to his already handsome sum of personal property, gave him some \$10,000 dollars of ready money, which he took with him to his homestead at Bramble Park. The money enabled him not only to clear the estate of all encumbrances, but also to make his mother, now aged and bed-ridden, comfortable.

But he was soon married, and with Helen Huntington, whose estates joined those of Bramble Park, he obtained a large fortune; but best of all, he took to his arms a sweet, intelligent and loving wife. She with whom he had played in childhood amid these very scenes, she whom he had rescued upon the waters of the ocean, she who had loved and reformed him.

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