

The Gypsy Queen's Vow VOL.II

By

May Agnes Fleming

***Free*editorial** 

THE GYPSY QUEEN'S VOW

CHAPTER XXI

PET BEGINS HER EDUCATION

"A horrid specter rises to my sight."

"I hear a knocking in the south entry.

Hark! more knocking!"

Macbeth.

Throwing open the folding-doors, Mrs. Moodie passed into the school-room, closely followed by Pet.

It was a long, high, wide room, with desks running round the walls, and maps, globes, books and slates scattered profusely around. Before each desk was a chair, and some sixty girls of all sizes and sorts sat now busily conning their lessons.

Two or three teachers sat in various directions, round the room, before little tables, with their eyes fixed on the students, ready to note down the slightest infringement of the rules.

It was seldom the commander-in-chief of the establishment swept her silken flounces through the hot, dusty classe; and now, according to the long-established rule, teachers and pupils rose simultaneously, and courtesied profoundly to that august lady. Then every eye in sixty-three heads turned and fixed themselves upon the new pupil with that sharp, searching, un pitying stare that only school-girls understand. Petronilla, however, was not in the remotest degree troubled with that disagreeable failing, yclept bashfulness; and glancing round composedly, she swept the whole room at a glance, and returned every stare with compound interest.

"Young ladies," said Mrs. Moodie, with a graceful wave of her hand toward Pet, "this young lady is Miss Petronilla Lawless, of Judestown, and will be your future companion and fellow-pupil. I hope you will be mutually pleased with each other, and try to make her at home among you as soon as possible. Miss Sharpe she will enter your division."

And, with a stately bow of her beribboned head, Mrs. Moodie rustled loudly from the room, while teachers and pupils again bowed in deepest reverence.

Pet gave an assenting nod to Mrs. Moodie's remarks, which had the effect of making two or three of the young ladies, indulge in a little giggle behind their handkerchiefs. Then, from a distant corner, came a small, keen, wiry-looking human terrier, known by the appropriate cognomen of Miss Sharpe, who immediately laid hands upon Pet, saying:

"Miss Lawless, come this way. You are to enter my class."

Pet, as good a physiognomist as ever lived, raised her keen eyes to the cantankerous face of the cross-looking old young lady, and conceived, upon the spot, a most intense dislike to her. The other girls, at a silent motion from their teachers, had dropped into their

seats, and resumed their studies still, however, covertly watching the new pupil with all a schoolgirl's curiosity.

Pet was led by sharp Miss Sharpe to the remote corner from whence she had issued, and where sat some dozen or two "juvenile ladies," all smaller than Pet. Miss Lawless looked at them a moment in undisguised contempt, and then stopped short, jerked herself free from Miss Sharpe's grasp, and coming to a sudden stand-still, decidedly began:

"I ain't a-going to sit among them there little things. I want to go over there!"

And she pointed to where a number of young ladies, whose ages might have varied from seventeen to twenty, sat in the "First Division."

A very little thing will produce a laugh in a silent school-room, where the pupils are ever ready to laugh at anything a new scholar does or says; and the effect of this brief speech was a universal burst of subdued laughter from the sixty "young ladies" aforesaid.

"Well, you can't go there!" said Miss Sharpe, sharply, looking daggers at Pet. "You are to sit in my division which is the lowest!"

"Yes, I see it is," said Pet; "but you needn't get so cross about it. I should think, when my papa pays for me, I could sit wherever I like. I'm sure this hot old room, without even a carpet on the floor, ain't much of a place to sit in, anyway."

Another universal laugh, louder than the first, followed this; and the sixty pairs of eyes flashed with wicked delight for Miss Sharpe was the detestation of the school.

"Silence!" called the head monitor, sternly.

Miss Sharpe clutched Pet's shoulder with no gentle hand, and jerked her into a seat with an angry scowl.

"You must keep silence, Miss Lawless," she began, with asperity. "Young ladies are not allowed to talk in the class-room. You will have to sit wherever you are placed, and make no complaints. Such rude behavior is not allowed here. Hold your tongue, now, and read this."

Hereupon she took from her table the "First Book of Lessons," and put it into Pet's hand, with another scowl, darker, if possible, than the first.

Pet took it, and holding it upside down for a while, seemed to be intently studying, thinking all the while that life in a school-room was not only as pleasant, but considerably pleasanter, than she had anticipated.

But for Pet Lawless to keep silent any length of time was simply a moral impossibility; so, finding the cross teacher's lynx eyes turned for a moment the other way, she bent over toward her next neighbor, a little red-eyed, red-haired girl, about her own age, and whispered, in strict confidence, pointing to Miss Sharpe:

"Ain't she a horrid cross old thing?"

But the young lady only glanced askance at the audacious little law-breaker at her side, and edged nervously away from her.

Petronilla not being easily affronted or slighted, however, came close to little red-head, and holding her book to her mouth, whispered again:

“Does she ever whip you or anything? She looks cross enough to do it. Ain’t it awful, coming to school?”

Seeing there was no escape from her persecutor, red-head thrust her knuckles into her eyes and began to cry.

“What’s the matter now?” said the teacher, turning sharply round, and looking threateningly at Pet.

“Why, Miss Sharpe, she keeps a-talking to me all the time and won’t stop,” whispered the unhappy owner of the red hair.

“What is she saying?” said Miss Sharpe, in a quick, irritated voice, that strongly reminded Pet of Dismal Hollow and Miss Priscilla Toosypegs.

“Shesheshe says you’re aaa horrid cross old thing, please, ma’am!” wept the little one, digging her knuckles still further into her eyes.

Miss Sharpe’s face grew black as a thunder-cloudowing to her peculiar complexion, she generally blushed black or deep orange. In all her thirteen years’ teaching, she had never encountered a pupil who had dared to call her a “horrid cross old thing” before. Old!that was the the worst. To be called so before the whole school, too! Miss Sharpe sat for one awful moment perfectly speechless with rage, and so black in the face that there seemed serious danger of her bursting a blood-vessel on the spot.

Once again a loud laugh, that would not be restrained, came from the sixty pretty mouths of the sixty young ladies so often spoken of. Even the teachers, although they sternly called “silence!” were forced to cough violently to hide the smile that was creeping over their faces at Miss Sharpe’s rage.

Meantime, our dauntless Pet sat with a sort of head-up-and-heels-down look, that was a sight to see; her arms akimbo, and her bright black eyes blazing with defiance, daringly riveted on the face of the justly-offended teacher.

“Diddid you dare to say that, youyou impudent, impertinentyoung saucy”

“Abandoned, outrageous son of a gun!” put in Pet, composedly.

“Silence! Did you dare to call me thatthat name?”

“I didn’t call you any nameI said you were a horrid cross old thing; and I’ll leave it to everybody here if you ain’t! I ain’t used to hold my tongueand I’m not going to do it, either!” said Pet, all ablaze with defiance.

Miss Sharpe sat unable to speak, her rage almost swamped in her utter amazement. In all her experience she had never come across so desperate and utterly depraved a case as this. Every book was dropped, and every eye fixed on Pet. Even the other teachers, unable longer to repress their smiles, exchanged glances of surprise, and watched with interest and curiosity, the little original, who sat staring at Miss Sharpe as if for a wager.

“II won’t endure this! I am not to be insulted in this manner!” said Miss Sharpe, rising passionately. “I’ll go and report her to Mrs. Moodie; and either she or I must leave this class.”

“My dear Miss Sharpe, be calm,” said the head teacher, a pleasant-faced young girl, as she rose and came over. “There is no use in troubling Mrs. Moodie about the matter.

This little girl, you perceive, has been indulged and spoiled all her life, and cannot readily submit to authority now. My dear," she added, turning to Pet, "you must sit still and not talk. It is against the rules; and you perceive you are giving Miss Sharpe a great deal of trouble."

"Well, so is she, just as bad! She's giving me a great deal of trouble, too! I want to go and sit in your class."

"But you can't sit in my class, Miss Lawless. You must keep the place allotted you. Little girls should be docile and obedient, you know, and do as they are told. Will you sit still now, and be quiet?"

"Yes; if she lets me alone!" pointing to Miss Sharpe.

"You must do as your teacher says, child. Now, do be a good little girl, and don't talk." And the sweet-voiced young lady patted Pet's black curly head kindly, and went back to her place.

Miss Sharpe, looking as if she would like to pounce upon Pet, and pound the life out of her, relapsed scowling into her seat; and Pet, curling her lip contemptuously at the cross teacher, took a lead pencil out of her pocket and began amusing herself drawing caricatures of her all over the book she held in her hand.

A profound silence again fell on the hot, close classe, and the girls bent over to-morrow's tasks; now and then however, smiling slyly at each other, and glancing significantly at the new-comer, whose short half-hour in school had already created a sensation quite unparalleled in all the past history of the establishment, and which was destined to fill sixty letters home to "papa and mama" next time they wrote. Then, in half an hour more, a bell loudly rung, and every girl jumped eagerly up. This was the signal that school for the day was dismissed; and books, slates and pencils were hustled hastily out of sight; and two by two the girls marched through the now open folding-doors, beginning with the tallest, through the long hall staircase, through another hall, out of a side-room, and into an immense play-ground, furnished with wings, skipping-ropes, hoops and everything else necessary for recreation and amusement.

But no longer were hoops, and swings, and skipping-ropes seized with loud shouts as heretofore; newer and more attractive game was in view now, and every one crowded around our Pet, surveying her with open eyes as if she were some natural curiosity.

But Pet had no intention of standing there to be looked at and cross-questioned; and breaking through the ring with the yell of an Ojibewa Indian, she sprang into one of the swings, and invited "some of 'em to come and swing her."

Like hops in beer, Pet's presence seemed to throw the whole assembly in a ferment hitherto unknown. The swings flew wildly; the skipping-ropes went up and down with lightning-like velocity; the hoops whirled and flew over the ground in a way that must have astonished even themselves, if hoops ever can be astonished. The girls raced, and ran, and skipped, and laughed as they had never done before; and the noise and uproar waxed "fast and furious." And wherever the fun was highest, the laughter loudest, the excitement wildest, there you might find Pet, the center and origin of it all. Cross Miss

Sharpe, who had been sent out to look after them, and see that none of them broke their necks, if possible, wrung her hands in despair at the awful din, and rushed hither and thither, scolding, shaking, threatening, and vociferating at the top of her lungs; but all in vain. They were every one going crazy that was evident; and that little minx, who had come there that day to throw the whole school in convulsions, was the cause of it all.

But even school-girls, with lungs, and throats, and faces very often of brass, must get exhausted at last; and after an hour's steady screaming and yelling, the whole assemblage shrieked, laughed and shouted themselves into hoarseness and comparative quiet.

Pet, somewhat fatigued after her exertions, was seated in the midst of a group of girls, telling, in solemn tones, a most awful "raw-head and bloody bones" ghost story, which she "made up" as she went along, and which was destined to deprive at least twenty little individuals of a wink of sleep that night.

Every one was bending eagerly forward, listening breathlessly to Pet, who had just got "Jack" into the "haunted castle," and was announcing the coming of a "great big black man, with red-hot coals for eyes, and flames of fire coming out of his mouth," when a thin, sharp shadow fell over them, and, looking up with a terrified start, they beheld Miss Sharpe standing over them.

"What is she talking about now?" queried that lady, with no very amiable glances toward Pet.

"She's telling a ghost story; that's what she's talking about!" said Pet, instantly beginning to be provoking.

"Ghosts!" said Miss Sharpe, turning up her nose though nature had already saved her the trouble. "Such stuff! You must not terrify the children by telling them such things, little girl."

"It's not stuff!" said Pet; "It's as true as preaching. I've seen lots of ghosts myself. There, now!"

"Miss Lawless, do you know where little girls that tell fibs go to?" said Miss Sharpe, sternly.

"Yes, the same place you'll go to, I expect," said Pet, pertly; "but I ain't telling fibs I never do. And I have seen plenty of ghosts, too. There's a whole settlement of them out where we live. I only wish I had brought some of them to school with me, and then you would see. That's all!"

"You naughty little girl!" said Miss Sharpe, angrily. "How dare you tell me such a story? You have seen ghosts, indeed! Why, everybody knows there is no such thing."

"What do you bet there's not?" said Pet.

"Miss Lawless, you forget to whom you are speaking!" said Miss Sharpe, with dignity.

"No, I don't; I know very well to whom I am speaking," said Pet, imitating her tone; "and I know just as well there are ghosts. They're great, tall, thin people, in white, with hollow eyes, that come at midnight and scare people. I've seen them, and I guess I ought to know."

Miss Sharpe, disdaining an altercation with the elf, who was already bristling up in anticipation of a controversy, turned and walked away majestically, or, at least, as majestically as her four feet eight inches would allow.

Pet looked after her with a boding eye that told wonderful tales, if she could only have read it; but she contented herself with mentally exclaiming:

“Oh, I’ll dose you! Maybe you won’t see a ghost tonight, old Miss Vinegar.”

“There, now, go on with the story,” chorused half a dozen voices, when Miss Sharpe was gone.

“See here,” said Pet, without heeding the request, “where does sheMiss Sharpe I meansleep at night?”

“With us,” said one of the small girls, “in the children’s dormitory. The large girls have rooms to themselves, every two of them; but we sleep in a long room all full of beds, and Miss Sharpe sleeps there, too.”

“Hum-m-m! Do you know where I am to sleep?”

“Yes; all Miss Sharpe’s division sleep in the children’s dormitory. You’ll be there.”

“Um-m-m! I should like to see the place. Would we be let?”

“Oh, yes. If you can get one of the girls in the First Division to go with you, she can take you all over the house.”

Off ran Pet, and without much difficulty she persuaded one of the First Division girls to show her through the house.

The first place they visited was the children’s dormitory. This was a long room, with rows of white-curtained beds on either side for the children, and one larger than the rest, at the further end, for Miss Sharpe. Small washstands and mirrors were scattered around, and near each bed was placed a small trunk belonging to the children.

Pet scanned these arrangements with a thoughtful eye. Then, turning to her cicerone, she said:

“In which of the beds am I to sleep?”

“In this one,” said the girl, indicating one at the extreme end of the room, opposite Miss Sharpe’s. “The room was full; so they had to put it close to the window, and you will have a chance to see everybody that passes.”

Pet went over to examine. Within a few inches of the bed was a window overlooking the street. It was partly raised now, and Pet thrust her head out to “see what she could see,” as they say. The first thing that struck her was the fact that the window was in a straight line above the hall door, and only removed from it the distance of a foot or two. Instantly a demoniacal project of mischief flashed across her fertile brain; and as she withdrew her head her wicked eyes, under their long, drooping lashes, were fairly scintillating with the anticipation of coming fun.

“Do they use bells or knockers on their doors, around here?” she carelessly asked, as she flitted about.

“Some use one, some the other. There is a large brass knocker on this door. I am sure you must have seen it.”

"I had forgotten. This is my trunk, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"What time do they go to bed here?"

"Nine in summereight in winter."

"Hum-m-m! I know now. And do they stay out in that yard all the time?"

"Oh, no. As soon as it gets dusk we come in, have supper, and then the larger girls practice their music, or read, or write to their friends or study, or sew, or do whatever they like; and the little girls of your division play about the halls and passages."

"Um-m-m! I see," said Pet, in the same musing tone, while her wicked eyes, under their long, dark lashes, were twinkling with the very spirit of mischief. "Could you get me a good long cord, do you think? I want it for something."

"Yes, I think so. Do you want it now?"

"Yes, please."

"Very well; wait here till I go up to my room and get it for you," said the unsuspecting young lady.

"Oh, ching-a-ring-a-ring-chaw!" shouted Pet, dancing round the long room with irrepressible glee, when she found herself alone. "Oh, won't I have fun to-night! Won't I show them what spiritual rapping is! Won't there be weeping and gnashing of teeth before morning!

'Mrs. MacShuttle,

She lived in a scuttle,

Along with her dog and her cat."

sang the imp, seizing a huge pitcher from one of the washstands and flourishing it over her head as she sung. Round and round she whirled, until her pitcher came furiously against the wall, and smash! in a thousand fragments it fell on the floor.

Arrested in her dance, Firefly stood still one moment, in dismay. Here was a winding-up of her extempore waltz quite unlooked for. There on the floor lay the pitcher, shivered into atoms, and there stood Pet, holding the handle still, and glancing utterly aghast from the ruins on the floor to the fragment of crockery in her hand.

"Whew! here's a go!" was the elegant expression first jerked out of Pet by the exigency of the case. "I expect this pitcher's been in the establishment ever since it was an establishment, and would have been in it as much longer only for me. Pet, child, look out! There'll be murder, distraction, and a tearing off of our shirts! Fall of Jerusalem! won't Miss Sharpe give me a blowing up, though!"

"Oh, Miss Lawless! what have you done?" cried the young lady, in tones of consternation, as she suddenly entered.

"Smashed the crockery," said Pet, coolly pointing to the wreck.

"Oh, dear me! Oh, Miss Lawless! how could you do so?"

"Didn't go for to do it. Got smashed itself."

"Miss Sharpe will be very angry, Miss Lawless."

"Well, that don't worry me much," said Pet.

"I am afraid she will blame me. I should not have left you here alone," said the young lady, twisting her fingers in distress.

"No, she won't. I'll send out and buy another one."

"Oh, you can't. The servants are not allowed to run errands for the young ladies without permission from Mrs. Moodie. You will have to tell Miss Sharpe."

"Well, come along then; I'll tell her. Did you bring the string?"

"Yes, here it is. Oh, Miss Lawless! I am exceedingly sorry."

"Wellmy goodness! you needn't be. An old blue pitcher! I used to throw half a dozen of them, every day, at the servants, at home, and nobody ever made a fuss about it. A common old blue pitcherhumph!"

"Oh! but it was different at home. They were your own, there; and Miss Sharpe is soqueer. She will scold you dreadfully."

"Well, so will I, then there! I can scold as long and as loud as she can, I reckon. An old blue pitcher! Humph! Wish to gracious I had smashed the whole set, and made one job of it."

By this time they had reached the play-ground; and making her way through the crowd, Pet marched resolutely up to Miss Sharpe, and confronted that lady with an expression as severe as though she were about to have her arrested for high treason.

"Miss Sharpe, look here!" she began. "I've been upstairs and smashed an old blue pitcher. There!"

"What!" said Miss Sharpe, knitting her brows, and rather at a loss.

"Miss Lawless was in the children's dormitory, Miss Sharpe," explained the girl who had been Pet's guide, "and she accidentally broke one of the pitchers. She could not help it, I assure you."

"But I know she could help it," screamed Miss Sharpe. "She has done it on purpose, just to provoke me. Oh, you little limb you!you unbearable little mischief-maker! You deserve to be whipped till you can't stand."

"See here, Miss Sharpe; you'll be hoarse pretty soon, if you keep screaming that way," said Pet, calmly.

"I'll go and tell Mrs. Moodie. I'll go this minute. Such conduct as this, you'll see, will not be tolerated here," shrieked the exasperated lady, shaking her fist furiously at Pet.

"Mrs. Moodie has gone out," said one of the girls.

"Then I'll tell her to-morrow. I'll"

Here the loud ringing of a bell put a stop to further declamation, and the girls all flew, flocking in, and marched, two by two, into another large room, where a long supper-table was laid out.

It was almost dark when the evening meal was over. Then the larger girls dispersed themselves to their various avocations, and the younger ones, under the care of a gentler monitor than Miss Sharpe, raced about the long halls and passages, and up and down-stairs.

Now was the time Pet had been waiting for. Gliding unobserved, up-stairs, she entered the dormitory, and securing one end of the string to the bed-post, let the remainder drop out of the window. Then returning down-stairs, she passed unnoticed through the front hall, and finally secured the other end of the string to the knocker of the door. It was too dark, as she knew, for any to observe the cord in opening the door.

This done, she returned to her companions, all aglow with delight at her success so far; and instigated by her, the din and uproar soon grew perfectly unbearable, and the whole phalanx were ordered off to bed half an hour earlier than usual, to get rid of the noise.

As Judge Lawless had said, it was a rigidly strict establishment; and the rule was that, at half-past nine, every light should be extinguished, and all should be safely tucked up in bed. Even Mrs. Moodie herself was no exception to this rule; for, either thinking example better than precept, or being fond of sleeping, ten o'clock always found her in the arms of Morpheus.

Therefore, at ten o'clock, silence, and darkness, and slumber, hung over the establishment of Mrs. Moodie. In the children's dormitory, nestling in their white-draped beds, the little tired pupils were sleeping the calm, quiet sleep of childhood, undisturbed by feverish thoughts or gloomy forebodings of the morrow. Even Miss Sharpe had testily permitted herself to fall stiffly asleep, and lay with her mouth open, stretched out as straight as a ramrod, and about as grim. All were asleep all but one.

One wicked, curly, mischief-brewing little head there was¹⁹⁹ by far too full of naughty thoughts to sleep. Pet, nestling on her pillow, was actually quivering with suppressed delight at the coming fun.

She heard ten o'clock eleven strike, and then she got up in bed and commenced operations. Her first care was to steal softly to one of the washstands, and thoroughly wet a sponge, which she placed on the window-ledge within her reach, knowing she would soon have occasion to use it.

Taking some phosphureted ether, which she had procured for the purpose of "fun" before leaving home, she rubbed it carefully over her face and hands.

Reader, did you ever see any one in the dark with their faces and hands rubbed over with phosphureted ether? looking as though they were all on fire all encircled by flames? If you have, then you know how our Pet looked then.

Sitting there, a frightful object to contemplate, she waited impatiently for the hour of midnight to come.

The clock struck twelve, at last; the silence was so profound that the low, soft breathing of the young sleepers around her could be plainly heard. In her long, flowing night-wrapper, Pet got up and tiptoed softly across the room to the bed where the cross she-dragon lay.

Now, our Pet never thought there could be the slightest danger in what she was about to do, or, wild as she was, she would most assuredly not have done it. She merely wished to frighten Miss Sharpe for her obstinacy, unbelief in ghosts and crossness, and never gave the matter another thought.

Therefore, though it was altogether an inexcusable trick, still Pet was not so very much to blame as may at first appear.

Now she paused for a moment to contemplate the sour, grim-looking sleeper thinking her even more repulsive in sleep than when awake; and then laying one hand on her face, she uttered a low, hollow groan, destined for her ears alone.

Miss Sharpe, awakened from a deep sleep by the disagreeable and startling consciousness of an icy-cold hand on her face, started up in affright, and then she beheld an awful vision! A white specter by her bedside, all in fire, with flames encircling face and hands, and sparks of fire seemingly darting from eyes and mouth!

For one terrible moment she was unable to utter a sound for utter, unspeakable horror. Then, with one wild piercing shriek, she buried her head under the clothes, to shut out the awful specter. Such a shriek as it was! No hyena, no screech-owl, no peacock ever uttered so ear-splitting throat-rending a scream as that. No word or words in the whole English language can give the faintest idea of that terrible screech. Before its last vibration had died away on the air, every sleeper in the establishment, including madame herself, had sprung out of bed, and stood pale and trembling, listening for a repetition of that awful cry. From twenty beds in the dormitory, twenty little sleepers sprung, and immediately began to make night hideous with small editions of Miss Sharpe's shriek. Gathering strength from numbers, twenty voices rose an octave higher at every scream, and yell, after yell, in the shrillest soprano, pierced the air, although not one of them had the remotest idea of what it was all about.

At the first alarm, Firefly had flitted swiftly and fleetly across the room, jumped into bed, and seizing the sponge, gave her face and hands a vigorous rubbing; and now stood screaming with the rest, not to say considerably louder than any of them.

"Oh, Miss Sharpe, get up! the house is on fire! we're all murdered in our beds!" yelled Pet, going over and catching that lady by the shoulder with a vigorous shake.

And "Oh, Miss Sharpe! Oh, Miss Sharpe! Get up. Oh-oh-oh!" shrieked the terrified children, clustering round the bed, and those who could springing in and shaking her.

With a disagreeable sense of being half crushed to death, Miss Sharpe was induced to remove her head from under the clothes, and cast a quick, terrified glance around. But the coast was clear the awful specter was gone.

And now another noise met her ear the coming footsteps of every one within the walls of the establishment, from Mrs. Moodie down to the little maid-of-all-work in the kitchen. In they rushed, armed with bedroom-candlesticks, rulers, ink-bottles, slate-frames, and various other warlike weapons, prepared to do battle to the last gasp.

And then it was: "Oh, what on earth is the matter? What on earth is the matter? What is the matter?" from every lip.

Miss Sharpe sprung out of bed and fled in terror to the side of Mrs. Moodie.

"Oh, Mrs. Moodie, it was awful! Oh, it was dreadful! With flames of fire coming out of its mouth, and all dressed in white. Oh, it was terrible! Ten feet high and all in flames!" shrieked Miss Sharpe, like one demented.

“Miss Sharpe, what in the name of Heaven is all this about?” asked the startled Mrs. Moodie, while the sixty “young ladies” clung together, white with mortal fear.

“Oh, Mrs. Moodie, I’ve seen it! It was frightful! all in flames of fire!” screamed the terrified Miss Sharpe.

“Seen it! seen what? Explain yourself, Miss Sharpe.”

“Oh, it was a ghost! a spirit! a demon! a fiend! I felt its blazing hands cold as ice on my face. Oh, good Heaven!” And again Miss Sharpe’s shriek at the recollection resounded through the room.

“Blazing hands cold as ice! Miss Sharpe, you are crazy! Calm yourself, I command you, and explain why we are all roused out of our beds at this hour of night by your shrieks,” said Mrs. Moodie, fixing her sharp eyes steadily upon her.

That look of rising anger brought Miss Sharpe to her senses. Wringing her hands, she cried out:

“Oh, I saw a ghost, Mrs. Moodie; an awful ghost! It came to my bedside all on fire, and”

“A ghost! nonsense, Miss Sharpe!” broke out the now thoroughly enraged Mrs. Moodie, as she caught Miss Sharpe by the shoulder, and shook her soundly. “You have been dreaming; you have had the nightmare; you are crazy! A pretty thing, indeed! that the whole house is to be aroused and terrified in this way. I am ashamed of you, Miss Sharpe, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself to terrify those little children committed to your charge in this manner. I never heard of anything so abominable in my life before,” said the angry Mrs. Moodie.

“Oh, indeed, indeed I saw it! Oh, indeed, indeed I did!” protested Miss Sharpe, wringing her hands.

“Silence, Miss Sharpe! don’t make a fool of yourself! I’m surprised at you! a woman of your years giving way to such silly fancies. You saw it, indeed! A nice teacher you are to watch young children! Return to your beds, young ladies; and do you, Miss Sharpe, return to yours; and don’t let me ever hear anything more about ghosts, or I shall instantly dismiss you. Ghosts, indeed! you’re a downright fool, Miss Sharpe that’s what you are!” exclaimed the exasperated lady.

But even the threat of dismissal could not totally overcome Miss Sharpe’s fears now, and catching hold of Mrs. Moodie’s night-robe as she was turning away, she wildly exclaimed:

“Oh, Mrs. Moodie, let us have a light in the room for this night at least! I cannot sleep a wink unless you do.”

“Miss Sharpe, hold your tongue! Do you see how you have frightened these children? Go to bed and mind your business. Young ladies, I think I told you before to go to your rooms did I not?” said Mrs. Moodie, with still increasing anger.

Trembling and terrified, the girls scampered like frightened doves back to their nests; and Mrs. Moodie, outraged and indignant, tramped her way to the bed she had so lately vacated, inwardly vowing to discharge Miss Sharpe as soon as ever she could get another to take her place.

And then the children in the dormitory crept shivering into bed, and wrapped their heads up in the bedclothes, trembling at every sound. And Miss Sharpe, quivering in dread, shrunk into the smallest possible space in hers, and having twisted herself into a round ball under the quilts, tightly shut her eyes, and firmly resolved that nothing in the earth, or in the waters under the earth, should make her open those eyes again that night. And our wicked Firefly chuckling inwardly over the success of her plot, jumped into hers, thinking of the fun yet to come.

An hour passed. One o'clock struck; then two, before sleep began to visit the drowsy eyelids of the roused slumberers again. Having assured herself that they had really fallen asleep at last, Pet sat up in bed softly, opened the window an inch or two, screened from view had any one been watching her, which there was not by the white curtains of the bed.

Then lying composedly back on her pillow, she took hold of her string, and began pulling away.

Knock! knock! knock! knock! Rap! rap! rap! rap! rap!

The clamor was deafening; the music was awful at that silent hour of the night. Up and down the huge brass knocker thundered, waking a peal of echoes that rung and rung through the house.

Once again the house was aroused; once again every sleeper sprung out of bed, in terror, wonder, and consternation.

"Oh, holy saints! what is that? Oh, good heavens! what can that be at this time?" came simultaneously from every lip.

Knock! knock! knock! Rap! rap! rap! louder and louder still.

Every girl flitted from her room, and a universal rush was made for the apartments of Mrs. Moodie all but the inmates of the dormitory. Miss Sharpe was too terrified to stir, and the children, following her lead, contented themselves with lying still, and renewing their screams where they had left them off an hour or so before.

Now Mrs. Moodie, half-distracted, rushed out, and encountered her forty terrified pupils in the hall.

"Oh, Mrs. Moodie! what has happened to-night? We will all be killed! Oh, listen to that!"

Knock! knock! knock! knock! knock! The clamor was deafening.

"We had better open the door, or they will break it down!" said Mrs. Moodie, her teeth chattering with terror.

"Send for Bridget; she is afraid of nothing!" suggested one of the trembling girls.

Two or three of the most courageous made a rush for the kitchen; and Bridget a strapping nymph of five feet nine, and "stout according" was routed out of bed, to storm the breach.

"Faith, thin, I'll open the door, if it was the divil himself!" exclaimed Bridget, resolutely, as she grasped the poker, and, like the leader of a forlorn hope, turned the key in the door.

Back she swung it with a jerk. The knocking instantly ceased. Up flew the poker, and down it descended with a whack, upon vacancy! There was no one there!

"The Lord be between us an' harm!" exclaimed Bridget, recoiling back. "The divil a one's there, good, bad, or indifferent!"

"They must have run away when you opened the door!" said Mrs. Moodie, in trembling tones. "There is certainly some one there!"

Bridget descended the steps, and looked up and down the street; but all was silent, lonely, and deserted not a living creature was to be seen.

"Come in, and lock the door," said the appalled Mrs. Moodie. "What in the name of Heaven could it have been?"

"Oh, the house is haunted! the house is haunted!" came from the white lips of the young ladies. "Oh, Mrs. Moodie! do not ask us to go back to our rooms. We dare not. Let us stay with you until morning!"

"Very well," said Mrs. Moodie, not sorry to have company; "come into my room. Bridget, bring lights."

The door was unlocked. The frightened girls hustled, pale, and frightened, and shivering with superstition, awe and undefined apprehension, into Mrs. Moodie's room; while that lady herself, crouching in their midst, was scarcely less terrified than they. Bridget brought in lights; and their coming renewed the courage the darkness had totally quenched.

"Now, Mistress Moodie, ma'am," said Bridget, crossing her arms with grim determination, "I'm goin' to sit at that door till mornin', if its plazin' to ye, and if thim blackguardly spalpeens comes knockin' dacint people out av their beds ag'in, be this an' that, I'll I've the mark of me five fingers on thim, as sure as my name's Biddy Malone!"

"Very well, Bridget," said Mrs. Moodie. "It may be some wickedly-disposed person wishing to frighten the young ladies; and if it is, the heaviest penalties of the law shall be inflicted on them."

Arming herself with the poker, Bridget softly turned the key in the door, and laid her hand on the lock, ready to open it at a second's notice.

Scarcely had she taken her stand, when knock! knock! it began again; but the third rap was abruptly cut short by her violently jerking the door open, and lifting the poker for a blow that would have done honor to Donnybrook Fair. But a second time it fell, with a loud crack, upon nothing! Far or near, not a soul was to be seen. Bridget was dismayed. For the first time in her life, a sensation of terror filled her brave Irish heart. Slamming the door violently to, she locked it again, and rushed with open eyes and mouth, into the room where the terror-stricken mistress and pupils sat terrified with fear.

"Faith, it's the divil himself that's at it! Lord, pardon me for namin' him! Och, holy martyrs! look down on us this night for a poor, disconsolate set ov craythers, and the Cross of Christ be between us and all harm!"

And dropping a little bob of a courtesy, Bridget devoutly cut the sign of the cross on her forehead with her thumb.

Unable to speak or move with terror, mistress, pupils, and servants crouched together, longing and praying wildly for morning to come.

Again the knocking commenced, and continued, without intermission, for one whole mortal hour. Even the neighbors began to be alarmed at the unusual din, and windows were opened, and night-capped heads thrust out to see who it was who knocked so incessantly. Three o'clock struck, and then, Pet beginning to feel terribly sleepy, and quite satisfied with the fun she had had all night, cut the cord, and drew it up. The clamors, of course, instantly ceased; and five minutes after, Firefly, the wicked cause of all this trouble, was peacefully sleeping.

But no other eye in the house was destined to close that night rather, morning. Huddled together below, the frightened flock waited for the first glimpse of morning sunlight, thinking all the while that never was there a night so long as that. Up in the children's dormitory, all from Miss Sharpe downward lay in a cold perspiration of dread, trembling to stay where they were, yet not daring to get up and join their companions below.

"I'll never stay another night in this dreadful place if I only live to see morning!" was the inward exclamation of every teacher and pupil who could by any means leave.

And so, in sleepless watchfulness, the dark, silent hours of morning wore on; and the first bright ray of another day's sunlight streaming in through the windows, never beheld an assemblage of paler or more terrified faces than were gathered together in the establishment of Mrs. Moodie.

CHAPTER XXII

PET FINISHES HER EDUCATION

“And her brow cleaned, but not her dauntless eye;
The wind was down, but still the sea ran high.”

Don Juan.

Accustomed to early rising from her infancy, the first beam of morning sunshine found Pet out of bed, and dressed.

The other girls, with Miss Sharpe, were up, too, hastily throwing on their clothes, and looking pale, haggard and worn, from the previous night's excitement and want of sleep. Quivering with the remembrance of last night's frolic, and the terror and consternation that would follow it to-day, Pet stood before the mirror bathing her hands and face, and curling her short, boyish, black ringlets.

The others did not wait for this, but as soon as they were dressed made a grand rush for the lower rooms, where they knew the remainder of the household were assembled. And here they found them, still in their night-robes just beginning to find their tongues, and venturing to talk over the exciting events of the previous night. Petronilla, with her keen sense of the ludicrous, had much ado to keep from laughing outright at their wild eyes and affrighted whispers, but drawing her face down to the length of the rest, she talked away as volubly as any of them of her terror and wonder, protesting she would write to her papa to take her home, for that she wasn't accustomed to living in haunted houses. At last, becoming aware of their deshabille, the young ladies decamped up-stairs to don more becoming garments, and talk over, in the privacy of their own apartments, the ghost and the mysterious rapping.

Mrs. Moodie, recovering her presence of mind and dignity, with the coming of daylight, resolved to lose no time in having the matter fully investigated. Her first act was to have the house searched from top to bottom, and the young ladies willingly engaging in the search, every corner, cranny and crevice, from attic to cellar, was thoroughly examined. Had a needle been lost it must have been found, but no trace of last night's visitor could be discovered.

“Oh, it's no use looking; it was a ghost!” exclaimed Miss Sharpe.

“Oh, yes, it was a ghost! It must have been a ghost!” echoed all the young ladies simultaneously.

“But ghosts always come in though a key-hole at least the ghosts up our way do,” said Pet; “so where was the use of its knocking and making such a fuss last night.”

No one felt themselves qualified to answer the questions, so the hunt was given over, and the hunters, in much disorder, were told they might amuse themselves in the playground that morning, instead of reciting, as usual. The teachers did not feel themselves able to pursue their customary avocations until some light had been thrown upon the mystery.

Then Mrs. Moodie put on her bonnet and shawl, and went out without any definite object in view unless it was to see if the ghost had left any clue to its whereabouts on the street. As a very natural consequence, her eye turned upon the huge brass knocker that had been so instrumental in last night's din; and from it, to her surprise, she beheld a long, stout cord dangling. Petronilla, of course, in cutting the string, could not reach down to sever it, and a half-yard or so still waved in triumph in the morning air.

Mrs. Moodie, though a fine lady, was sharp and "wide awake," and in this cord she perceived some clue to the affair of the previous night. As she still gazed on it in the same way as a detective might, at the evidence of some secret crime, the young girl who had given Pet the cord passed through the hall and paused to look at the open door which Mrs. Moodie was so intently surveying. Her eye fell on the cord; she started, took a step forward, looking puzzled and surprised.

"It was no spirit, you see, that was rapping last night, Miss Hughes," said Mrs. Moodie, sharply; "this cord has had something to do with it."

"Why, that cord is mine or rather was," said the young lady, examining it; "we used to use it in our room for hanging pocket-handkerchiefs and collars to dry on."

"Yours, Miss Hughes," said Mrs. Moodie, facing round with an angry light rising in her eyes.

"It was mine, madam; I gave it last evening to the new pupil, Miss Lawless."

"To Miss Lawless?"

"Yes, madam, when we were in the dormitory last night, she asked me for a string, and I brought her this, having no other; she has cut it, I see."

"What did Miss Lawless want of it do you know?"

"I do not know; she did not say; it is very strange how it can have got here."

A new light suddenly flashed through the mind of Mrs. Moodie. She recollected what Pet's father had told her of the mischief-loving propensities of that young lady. What if all her meekness and docility had been assumed! She glanced up at the window beside Pet's bed, and instantaneously the whole truth dawned upon her.

And then a change most wonderful to see came over the features of Mrs. Moodie. Dark and stern, and determined, she turned from the door, untied the cord, and marched directly into the house.

"Miss Hughes," she said, curtly, "go and tell all the teachers and pupils to assemble in the school-room at once. I think I have found out the origin of the disturbance now."

Wondering and perplexed, Miss Hughes went and delivered her message; and on fire with eager curiosity, a universal rush was made for the classe, and in silent expectation they waited for the coming of Mrs. Moodie.

They had not long to wait. With a hard, metallic tramp, that announced her state of mind, that lady rustled in, and in ominous silence took her seat, motioning the others to resume theirs with a wave of her hand.

Every eye was bent upon her in silent awe, as they noticed her stiff, rigid sternness. Her eye passed over the rest, and like a hound scenting his prey, fixed itself piercingly on Pet.

"Miss Lawless," she said, in a stern, measured tone, "come here." "Stars and stripes!" ejaculated Pet, inwardly, as she rose to obey; "can she have found me out so soon? Oh, Pet Lawless, maybe you ain't in for it now!"

All eyes were now turned in silent amazement on Pet. Slowly Mrs. Moodie thrust her hand in her pocket, still sternly transfixing Pet with her eyes, and drew out a piece of cord!

At the sight, all Pet's doubts were removed; she was discovered. Then all personal apprehensions vanished, her perverse spirit rose, and bold, dauntless and daring she stood before her stern judge her straight, lithe form defiantly erect, her malicious black eyes dancing with fun.

"Miss Lawless, do you know anything of this?" demanded Mrs. Moodie, holding it up.

"Slightly acquainted," said Pet; "saw it last night for the first time."

"Will you be kind enough to state for what purpose you borrowed it?"

"Yes'm, to have some fun with."

"Fun! pray be a little more explicit, Miss Lawless. Was it you that tied it to the door, last night?"

"Yes'm."

"And by that means you knocked at the door, and created all the alarm and confusion that so terrified us all," said Mrs. Moodie with a rapidly darkening brow.

"Yes'm," said Pet, loudly, nothing daunted.

A low murmur of surprise and horror, at this atrocious confession ran round the room.

"And what was your design in thus throwing the household into terror and consternation, Miss Lawless?"

"I told you before just for fun," said Pet, coolly.

Mrs. Moodie compressed her lips, and though her sallow face was dark with suppressed anger, she remained outwardly calm. Low murmurs of amazement, anger and indignation ran through the room; but Pet stood upright, bold and defiant before them all, as though she had done nothing whatever to be ashamed of.

"Perhaps, then, since you are so fond of practical jokes, you were the ghost Miss Sharpe saw, likewise," said Mrs. Moodie.

"Yes, I was," said Pet, darting a flashing glance at that lady, who sat listening, with hand and eyes uplifted in horror.

"No, she wasn't," said Miss Sharpe; "the one I saw was all on fire."

"Silence, Miss Sharpe! leave the matter to me," said Mrs. Moodie, sternly. Then turning to Pet: "Since you are so candid, Miss Lawless, will you inform me in what manner you rendered yourself so frightful an object?"

"Yes, it was easy enough," said Pet. "I just rubbed some phosphureted ether on my hands and face. It shone in the dark and scared her; and that was all I wanted."

A profound silence for one moment reigned throughout the room. Every one sat, overwhelmed, looking at each other as though unable to credit what they heard.

“And what evil motive had you in terrifying us so?” resumed Mrs. Moodie, after a pause.

“I hadn’t any evil motive. I just wanted fun, I tell you. Papa sent me here, and I didn’t want to come, but I had to; so, as it was horrid dull here, I thought I’d just amuse myself scaring you all, and I can’t see where was the harm either! I’ve always been used to do as I like, and this ain’t no circumstance to what’s to come next!” And Pet’s flashing eyes blazed open defiance.

Mrs. Moodie rose from her seat, her sallow complexion almost white with anger, her sharp eyes bright with an angry light.

“Some one else will have a voice in this matter, Miss Lawless. Had I been aware of the sort of girl you were, rest assured that, much as I respect your father, you should never have entered here. In all my experience it has never been my misfortune to encounter so much depravity in one so young. I shall instantly write to your father to come and take you home, for no inducement could persuade me to allow you to become a member of this establishment. You will consider yourself expelled, Miss Lawless, and must leave the house as soon as your father can come to take you home.”

“Well, I’m sure I’m glad of it,” said Pet, impatiently; “for of all the stupid old holes I ever saw, this is the worst! I wouldn’t be paid to stay hereno, not if you were to make me President to-morrow for it.”

“No such inducement is likely to be offered, Miss Lawless. Your presence here, I can assure you, is not coveted. Miss Sharpe, take this young lady to one of the spare rooms, and remain there to watch her until her father comes and removes her. Young ladies, you will now resume your studies as usual.”

And with a frigid bow, Mrs. Moodie swept from the room, leaving all behind her lost in a maze of wonder and indignation.

Miss Sharpe, with her little eyes glistening, approached and took Pet by the shoulder, to lead her from the room, but Pet angrily jerked herself free from her hated touch, and exclaimed:

“Let me alone! I can walk without your help. Go ahead and I’ll follow, but keep your hands to yourself.”

Miss Sharpe, finding herself foiled even in the moment of victory, walked sullenly on, and Pet, with head up and elbows squared, tripped after her to the solitude of “one of the spare rooms,” where every amusement was debarred her but that of making faces at Miss Sharpe.

An hour after, a long epistle, detailing in glowing colors Pet’s wicked actions of the night before, was dispatched by Mrs. Moodie to Judge Lawless.

The result of it was, that the evening of the second day after, that gentleman arrived, nearly beside himself with rage.

Then Mrs. Moodie recapitulated the whole affair, and ended by protesting that no amount of money could prevail upon her to keep so vicious a child in her school another

day. All her pupils would become depraved by her example; and the result would be, their parents would take them home, and thus she would lose her school. Judge Lawless haughtily replied she need be under no apprehension, for he would instantly take his daughter home.

Pet was accordingly dressed, her baggage packed up, and brought down to her father. With all her boldness she yielded for a moment as she met his eye. But without one single word of comment, he motioned her to precede him into the carriage; and in silence they started.

During the whole journey home, the judge never condescended to open his mouth or address her a single word. Pet, just as well pleased to be left to herself, leaned back in the carriage to meditate new mischief when she would get home.

But Miss Petronilla Lawless soon found she was not quite so much her own mistress as she thought.

The evening of the second day brought them to Judestown. As they passed the village, entered the forest road, and came within sight of old Barrens Cottage, Pet began to think of Ray and wonder how he was, and if it would be safe to ask her father to let her go in and see.

One glance at that gentleman's face, however, convinced her that it would not be safe, and that prudence was by far the safest plan just then. Hoping Erminie might be at the door as she passed, she thrust her head out of the carriage window, when her father silently caught her by the shoulder, pulled her back with no gentle hand, and shut down the blind.

Then the very demon of defiance sprung into the eyes of the elf; and facing round, she was about to begin a harangue more spirited than respectful; but something in the cold, stern, steely eye bent on her quenched the indignant light in her own and she sulkily relapsed into silence, thinking a "dumb devil" would be more agreeable to her father just then than a talking one.

Ranty was out on the veranda, walking up and down with his hands in his pockets and whistling "Yankee Doodle." Pet favored him with a nod as she tripped into the house, while Ranty's eyes grew as large as two full moons in his amazement. Darting after her, he caught her by the arm as she was entering the door and exclaimed:

"I say, Pet; what in the world brings you home again? I thought you were gone to school!"

"So I was."

"Then why are you here?"

"Finished my education. Told you I would in a week," said Pet, with a nod.

"Randolph, go off and mind your business, sir," exclaimed his father, sternly. "Herethis way, you."

So saying he caught Pet by the shoulder, and unceremoniously drew her after him, upstairs into the library. Then shutting the door, he threw himself into his arm-chair, and folding his arms across his chest, favored Pet with an awful look.

Miss Lawless, standing erect before him, bore this appalling stare without blushing.

“Well, and what do you think of yourself now, Miss Petronilla Lawless?” was the first question he deigned to ask her since their meeting.

“Just what I did before,” said Pet, nothing daunted.

“And what may that be, pray?” said her father, with an icy sneer.

“Why, that I’m a real smart little girl, and can keep my word like a man! I said I’d finish my education and be back in a week, and here I am.”

A dark frown settled on the brow of the judge, as he listened to this audacious reply; but, maintaining an outer semblance of calmness, he asked:

“And how have you determined to spend your time for the future, Miss Lawless?”

“Just as I did before riding round and visiting my friends.”

A chilling smile settled on the lips of the judge.

“So that is your intention, is it? Well, now hear mine. Since you will neither stay at school nor behave yourself as a young lady should when at home, I shall sell your pony and procure you a tutor who will be your teacher and guard at the same time. Whenever you move from the house, either he or I will accompany you; and I shall take proper steps to prevent your visiting any of those you call your friends. You will find, Miss Lawless, I am not to be disobeyed with impunity in the future. Perhaps, after a time, if I find you docile and attentive to my orders, I may forget your past misconduct and restore you some of your privileges again. This, however, will entirely depend on the manner in which you conduct yourself. I have already a gentleman in view who will undertake the office of tutor, and until he comes I shall have you locked in your room and your meals brought up to you. Not a word, Miss Lawless. I have borne with your impertinence too long, and you will now find I can adopt a different course. Solitude will cool your blood, I trust, and bring you to your senses.”

So saying, the judge calmly arose, rung the bell and then reseated himself.

You should have seen how Pet stormed and raved, and scolded, then, vowing she would kill herself; she would jump out of the window; she would set the house afire and burn them all in their beds; she would have no tutor; she would murder him if he came.

The judge listened to all this with the most perfect indifference, until the entrance of a negress put an end to the scene.

“Take Miss Petronilla up-stairs to the attic, and lock her in,” was the judge’s command.

But he soon found this was easier said than done; for, seizing a small chair, Pet brandished it over her head, and threatened instant annihilation to the first who would come near her.

The judge arose, and with a sudden snatch caught hold of it. Pet clung to it like a hero, scolding and vociferating at the top of her lungs still; but she was as a fly in her father’s grasp, and she was speedily disarmed and pinned.

“I will bring her up myself. Stand out of the way, Dele,” said the judge.

Holding her firmly, the judge drew her with him up-stairs, opened the attic door, thrust her in, locked it, and left Miss Pet in solitude and darkness, and to her own reflections.

There was no window in the attic, so her threat of casting herself from it went for naught. As for her other threats, the judge paid about as much attention to them as he would to the buzzing of a fly on the window. He then mounted his horse, and rode off having given orders that Miss Petronilla's meals should be regularly brought to her, but on no condition should she be allowed to get out.

Pet, for once fairly conquered, sat down, determined to do something desperate; and in this frame of mind she was discovered by Ranty, who, hearing of her melancholy fate, came up-stairs and took his station outside the door.

"Hillo, Pet!" he began.

"Hillo, yourself," replied Pet, sulkily.

"You're locked upain't you?" went on Ranty.

"Where's your eyes? Can't you see I am?" snapped Pet.

"Well, you know it serves you right," said Ranty, by way of consolation, as he took out a jack-knife and began to whittle.

"Oh! if I was only out at him," muttered Pet, between her teeth.

"You haven't seen Erminie since you came home, I suppose," said Ranty.

"No, I haven't! You know very well I haven't," said Pet, crossly. "How's Ray?"

"Oh, he's first-rate up and about. His wound didn't amount to much. I'm going over there now; got any message to send?"

"No; only to bid them good-by. I never expect to see any of them again," said Pet, with a deep groan.

"Why, where are you going?" asked Ranty, in surprise.

"To commit suicide. Do you know if choking hurts much, Ranty?"

"Can't say never tried it. If it's an easy death, just let me know when you've done it. I'm off." And Ranty decamped, whistling; and Pet was left locked up in the garret.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ADOPTED DAUGHTER

“A brow whose frowns are vastly grand
And eye of star-lit brightness:
A swan-like neck, and arm and hand
Of most bewitching whiteness.”

Praed.

And now, reader, are you willing to retrace your steps with me, and go back to those we left behind, long ago, in England?

The sudden death of the Earl De Courcy fell heavily on the hearts of Lord Villiers and Lady Maude; but they mourned as those on whom the heaviest blow Fate can bestow has already fallen, and all other griefs seemed light in comparison.

The servants spoke of the dark, shrouded figure who had²¹⁶ been seen to enter but never depart; but as it was evident the earl had died, and not been murdered, no suspicion was attached to this. And so, with stately pomp and ceremony, Hugh Seyton, fourth Earl De Courcy, was laid to rest in the family vault, and Lord Villiers took the title, and was now fifth Earl De Courcy.

In the bustle of the funeral, and the duties of his elevated station he found means to withdraw his mind at times from the loss of his child; but his lovely countess mourned still, and “would not be comforted.”

Had she been assured of Erminie’s death, she would have grieved, it is true: but not as she grieved now. Had she beheld her beautiful child laid in the grave, she would have mourned; but not with mourning like this.

What had been her fate? Was she living or dead? into whose hands had she fallen? What would be her future fate?

Night and day, these thoughts were ever uppermost in her mind, darkening her very soul with anguish and despair. Enormous rewards had been offered for the slightest clue to her abductor; for upward of a year, the keenest detectives in England were put on the track. But all was in vain. The wide sea rolled between parents and child, and as well might they looked for last year’s snow as for lost Erminie. And so at last the search was given up in despair; the sensation it had created died away; the circumstance was almost forgotten by all but the bereaved parents. But theyoh! never could they forget sweet, blue-eyed little Erminie! While the search continued, Lady Maude had hoped. Day after day passed, and no tidings were brought her of the lost one; but still she wildly hoped. Month after month waned away; no trace of her child could be discovered, and still she madly hoped. Each day she rose with beating heart, at the thought that perhaps before night sweet Erminie might be restored. Every passing footstep sent a thrill to her heart, in the anticipation that it might be the bearer of the glad tidings. Through all the long, weary months of vain watching and waiting, she had hoped against hope until the last.

But now when the search was given over in despair came the full realization of her utter bereavement. Then²¹⁷ the mortal anguish and despair she had long struggled against overwhelmed her soul; and, hating the sunlight, the glad earth, and bright sky above, she buried herself in deepest mourning, shut out the light from her room, and, in silence and darkness, still mourned for her lost one, and “would not be comforted.”

On the heart of her husband the blow had fallen no less heavily; but crushing back his bitter sorrow to his own noble heart, he calmed himself to console her. Of all her friends of all who loved her, she would admit no one to her presence but him; and folded to his heart, she sat for hours, day after day, white, still, cold, and silent. When he left her, she threw herself on her couch, and, in the same strange stupor, remained there until he came back.

At first, he had permitted Nature to have her way, thinking her sorrow would be less enduring if left to wear itself out; but when months and months passed, and no change came, and he saw her growing whiter and more fragile day after day, he began to think it was time something else was done to rouse her from this destroying grief.

“Maude, Maude! this is wrong this is sinful!” he said, holding her little wan hands, and looking sadly down into the white, cold face. “This rebellious murmuring must not be indulged longer. Dearest Maude, rouse yourself from this trance of despair, and remember our Erminie is in the hands of One who ‘doeth all for the best.’ He who noteth even the fall of a sparrow will protect our angel child.”

A shiver, a shadow, a fluttering of the heart, and that was all. No words came from the pale lips.

“Have faith, sweet wife, and trust in God. Overcome this selfish grief, and remember there still remain many for you to love many who love you. Live for them, my own Maude; live for me; live for the heaven where our Erminie has gone.”

“Oh, my child! my child! Would to God I had died for thee!” broke in a passionate cry from the white lips of the mother.

The manly chest of Lord De Courcy rose and fell; the muscles of his face twitched for a moment convulsively, and his arms strained her in a closer clasp.

“Our child prays for her mother in heaven. Grieve not for her, dear love. And am I not left to you still?”

“Oh! it was my fault it was my fault! I left her alone, helpless and unprotected, while I was enjoying myself down-stairs. There was no one to watch her no one to save her. All were gone, and she was left to perish! Oh, my child! my child!”

No words can describe the agony, the remorse, the undying despair of her tones, so full of a mother’s utmost woe. Then blessed tears came to her relief and, bowing her head on her husband’s shoulder, she wept convulsively.

It was the first time she had shed a tear since the loss of her child. Lord De Courcy hailed this as a favorable symptom, and permitted her to weep, undisturbed, until the very violence of her grief had exhausted itself; and then raising her head, and smoothing back the dark curls from her high, pale brow, he said, softly:

"My Maude is morbid in her grief. She has nothing to reproach herself with. Since Heaven willed we should lose one angel it gave us, is it not our duty to be resigned?"

"Oh! if she had died if I knew she were sleeping quietly in her grave, I could be resigned. But this dreadful uncertainty is killing me. Oh, Ernest! since God gave me two children to love, why has He decreed I should lose them both?"

It was the first time since her marriage she had spoken of that other child; and, for one instant, Lord De Courcy's brow grew dark at the unpleasant memories it brought back. The shadow was gone as quickly as it came; and, stooping down, he pressed a kiss on her brow, as he replied:

"He knows best, love. If He has given us griefs, was He not a sufferer of sorrow himself? Rouse yourself from this lethargy of grief, Maude. Does it console you to make those around you wretched? For, Maude, I can not tell you how much it adds to my grief how miserable it makes all those who love you, to see you yield to this lethargy of despair. Do you think I do not feel the loss of our beautiful child? And yet, Maude, I do not give way to this utter abandon of despair, because I know it is positively wrong. There is a sort of luxury in yielding to grief, and permitting it to have its way; but it is an essentially selfish luxury; and I trust my Maude will view it in its proper light, and pray for a more Christian spirit."

"Forgive me, my husband," she softly murmured. "Bear with me a little longer. I know I am weak and rebellious; but oh! there never was sorrow like unto mine!"

But from that day, a change was manifest in Lady Maude. Loving her husband with almost adoring worship, for his sake she strove to shake off the "luxury of grief" he had spoken of, and resume her place in the world as before. At first, the trial was hard almost too hard for her to bear, but his pleasant smile, his thrilling whisper of thanks, the earnest pressure of his hand, told her her efforts were understood and appreciated, and more than rewarded her for the sacrifice she had made.

And thus five years glided away, unmarked by any event worth recording.

The young Earl De Courcy as a statesman and politician, had become a demigod with the public, and one of the leading men of the day. In the whirl of busy life, in the maelstrom of politics, little Erminie was not forgotten, but her memory had grown to be a sweet, haunting shadow of the past tender, beautiful recollection, that came to him like a strain of sweet music heard amid the discordant crash and din of the busy world. He thought of her now as an angel-visitant, sent to smile on him for a moment, and then taken back to the heaven from which she had come, to pray for him there.

The intense sorrow of the Countess De Courcy had also been subdued and rendered far less poignant by time. She too, had been obliged, by her elevated position, to resume that place in the fashionable world she was so well fitted to fill. But when in the glittering assembly, the brilliant ball, the gorgeous pageant, was sweet, lost Erminie forgotten? Never? Outwardly, that one great sorrow had left its traces still in the deeper pallor of the lovely face, in the subdued light of the large, melancholy dark eyes, in the soft, tender smile that seemed something holy as it hovered around the sweet, beautiful

lips. It had made her a gentler, better woman, with a heart ever melting at the cry of distress, with a hand ever ready to relieve it. It had humbled her pride; it had elevated her soul; it had made her gentle, tender, and more saintly than ever before. Her love for children amounted almost to a passion; those "human flowers," as some one prettily calls them, could at any time arrest her attention, and make her forget all else. Not a child among all the earl's tenantry that had not received proof of her affection, in the shape of creature-comforts and even as she idolized children, so was she invariably loved by them in return.

The country seat of the De Courcys was a fine old mansion, embowered in trees, with splendid parks, fine preserves, and surrounded by beautiful scenery. Here, with their friends, the earl and countess were in the habit of going each summer, to spend a few weeks; and here the happiest moments of Lady Maude were spent, wandering through the dim old woods, where she could dream, undisturbed, of her lost darling.

Taking her accustomed walk, one day, she was arrested by the loud cries of a child near. With her sympathies ever enlisted for children, she glanced quickly in the direction, and beheld a little, infantile-looking child of two years old apparently, gazing bewildered, and screaming away at the top of its lungs.

Lady Maude approached, and at a single glance became deeply interested in this little stray waif.

It was a face of singular beauty that met her eye. A dark olive complexion, large, brilliant black eyes, coal-black hair that now hung tangled and disordered over her shoulders. Her little dress was torn, and her hands and face scratched with brambles. The child was evidently lost.

Lady Maude approached; and the child, turning to gaze on her, for a moment ceased her cries. Stooping down, she parted the elf-locks off the dark little face, and gazed long and earnestly down into the bright eyes that fearlessly met her own. Something in that face haunted and troubled her; it seemed to her she had seen it before. Yet that could hardly be; for this was not a face easily forgotten, when once seen. The longer she looked, the more and more troubled she grew. It seemed to her she must have seen a face like this somewhere before, and that it was connected with some dark memory what, she could not tell.

The child, with the confiding confidence of infancy, looked up in the pale, sweet face of the lovely lady, and artlessly lisped:

"Ma mere."

"French," murmured Lady Maude, in surprise. "How in the world can she have come here? Where is 'mother,' little one?" she asked, in the same language.

"Gone away bad man get Rita," lisped the little innocent, pulling Lady Maude's dress, as if to urge her along.

The countess was at a loss, and perhaps would have gone with the little one further into the woods, had not one of the earl's gamekeepers come up at that instant, and taking off his hat, said:

"Better not venture into the woods, my lady; a gang of gipsies passed through, last night." Then catching sight of Rita, as the child called herself, he burst out in surprise; "Why, bless my soul! here's one of 'em!"

"Does this child belong to the gipsies?" asked Lady Maude, who never could hear the word gipsy without a sudden red light flushing to her pale cheek.

"Yes, my lady; saw her with them when they passed through, last night. S'pose she's got left behind, in a mistake. I don't believe she's one of 'em, though; stole, most likely."

"Do you think so?" said Lady Maude with interest. "She does not look unlike a gipsy. Why do you think she has been stolen?"

"Why, my lady, if she had been one of themselves, some of the women would have had her; but nobody seemed to own this one, or to care about her. I saw one of the men draw her along side of the head, last night, with a blow that knocked her down. Lord! how my fingers were itching to do the same to him!"

"Poor little thing!" said Lady Maude, compassionately, folding her in her arms with a sudden impulse. "Poor little thing! Yes, now I think of it, it is more than probable she has been stolen, for she cannot speak English. Carry her to the hall; her poor little feet are all cut and bleeding, and we can not allow her to perish here."

The man lifted the child in his arms, and followed the countess to the hall, where she gave orders to have the little foundling properly dressed and cared for, before presenting her to the earl. He smiled as he listened to her story, and followed her to the room where little Rita, now washed and neatly dressed, sat on the floor playing with some toys. But as his eyes rested on the dark, brilliant face, the smile faded away, and a half-puzzled, half-doubtful look took its place.

"Is she not beautiful, dear Ernest? Does she not remind you of some bright, rich, tropical flower?" said Lady Maude, in admiration.

"Or some bright-winged, gorgeous little butterflyes," said Lord De Courcy. "But, Maude, it seems to me I can not account for it but it seems as if I had seen her somewhere before."

"Oh, my lord! have you, too, observed it?" cried Lady Maude, breathlessly. "It was the first thing that struck me, too. How very singular!"

"I suppose she resembles some one we have both known. There is no accounting for the strange likenesses we see sometimes in total strangers. Well, what do you intend to do with this little bird of paradise you have caught?"

"Let her remain here in charge of the housekeeper. I cannot account for the strange interest I feel in this little one, Ernest."

"I should like to see the child you do not feel an interest in, Maude," he said, smiling.

"But are there no means of finding out to whom she belongs? Her parents may be living, and lamenting her loss, even now, dear wife."

A sudden shadow fell on them both at his words and the recollection they recalled. Earl De Courcy's eyes softened with a tender light as he gazed on the child's, and Lady Maude's were full of tears as she stooped down and kissed the small, red mouth.

“There are no means of discovering them, Ernest,” she said, half sadly. “The gipsies are gone; but Martha found a little silver cross round her neck, on which were engraven the letters ‘M. J. L.’ I have laid it carefully aside, though I fear her parentage may never be discovered.”

“Well do as you like with her, dear Maude. The child is certainly very beautiful. I believe you love all children for our lost treasure’s sake.”

“Oh, I do! my sweet, precious Erminie! Oh, my lord! if this little one had blue eyes and fair hair like her, I could find it in my heart to adopt her, for our darling’s sake.”

“You would not let such a trifle as that prevent you, Maude, if you really wished it. But let the child remain. Rita that’s her name, isn’t it? come here, Rita.”

He held out his arms. Rita looked at him from under her long eyelashes, and then going over, nestled within them just as Erminie used to do.

The simple action awoke a host of tender memories that for a moment nearly unnerved the earl. Rising hastily, he kissed Rita and left the room. But from that day the little stray waif was an inmate of the hall, and with every passing day grew more and more deeply dear to the earl and countess. When they returned to the city, Lady Maude would not hear of parting with her pet; so Mademoiselle Rita and her nurse accompanied them; and soon both earl and countess learned to love her with a love only second to that they had cherished for little Erminie.

And so, without legally adopting her, they learned to look up on her, as time passed, in the light of a daughter sent to take the place of the lost one. Rita addressed them by the endearing name of father and mother; and the world tacitly seemed to take it for granted that little “Lady Rita” was to be heiress and daughter of Earl De Courcy.

At seven years old, Lady Rita had her governess and commenced her education. She seemed to have forgotten she ever had any other father and mother than Lord and Lady De Courcy; and they, quite as willing she should think so, never undeceived her.

And so, while the lost daughter was living in poverty, in a little cottage, in her far-distant home, dependent on the bounty of others, the adopted daughter was growing up surrounded by every luxury that fond hearts could bestow upon her.

CHAPTER XXIV

PET GIVES HER TUTOR A LESSON

“Then on his blow the swelling vein
Throbbled, as if back upon his brain
The hot blood ebbed and flowed again.”

Byron.

Your pardon, dear reader, if, without further preface, I skip over a period of six years. One brief bird's-eye glance at the past, and then to go on with our history.

Those six years had changed Ray and Ranty from boys of fifteen to young men of twenty-one, and had metamorphosed Erminie and Petronilla from little girls of twelve and eleven to young ladies of respectively eighteen and seventeen. Beyond that, it had wrought little change in Judestown or its inhabitants.

Master Ranty having displayed, during his rapid career at college, sundry “fast” tendencies, was sent to sea to take the nonsense out of him. That young gentleman bore his fate with most exemplary patience and resignation, affirming that he always had a strong partiality for bilge-water and short allowance, and rather liked the cat-o'-nine-tails than otherwise.

Great was the delight of the worthy admiral, his uncle, when he heard of his nephew's destination; and it was partially through his influence that, some months after, Ranty, radiant in blue roundabout and bright brass buttons, stood on the deck of the Sea Nymph, and wrote his name, in tremendous capitals, as “Randolph Lawless, U. S. N.”

“Now remember, Minnie, you mustn't go and fall in love with anybody else,” were his parting words; “if you do, I'll knock all creation into everlasting smash; I'll hurl the whole universe into the regions of space; I'll set fire to every blessed one of the United States, and bring all the world and Nebraska Territory to universal ruination!”

Duly impressed by these appalling and blood-chilling threats, Erminie dutifully promised not to “go and fall in love with anybody else;” and Mr Lawless, transformed into a dashing middy, gave his friends at home his blessing, and set off on his first voyage.

Ray, who, even in his boyhood, had displayed great talent in legal matters, was now, by the kindness of the admiral, in New York city, studying law.

Erminie, too, was absent from home now. Having completely captivated the heart of the generous and eccentric Admiral Havenful, as she did that of most others, he set about thinking, one day, what was the best means to display his affection. Just then he recollected her fondness for learning, and the few opportunities she had to indulge that fondness; and jumping up, he struck the table a vigorous blow, exclaiming:

“I'll send her to school! Pet learns all them heathenish foreign languages, and makes a noise on that big sea-chest of a piano, and so shall little Snowdrop. I'll send her to school this very day! shiver my timbers if I don't!”

And on the spur of the moment, the admiral, with many a doleful grunt, dumped himself on old Ringbone's back, and jogged over the heath to the cottage.

There he made his proposal to Erminie, whose sweet blue eyes lit up at first with joy and gratitude; then came the thought of Ketura, now a helpless cripple, unable to leave her room, and her countenance fell, and the joyful light faded from her face.

"I am very sorry, but I cannot leave my grandmother," was her sad reply.

"Fiddle-de-dee!" exclaimed the admiral, testily. "She's got Lucy to attend to her; and if Lucy is not enough, she can have half a dozen female women from the White Squall to keep her in proper sailing order. I know a good place to send you to, Snowdrop, and go you shall, and that's all about it! I'll speak to the old lady myself about it."

So the admiral stamped up-stairs and spoke to Ketura, accordingly, who gave a cold, curt assent. And the result of this was that, three weeks after, Erminie was sent to a Convent of the Sacred Heart, to study everything necessary for a finished education.

So, of our four young friends, only Firefly remained at home, under the surveillance of a tutor. Pet had lost none²²⁶ of her mischief-loving propensities as she grew up; in fact, they seemed to grow with her growth, until she became the maddest, merriest, skip-over-the-moon madcap that ever threw a peaceable community into convulsions. Never did a pupil drive a well-disposed teacher to the verge of distraction as Pet did hers; never did a naughty daughter throw a dignified "parient" into such undignified paroxysms of rage as our Firefly did; never was a quiet, orderly, stately mansion thrown upside down, as if a tornado had torn through it every day, as Heath Hall was; never in any other house was here heard such awful banging of doors, and slamming down of windows, and tearing like a maniac up and down-stairs, and rushing like a living whirlwind in and out of every room in five minutes, as might be seen and heard here; never were servants so completely at their wits' end; never were quiet, business-like neighbors so completely and utterly shocked and astonished before as they were by the freaks of Judge Lawless' heiress. Well-named was Pet; for never, since the plagues of Egypt, was the earth afflicted with a more lawless little hurricane than the hot-headed, laughter-loving, mischief-making heiress in question. Very charming, withal, and bewilderingly beautiful was Pet; and there was not a young man in Judestown, or within twenty miles round, who would not have given his whiskers and mustaches for one glance from her "bonnie black e'e." But Pet didn't care a snap for all the young men in America, except, perhaps, Ray Germaine; and she flirted away unmercifully, turned countless heads, and had more sighing swains at her feet than all the other belles of Judestown put together.

Pet was naturally clever, bright and talented, and could have progressed wonderfully in her studies if she had chosen; but she didn't choose, and followed her own sweet will about learning, in spite of all the lectures, entreaties and persuasions of her tutor, and the stern reproofs and angry out-bursts of her father. Therefore, at eighteen, she could play a little, draw a littleher talents in this respect were chiefly confined to

caricaturesing a good deal, talk more than she could sing, and was still aware that English grammar was a little book with a gray cover. At first, Mr. Garnet, her teacher, had insisted upon her applying herself; but seeing that Pet only listened very dutifully and then did as she liked after, he gave it up, and allowed her now pretty much to do as she liked.

Pet had from the first conceived a strong dislike to this gentlemana dislike that increased every day. This was the more surprising, as his conduct, morals, and manners, were irreproachable, and he was an immense favorite with the judge and everybody else. In person he was a tall, light-haired, gray-eyed, effeminate-looking young man; easy and courteous in manner, polished in address, a finished scholar, and strict Christian. But Pet's keen gaze had detected the concealed cunning in the eye; the sardonic smile, the unscrupulous look the face sometimes wore; the hard, crafty, cruel expression of the mouth. Therefore, all his virtue was to her hypocrisy; his goodness, a mask for evil designs; his politeness, a cloak for covert wickedness. Pet disliked him, and took no pains to conceal it.

And Pet had read his character aright; he had been a young man of fortunehe was a ruined debauchee, reduced to this by his excesses. At first he had looked upon his scholar as a pest and plague; but as she grew up, his feelings changed. Love and ambition began to enter his heart. What, he thought, if he could win this peerless beauty, this wealthy heiress, to be his wife? His fallen fortunes would be retrieved, and his pride and passion gratified possessing her. Concealing his schemes, he wound himself round the heart of the judge, until he became his bosom friend and confidant. He knew Pet disliked him, but he thought this was because she looked upon him as a cross master; if she could be taught to regard him as a lover, it would be very different. Therefore, as months passed, he became all kindness, tenderness, and affabilitythe most devoted slave and admirer Miss Lawless had.

"When Satan turns saint, there's room for suspicion!" said Pet, looking at him with a cool, critical eye. "You're up to something you shouldn't be, my good youth. I'll keep my eye on you, Mr. Rozzel Garnet."

But though Pet kept her "eye on him" as she threatened, no clue to the change could she discover; for as a lover she had never dreamed of him in her wildest moments. Until one day, bursting into the library where he sat, with an open letter in her hand, her cheeks flushed to a deeper crimson²²⁸ than usual, her dancing curls all irradiate, her brilliant eyes flashing back the sunshine, her whole face sparkling with delight, he looked up from the book he was reading, and asked:

"You seem in unusually good spirits to-day, Miss Lawlessmay I ask the cause?"

"Yes; I've got a letter from Ray, and he's coming home in a month or so! Tra, la, la, la, la, la, la."

And Pet went waltzing round the room.

A cloud settled for a moment on the bland face of the gentleman, and his small eyes shot a sharp, jealous gleam at the bewildering figure floating dimly over the carpet. It

vanished, however, as quickly as it came, as he said, in a tone of assumed carelessness: "Ah! and who is Ray, Miss Petronilla?"

"Why, you know well enough," said Pet, impatiently. "Ray Germaine you saw him when he was here last."

"Bless me! Yes, I had forgotten; but you remember that was three years ago, Miss Lawless, so I may be pardoned for not recollecting him. If I took as much interest in him as you seem to do, my memory would doubtless be better."

His tones were low, bland and oily, but his gleaming eyes were like two drawn stilettoes.

"I expect you would," said Pet. "I have a faint idea that I would have some trouble if not more in forgetting Ray Germaine. Don't believe he would approve of my doing so at all, either."

"I did not think Miss Lawless cared for the approval or disapproval of any one in the world," insinuated the gentleman, with one of his bland smiles and needle-like glances.

"We'll see what thought done! That proves, Mr. Garnet," said the elf, mockingly, "how careful the general run of man-kind should be in trusting their thoughts, since even a gentleman so near perfection as you are can be deceived."

"Then you do care for the approval of this fellow, Germaine?" said the tutor, trying to hide a dark scowl.

"This fellow, Germaine? Well, there's a nice way for a young lady's tutor to talk of her friends. I'd prefer to hear him called Mister Germaine, sir, if it's all the same to you," said Pet, drawing herself up.

"Oh, very well!" said Garnet, with a curling lip; "only as he is a pauper, educated by the bounty of your uncle"

But his speech was cut short by Pet's springing suddenly round, with blazing eyes, passion-darkened face, and fiercely and passionately bursting out with:

"It is false! It is a foul slander! Ray Germaine is no pauper; and if you ever dare to say such a thing again, I shall have you turned out of the house! Take care how you talk, Mr. Rozzel Garnet! It's treading on dangerous ground to slight my friends before me!"

Mr. Garnet saw that he had made a false move, and that it was dangerous work handling this fiery little grenade, so he banished all traces of his recent scowl from his face, and his tones were of honeyed sweetness when he spoke again.

"Ten thousand pardons, Miss Lawless, for my offence. Believe me, I had not the remotest intention of slighting your excellent friend, Mr. Germaine. You and he were very intimate, I presume?"

"Thick as pickpockets," said Pet, forgetting her momentary anger. "Heigho! I wish he was here; he was the only masculine I ever knew, who wasn't as stupid as an owl."

"That's a very flattering speech, Miss Lawless," said Garnet, biting his lip, "and a very sweeping assertion. Are there no exceptions but him?"

"Not that I've ever met. I dare say there may be one or two in the world; but I haven't come across them."

There was a moment's pause, during which Garnet sat gnawing his nether lip, and Pet flitted round the room, humming an opera air. He watched her covertly, and then, seeing her about to leave, he started impulsively up, exclaiming:

"One moment, Miss Pet I have something to say to you."

"Well, fire away," said Pet, composedly, turning round, and standing with her back to the door.

But for once in his life, his customary assurance seemed to have failed him. There was something in the bold, fearless open gaze of those brilliant black eyes that daunted him, brazen as he was. A slight crimson flushed to his face, and his eyes for an instant fell.

"Now, what in the name of Diana and all her nymphs is coming?" mentally exclaimed Pet, as she watched in surprise his embarrassment. "The cool, self-possessed, dignified Mr. Rozzel Garnet blushing like a boiled lobster before poor little Pet Lawless! Snakes and sarpints, and varmints generally, the world's coming to an end that's certain!"

Then aloud:

"Mr. Garnet, I desired you to fire away, which translated from the original Greek, means go ahead, and say whatever you want to. No need to be bashful about it seeing it's only me."

The flush on Mr. Garnet's cheek deepened, as he said:

"Perhaps, Miss Petronilla, what I am about to say may be unexpected, but it can hardly take you by surprise. The change in my manner toward you for the last few months must have prepared you for it."

He stopped short, and began walking up and down. Pet stuck both hands in her apron-pockets, and stood waiting, "like Patience on a monument," for what was to come next.

"It's no gunpowder-plot, or hanging matter, now, is it?" she began. "For though I wouldn't mind setting the Chesapeake on fire, or blowing up the Alleghanies, I've an immense respect for the laws of my country, Mr. Garnet, and would not like to undermine the Constitution, or anything of that sort. Any common matter, though, from riding a steeple-chase to fighting a duel, and I'm yours to command."

"Miss Lawless, may I beg of you to be serious for a few moments this is no jesting matter," said the gentleman, looking annoyed.

"Well, my goodness! ain't I serious? I'll leave it to the company, generally, if I'm not as solemn as a hearse. If you'd only condescend to look at me instead of watching the flowers in the carpet, you would see my face is half a yard long."

"Then, Miss Lawless, to come to the matter at once for I know you do not like long prefaces I love you, I worship you, Petronilla! Petronilla, dearer than life! may I hope one day to possess this dear hand?"

Now, if our Pet had been sentimental, she would have blushed becomingly, burst into tears, or covered her face with her hands, maybe; but Pet wasn't a bit sentimental, and so, arching her eyebrows, and opening her eyes till they were the size of two saucers, she gave utterance to her complete amazement in a long, shrill whistle.

Garnet approached her, and would have taken her hand, only as they were still stuck in her apron-pockets, she didn't appear to have such a thing about her. Accordingly, therefore, he attempted do the next best thing, that is, put his arms around her waist; but Pet very coolly edged away saying:

"Hands off, Mr. Garnet, until better acquainted. I don't believe in having coat-sleeves round my waist as a general thing. Just say that over again, will you; it was mighty interesting!"

And Pet flung herself into an arm-chair, and put her feet upon an ottoman with a great display of carelessness and ankles, and stared Mr. Garnet composedly in the face.

"Cruel girl! You know your power, and thus you use it. Oh, Petronilla! my beautiful one! have I nothing left to hope for?"

"That's a question I can't take it upon myself to answer," said Pet. "There's your next quarter's salary, though, you can hope for that."

"Is that meant as a taunt? Oh, Petronilla! you little know how deeply, how devotedly I love you! I could give my life to make you happy."

"Thanky, Mr. Garnet shows a highly Christian spirit in you: but, at the same time, I guess I won't mind it. As to your loving me, I have not the slightest doubt about it. I'm such an angel in female form that I don't see how people can help loving me, any more than they can help the toothache. So you needn't go telling me over again you love me, because you've said it two or three times already; and the most interesting things get tiresome, you know, when repeated too often."

"Capricious, beautiful fairy! how shall I win you to seriousness? Fairest Petronilla, I would serve for this little hand even as Jacob served for Rachel!"

"Mr. Garnet, it's real polite of you to say so, but you'll excuse me for saying I'd a good deal rather you wouldn't. You've been here six years now, and if I thought I was to undergo six more like them, I'd take the first bar of soft-soap I could find and put an immediate end to my melancholy existence."

"Mocking still! Oh, beautiful Petronilla! how shall I reach this willful heart?"

"There's no heart there, Mr. Garnet; it took a trip to the fast city of Gotham three years ago, and hasn't come back since."

"With Raymond Germaine?" he said, with a sharp flash of his eyes.

"Ex-actly; you've struck the right thing in the middle hit the nail straight on the head jumped, with your accustomed sagacity, at my exact meaning. After all, you're not half so stupid as you look, Mr. Garnet."

"Miss Lawless," he broke out, angrily, "this levity is as unbecoming as it is unnecessary. I have asked you a question, which, as a lady, you are bound to answer."

"Mr. Garnet, look here," said Pet: "did papa hire you to knock reading, writing and spelling into me, or to make love?"

"Miss Lawless!"

"Perhaps, though," said Pet, in a musing tone, "it's customary with tutors when winding-up a young lady's education, to put her through a severe course of love-making, that she

may know how to act and speak properly when occasion requires. Mr. Garnet, excuse me, I never thought of it before; I see it all now. Just begin at the beginning again, if it's not too much trouble, and you'll see how beautifully I'll go through with it."

He started up passionately, and bit his lip till it bled.

"Once for all, Miss Lawless," he exclaimed, stifling his impotent rage, and striding fiercely up to her "once for all, I demand an answer. I love you will you be my wife?"

"Well, upon my word, Mr. Rozzel Garnet," said Pet, confusedly, "you have the mildest and pleasantest way of your own I ever witnessed. Here you come stamping up to me as if about to knock me down, and savagely tell me you love me! Love away, can't you, but don't get in a rage about it! I'm sure you're perfectly welcome to love me till you're black in the face, if you'll only take things easy."

"Miss Lawless, forgive me; I'm half-mad, and scarce know what I said."

"I forgive you," said Pet, stretching out her hands as if about to warm them; "go, sin no more. I thought you²³³ were a little light in the head myself; but then it didn't surprise me, as it's about the full of the moon, I think."

"Miss Lawless, I did think you were too much of a lady to despise and scoff at true affection thus. If I have the misfortune to be poor, that does not make me the less sensitive to insult."

"Now, Mr. Garnet, look here," said Pet, rising. "I'm getting tired of this scene, and may as well bring it to an end at once. Your love I fully understand; you have several reasons for loving meseveral thousands, in fact, but we won't speak of them. As to insulting you, I flatly deny it; and if you think I have done so, just refer me to a friend, and I'll fight a duel about it to-morrow. Scoffing at true affection is another thing I'm not in the habit of doing, neither in despising people for being poor; you know both these things as well as I do. But, Mr. Garnet, I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man in the world, and I was to go to my grave a forlorn, hatchet-faced old maid for refusing you. If it's any consolation to you to know it, I wouldn't marry you to save your neck from the hangmanyour soul from you know whoor your goods and chattels, personal, from being turned, neck and crop, into the street. Now, there!"

His face blanched with rage; his eyes gleamed with a serpent-like light; his thin lips quivered, and for a moment he stood glaring upon her as if he could have torn her limb from limb. But there was a dangerous light in her eye, too, as she stood drawn up to her full height, with reddening cheeks, and defiant, steady gaze, staring him still straight in the face. So they stood for an instant, and then the sense of the ludicrous overcame all else in Pet's mind, and she burst into a clear, merry peal of laughter.

"Well, upon my word, Mr. Garnet, if this is not as good as a farce; here we are, staring at each other, as if for a wager, and looking as savage as a couple of uncivilized tigers. I dare say, it would be a very nice way to pass time on an ordinary occasion; but as it's drawing near dinner-time, and I have a powerful appetite of my own, you'll excuse me for bidding you a heartrending adieu, and tearing myself away. If you have anything more to say, I'll come back, after dinner, and stand it like a martyr."

“Not so fast, Miss Petronilla Lawless!” said Garnet, grasping her by the arm, his sallow face fairly livid with rage; “since it has been your good pleasure to laugh me to scorn, and mock at the affection I have offered, just hear me. I swear to you, the day shall come when you will rue this! There is but a step between love and hatred and that step I have taken. Remember, you have made me your deadliest enemy, and I am an enemy not to be scorned! Girl, beware!”

“Well, now, I declare,” said Pet, “if this is not as good as a play and moral. I’m afraid you’re only plagiarizing, though, Mr. Garnet, for that melodramatic ‘girl, beware!’ sounds very like something I read in the ‘Pink Bandit of the Cranberry Cove.’ Confess, now, you’ve been reading it haven’t you? and that’s an extract from it; and, at the same time, you’ll oblige me by letting go my arm. It’s not made of cast-iron, though you seem to think it is.”

“Laugh, girl!” he said, hoarsely, “but the day will come when you shall sue to me, and sue in vain, even as I have done to-day. Then you will know what it is to despise Rozzel Garnet.”

“Why, you horrid old fright!” exclaimed Pet, with flashing eyes, “I sue to you, indeed! I guess not, my good teacher! How dare you threaten me, sir, your master’s daughter! Upon my word and honor, Mr. Rozzel Garnet, I have the best mind ever was to have you horsewhipped out of the house by my servants. A pretty chivalrous gentleman you are, to stand up there and talk to a lady like this! I declare to goodness! if I hadn’t the temper of an angel, I wouldn’t stand it!”

Still he held her, glaring in her face with his threatening eyes, and half-choked with passion.

“Let me go,” said Pet, jerking herself first one way, and then another, to free herself from his tenacious grasp. “I vow I’ll go and tell papa every blessed word of this, and if you stay another night under the same roof with me, my name’s not Petronilla. Take your claw from my arm, will you? and let me go!”

Pet jerked and pulled in vain; Mr. Garnet held her fast, and smiled a grim, sardonic smile at her futile efforts.

“Spit and snarl, my little kitten,” he said mockingly; “see what a sparrow you are in my grasp. Go you shall not, till it is my good pleasure to release you!”

With a sharp, passionate cry of rage, Petronilla darted down like lightning, and sunk her sharp, white teeth into his hand. The red blood spurted from a little circlet of wounds, and with an oath of pain and fury, he sprung back from the little wild-cat. No sooner was his hold released, than Pet darted like a flash through the door, turned the key in the lock and held him captive.

“Aha! Mr. Garnet!” she cried, exultingly; “little kittens can bite as well as snarl, you see. You caught a Tartar that time didn’t you? You’re a model gentleman; you’re the saint that ought to be canonized on the spot; you’re the refined scholar ain’t you? I’ll leave you, now, to discover the charms of solitude, while I go and tell papa the lesson I have taught you this morning. A little fasting and solitary imprisonment won’t hurt your blood in the

least. Bon jour, Seigneur Don Monsieur Moustache Whiskerando! May your guardian-angel watch over you till I come back, and keep you from bursting a blood-vessel in your rage. If anything should happen to so precious an individual, society might as well shut up shop at once, so the gods have a care of you, Mr. Rozzel Garnet!" And off danced Pet. In the dining-room she found her father awaiting her.

"Where is Mr. Garnet?" he asked as she entered.

"Mr. Garnet will not be down to dinner," said Pet, inwardly determining to keep that gentleman as long imprisoned as she could.

The judge, without troubling himself to inquire further, took his seat, and proceeded to administer condign punishment to the good things spread before him, assisted by Pet, whose appetite was by no means impaired by the pleasant scene she had just passed through, and whose stony conscience was not in the least troubled with remorse for having locked a young gentleman up without his dinner.

About ten minutes after, the judge started to leave the room, and Pet, guessing where he was going, called to him:

"Papa!"

"Well," said the judge, pausing, and turning round.

"Where are you going?"

"To the library, Miss Lawless," said the judge, with dignity.

"Well, look here, papa, there's a prisoner of war in there."

"What, Miss Lawless?" said the judge, knitting his brows in perplexity.

"A prisoner I have taken captivated locked up! In other words, the pupil has turned teacher and locked her master up, as mothers do refractory children, to bring him to his senses."

"Miss Lawless," said the judge, in his most stately manner, "I have no time to listen to your nonsense. If you have anything to say say it. If not, hold your tongue, and learn to be respectful when you address your father."

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Pet. "No matter how seriously, sensibly, or solemnly I talk, people say I'm talking nonsense. But that's just my fate; everything awful and horrid is destined to happen to me; and if I say a word against it, I'm told I'm imprudent and ungrateful, and dear knows what. Now, I told you I have locked my teacher up, and you tell me you have no time to listen to my nonsense. I guess Mr. Garnet finds it an unpleasant truth, anyway."

"Petronilla! what do you mean?" said her father, beginning to think there might be method in this madness.

"Why, that I've locked Mr. Garnet up in the library for not behaving himself," said Pet, promptly.

"Locked him up!"

"Yes, sir; and served him right, too, the hateful old ghoul!"

"Locked your teacher up?"

"Yes, sir; teachers require locking up as well as pupils."

“Miss Lawless, it’s not possible that you have been guilty of such an outrageous act!” said the judge, with an awful frown.

“Yes, it is possible,” said Pet; “and he deserves twice as much for what he did. Oh, wouldn’t I like to be a man for one blessed half-hour, that I could horsewhip him within an inch of his life!”

“Good Heavens! what a visitation this mad girl is! What has Mr. Garnet done, you dreadful girl?”

“Dreadful girl!” burst out Pet, indignantly, “there’s the way I’m abused for taking my own part. Your daughter’s teacher has been making all sorts of love to me all the whole blessed morning!” and thereupon Pet commenced with a “full, true, and authentic” account of her morning interview in the library.

As the judge listened, the scowl on his brow grew blacker and blacker till his face was like the double-refined essence of a thunderbolt. But when Pet mentioned his threats and indignity in refusing to free her, his rage burst all bounds, and his wrath was a sight to see.

“The villain! the scoundrel! the blackleg! the low-bred hound! to dare to talk to my daughter in such a way! I vow to Heaven I have a good mind to break every bone in his body! To insult my daughter under her father’s roof, and threaten her like this! Petronilla, where is the key? I’ll kick the impertinent puppy out of the house.”

“The key’s in the door,” said Pet. “I expect he’s in a sweet frame of mind by this time.”

Up-stairs, in a highly choleric state, marched the judge, and turning the key in the library-door, he confronted Mr. Garnet, who was striding up and down the room in a way not particularly beneficial to the carpet, with flashing eyes, scowling brows, and an awful expression of countenance generally, and began, in a tone of withering sarcasm:

“So, Mr. Garnet, you have done my daughter the honor to propose for her hand this morning, and when that digit was refused you, you caught her, and had the impudence to insult her in her father’s house. Oh! you’re a model teacher of youth, Mr. Garnet! You’re an exemplary young man to be trusted with the education of a young female. Come, sir, out of my house, and if ever I catch sight of you again, I’ll cane you while I’m able to stand. Off with you this instant.” And the judge, who was as strong as half a dozen broken-down rouses like Garnet, caught him by the collar and unceremoniously dragged him down stairs. In vain the quondam teacher strove to free himself, and make his voice heard; not a word would the judge listen to; but upon reaching the hall door, landed him by a well-applied kick on the broad of his back, and then went in, slamming the door in his face.

Crestfallen and mortified, Mr. Garnet picked himself up, and glancing hurriedly around, beheld Petronilla standing laughingly watching him at the window. A very fiend seemed to leap into his eyes then, and shaking his fist at her, he strode off breathing words of vengeance, “not loud, but deep.”

CHAPTER XXV

MR TOOSYPEGS IN DISTRESS

“Ah, me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history
The course of true love never did run smooth.”
Shakespeare.

“Admiral Havenful, it’s kind of you to ask, but I ain’t well at all; I’m very much obliged to you,” said Mr. Toosypegs, in a deeply dejected voice, as he walked into the parlor of the White Squall and took his seat without ever raising his eyes from the floor.

“Stand from under!” growled the admiral, in a tone like a bear with the bronchitis, as he gave his glazed hat a slap down on his head, and looked in a bewildered sort of way at the melancholy face of Mr. O. C. Toosypegs.

“Admiral Havenful, it’s my intention to stand from under as much as possible,” said Mr. Toosypegs, mournfully; “but, at the same time, I’m just as miserable as ever I can be, thank you. I don’t see what I was born for at all, either. I dare say they meant well about it; but at the same time, I don’t see what I was born for,” said Mr. Toosypegs, with increased mournfulness.

The admiral laid both hands on his knees, and leaning over, looked solemnly into Mr. Toosypegs’ face. Reading no expression whatever in that “Book of Beauty” but the mildest sort of despair, he drew himself up again, and grunted out an adjuration to “heave ahead.”

“Admiral Havenful, would you oblige me by not saying that again?” said Mr. Toosypegs, giving a sudden start, and keeping his hand to his stomach with a grimace of intensest disgust. “You mean real well, I know; but it recalls unpleasant recollections that I wish buried in oblivion. Ugh!” said Mr. Toosypegs, with a convulsive shudder.

The admiral looked appealingly at the great painting on the mantel; but as that offered no suggestion, he took off his hat, gave his wig a vigorous scratching, as if to extract a few ideas by the roots, and then clapping it on again, faced around, and with renewed vigor began the attack.

“Now, Mr. Toosypegs, I’m considerable out of my latitude, and if you’ll just keep her round a point or so, I’ll be able to see my way clearer, and discover in which corner the wind sets. What’s the trouble, young man?”

“The trouble, Admiral Havenful, is such that no amount of words can ever express it. No, Admiral Havenful!” exclaimed the unhappy Mr. Toosypegs, “all the words in all the dictionaries, not to mention the spelling books, that ever was printed, couldn’t begin to tell you the way I feel. It worries me so, and preys on my mind at such a rate that my appetite ain’t no circumstance to what it used to be. My Sunday swallow-tails (the one with the brass buttons, Admiral Havenful), that used to barely meet on me, goes clean around me twice now. I don’t expect to live long at this rate, but I guess it’s pleasantest

lying in the graveyard than living in this vale of tears,” added Mr. Toosypegs, with a melancholy snuffle.

Once again the perplexed admiral looked helplessly at the picture; but the work of art maintained a strict neutrality, and gave him not the slightest assistance. Then he glanced at Mr. Toosypegs, but still nothing was to be read in those pallid, freckled features, but the mildest sort of anguish. The admiral was beginning to lose patience.

“Belay there! belay!” he roared, bringing his fist down with a tremendous thud on his unoffending knee. “Come to the point at once, Orlando Toosypegs! What the dickens is the matter?”

“Admiral Havenful, don’t swear!” exclaimed Mr. Toosypegs, looking deeply scandalized.

“I dare say you mean well; but profane swearing isn’t so edifying as it might be. I’ve a little tract at home that tells about a boy that told another boy to ‘go to blazes!’ and three years after he fell out of a fourth-story window and broke two of his legs, and some of his arms. That shows the way profane swearing is240 punished. I’ll bring you over the book some day, Admiral Havenful, if you like; it’s a very interesting story to read about.”

The admiral fell back with a groan.

“I haven’t read anything lately but the ‘Lamentations of Jeremiah,’” said Mr. Toosypegs, resuming his former objections; “it’s very soothing to the feelings, though I can’t lay it to heart so much as I would like to, on account of Aunt Priscilla scolding all the time. She means real well, I know, but it ain’t so pleasant to listen to as some things I’ve heard. I laid awake all last night crying, but it don’t seem to do me much good.”

And Mr. Toosypegs wiped his eyes with his handkerchief.

The admiral said nothing; he had evidently given up the point in despair.

“I wouldn’t mention this to anybody but you, Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs; “because my feelings are so dreadfully lacerated it’s a great affliction to me to speak of it. I know you won’t tell anybody that I’ve revealed it, because I would feel real bad about it if you did.”

“Orlando Toosypegs, just stand by a minute, will you?” said the admiral, in the tone of a patient but persecuted saint. “Now, hold on what have you revealed to me? what have you told me? There’s two questions I’d feel obliged to anybody to answer.”

“Why, my goodness!” said Mr. Toosypegs, in much surprise, “haven’t I told you? Why I thought I had. Well, then, Admiral Havenful, I’ve went and fell in love, and that’s all there is about it.”

“Main topsail haul!” roared the admiral, immeasurably relieved; “who’d ever have thought it? Who is she, Orlando?” said the admiral, lowering his voice to a husky whisper.

“Your niece, Miss Pet Lawless,” said Mr. Toosypegs, blushing deeply.

This announcement took the admiral so much by surprise that he could only give vent to it by another appealing glance at the picture, and a stifled growl of “Splice the main-brace!”

“Admiral Havenful, it’s my intention to splice the main-brace as much as possible. I’m very much obliged to you,” said Mr. Toosypegs, gratefully, “but, at the same time, I’m afraid it won’t do me the least good. I know very well she don’t care anything about me, and will go and marry somebody else some day. By gracious!” exclaimed Mr. Toosypegs, with the energy of desperation, “I’ve a good mind to go and do something to myself, whenever I think of it. Why, it’s enough to make a fellow go and heave himself away into an untimely graveso it is.”

“Don’t, Orlando, don’t,” said the admiral, in a tone of grave rebuke; “it’s not proper to talk so. When you come to overhaul your conscience, by-and-by, you’ll be sorry for such rash threats. Now, look hereI’m going to talk to you for your own good. Does Pet know you’ve gone and splashed your affections onto her?”

“Good gracious, no!” ejaculated Mr. Toosypegs, in much alarm; “I wouldn’t tell her for anythingno, not for any amount of money you could give me for doing it, Admiral Havenful.Oh, my goodness! the idea! why, she would laugh at me, Admiral Havenful.”

“Avast there, messmate! avast!” growled the admiral, administering a thump to his glazed hat. “Now, look here. When a young man goes and falls into love with a young woman, what does he do? or, what do they do?”

“I’m sure I don’t know, Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs, looking dejectedly at the carpet; “I never was in love before, you know, and it’s just the queerest feeling ever was. I never experienced anything like it before. It’s not like the colic, or the toothache, or a cramp, or anything: you feelwell, I don’t know as I can describe it; but you kind of feel all over. And whenever I meet Miss Pet suddenly and she turns them two great, black eyes of hers right onto memy gracious! Admiral Havenful, the state it sets me into! Why, I actually feel as if I’d like to crawl out of the toes of my boots or have the carpet open and swallow me up.”

And, Mr. Toosypegs, carried away by the exciting recollection, got up and paced up and down two or three times, and then dropped back into his seat and began wiping his heated visage with the flaming bandanna so often spoken of.

“Belay! belay!” said the admiral, impatiently; “you’re steering in the wrong direction altogether, Orlando. Now, look here; I asked you, ‘when a young man goes and falls in love with a young woman, what does he do?’ and says you ‘I don’t know, Admiral Havenful.’ Well, now look here; I’ll tell you. When a young man goes and falls in love with a young woman, what does he do? Why, Orlando Toosypegs, he goes and marries her. That’s what he does!”

And hereupon the admiral administered another vigorous slap to his glazed hat, that very nearly stove in the crown of that ill-used head-piece; and leaning back in his chair, looked with excusable triumph and exultation at Mr. Toosypegs.

That young gentleman gave a sudden start, such as people are in the habit of giving when they sit on a tin tack turned up, and got very red, but did not reply.

“Now, look here, Orlando Toosypegs,” reiterated the admiral, bringing the forefinger of his right hand impressively down on the palm of his left, “they goes and gets married. That’s what they does.”

Mr. Toosypegs gave another start, which could only be justified by the idea of another upturned tin tack, and blushed deeper than ever, but still replied never a word.

“They goes and gets married. That there’s what they does,” repeated the admiral, folding his arms and leaning serenely back, like a man who has settled the matter forever. “And now, Orlando Toosypegs, in the words of Scripture,” here the admiral got up and took off his glazed hat “go thou, and do likewise.”

And then clapping his hat on again, with a triumphant slap, he sat down and looked Mr. Toosypegs straight and unwinkingly in the face.

“Admiral Havenful, I’m very much obliged to you, I’m sure,” said the “lovyer,” in a subdued tone; “butbut maybe she wouldn’t have me. She might, just as likely as not, say ‘No,’ Admiral Havenful.”

This was a view of the case the admiral had never once taken, and it took him so completely “aback,” to use his own phrase, that he could only cast another appealing glance at the picture and growl a low, bewildered adjuration to society in general, to “Stand from under!”

“I shouldn’t be a bit surprised if she said ‘No,’ Admiral Havenful; not one bit, sir,” said Mr. Toosypegs, mournfully; “it’s my luck, always, to have the most dreadful things²⁴³ happen to me! I declare it’s enough to make a fellow mad enough to go and do something to himself it actually is.”

“Don’t now, Orlando, don’t now,” said the admiral, severely; “it isn’t proper, you know, and you really shouldn’t. There’s a proverb I’m trying to think of,” said the admiral, knitting his brow in intense perplexity; “you know the Book of Proverbs, Orlando, don’t you? Hold on, now, till I see: ‘Fain’noyes, ‘Fain heartfain heart never won a fair lady.’” Again the old sailor reverentially removed his hat. “That’s it, Orlando; ‘fain heart never won fair lady.’ Now, look here: you go straight along and ask Firefly if she’s willing to cruise under your flag through life, and if she lays her hand in yours, and says ‘I’m there, messmate!’ by St. Paul Jones! we’ll have such a wedding as never was seen in old Maryland since Calvert came over. Hoorah!” yelled the admiral, waving his hat over his head in an unexpected outburst of delight, that quite startled Mr. Toosypegs.

“Admiral Havenful, I’ll do it! I will, by granny!” exclaimed Mr. Toosypegs jumping up in the excitement of the moment. “I’ll go right straight over to Heath Hill and ask her. Why, she actually might say ‘Yes,’ after all. Oh, my gracious! if she does, won’t it be nice? What will aunt Prisciller say? Admiral Havenful, it was real kind of you to advise me so, and tell me what to do; and I’m ever so much obliged to you I really am,” said Mr. Toosypegs, bustling around, and putting on his hat, and turning to go.

“Keep her to the wind’s eye!” roared the admiral, in a burst of enthusiasm, as he brought one tremendous sledge-hammer fist down with an awful thump on the table.

“Admiral Havenful, it is my intention to keep her to the wind’s eye as much as possible,” said Mr. Toosypegs, who comprehended the sentence about as much as he would a Chinese funeral-oration. “Good-by, now; I’ll come right back when it’s over, and tell you what she said.”

And like the frog immortalized in Mother Goose, who “would a-wooing go,” Mr. O. C. Toosypegs “set off with his opera-hat,” on that expedition so terrifying to bashful young menthat of going to “pop the question.”

CHAPTER XXVI

PET “RESPECTFULLY DECLINES”

“Doubt the stars are fire
Doubt the sun doth move
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never doubt I love.”

Hamlet.

In all the ardor of his momentary excitement, Mr. Toosypegs got astride of a serious-looking pony, a family relation of the admiral's favorite nag, Ringbone, and set out at a shuffling gallop for Heath Hill. Mr. Toosypegs did not look quite so pretty on horseback as some people might suppose: for he went jiggling up and down with every motion of his steed, and being remarkably long in the legs, his feet were never more than a few inches from the ground; so that altogether, he was not the most dashing rider you would have selected to lead a charge of cavalry. But Mr. Toosypegs was not thinking of his looks just then, but of a far more important subject—trying to screw his courage to the sticking-point. The further he went, the faster his new-found courage began oozing away. As the White Squall receded, so did his daring determination; and as the full extent of the mission he was on burst out on him, a cold perspiration slowly burst out on his face, despite the warmth of the day.

“Good gracious! it's going to be awful; I know it is!” exclaimed Mr. Toosypegs, wiping his face with the cuff of his coat. “And how I'm ever going to get through with it, I'm sure I don't know. I wish to goodness I had never said nothing about it! If only knew any man that's in the habit of proposing, he could tell me how they do it, and then I wouldn't mind. But now by granny! I've a good mind to turn, and go right back to Dismal Hollow. But then, the admiral—what will he say? Well, I don't care what he says. How would he like to go and pop the question himself, I wonder? By gracious! I will go back. It's no use thinking about it; for I'd sooner be chawed alive by rattlesnakes, and then kicked to death by grasshoppers, than go and tell Miss Pet the way I feel. I couldn't tell her the way I feel; it's the most peculiar sensation ever was. And them black eyes of hers! Land of hope and blessed promise! the way they do go right through a fellow's vest-pattern! How in the world so many men can manage to get married is more than I know; for I'd sooner march up to the muzzle of a pistol while Old Nick held the trigger, than go and do it! Whoa, Charlie! Turn round. I'm going home to Dismal Hollow!”

Whir, whir, whir! came something, with lightning-like rapidity, over the soft heath. Mr. Toosypegs turned round; and there came Miss Pet herself, flying along like the wind, on her fleet Arabian, her cheeks crimson, her splendid eyes blazing, her red lips smiling; her short, jetty curls flying in the wind she herself raised; her long, raven-black plume just touching her scarlet cheeks; the red rings of flame flashing out in the sunlight from her dazzling eyes and hair. She was bewildering, dazzling, blinding! Mr. Toosypegs had

his breath completely taken away as his heart had long since been, and in that moment fell more deeply, deplorably, and helplessly in love than ever. Every idea was instantaneously put to flight by this little dark, bright bird-of-paradise this blinding little grenade, all fire, and jets, and sparkles.

“Halloa, Orlando! Your very humble servant!” shouted Pet, as she laughingly dashed up, touching her hat gallantly to the gentleman. “How does your imperial highness find yourself this glorious day?”

“A pretty miserable, thank you. AI mean I ain’t very well, Miss Pet,” said Mr. Toosypegs, stammering, and breaking down.

“Not very well, eh? Why, what’s the matter? Not cholera-morbus, or measles or a galloping-decline, or anything is it?” said Pet, in a tone of deepest anxiety. “The gods forbid anything should happen to you, Orlando, for the sake of all Judestown girls whose hearts you have broken! You do look sort of blue a prey to ‘green and yellow melancholy,’ I shouldn’t wonder! Make Miss Priscilla apply a mustard-poultice when you get home it doesn’t matter where and go to bed with your feet in a tub of hot water, and I’ll bet you anything you’ll be as well as ever, if not considerably better, in the morning. I’m going to take in nursing some of these days, and ought to know!”

“Miss Pet, it’s real good of you to advise me, and I’m very much obliged to you,” said Mr. Toosypegs, gratefully; “but, at the same time, I don’t believe mustard-poultices and tubs of hot water would do me the first mite of good. No, Miss Pet, not all the hot water in all the hot springs that ever was, could do me the least good,” said Mr. Toosypegs, firmly. “I’m in that state that nothing can do me any good no, no, nothing!” repeated Mr. Toosypegs, with increased firmness. “It’s all internal, you see, Miss Pet.”

“Oh! is it?” said Pet, puckering up her mouth as if she was going to whistle. “You ought to take something, then, and drive it out! Hot gin, or burnt brandy and cayenne is good excessively good though not so nice to take as some things I’ve tasted. Just you take a pint or so of hot burnt brandy and cayenne to-night, before going to bed, and you’ll see it will be all out in a severe rash early to-morrow morning. I’m advising you for your good, Orlando; for I feel like a mother to you in fact, I feel a motherly interest in all the nice young men in Judestown and the surrounding country generally, for any extent you please, and am always ready to give them no end of good advice, if they only take it.”

“It’s real good of you, Miss Pet I’m sure,” said Mr. Toosypegs, wincing, as the very thought of the hot brandy and cayenne brought tears to his eyes, “and I would be real glad to take your advice, and brandy, only what ails me can’t be brought out in a rash. No, Miss Pet, all the brandy from here to Brandywine,” said Mr. Toosypegs with a hazy idea that all ardent spirits came from that place “couldn’t do it. It’s real good of you, though, to recommend it; and I’m very much obliged to you, I’m sure.”

“Well, really, I’m afraid I’ll have to give the case up, though I hate to do it. What’s the symptoms, Orlando?”

“The what, Miss Pet?”

"The symptoms, you know I don't exactly understand the word myself; and I forgot my dictionary when I was coming away. It means, though, the feelings or something that way how do you feel as a general thing?"

"Well, I can't say I feel very well," said Mr. Toosypegs, mournfully. "I'm sort of restless, and can't sleep of nights!"

"Ah! that's owing to the musketoos!" said Pet. "That ain't dangerous. Go on."

"No, Miss Pet, it's not the musketoos; it's my feelings," said Mr. Toosypegs, with increased mournfulness. "I've lost my appetite!"

"Well, I'm sure I don't wonder at that, either," again interrupted Pet. "Miss Priscilla half-starves you over there I know she does. Just you come over and dine with us two or three times a week, at Heath Hill, and you'll be astonished slightly at the way you'll find your appetite again. Oh, I don't despair of you at all!"

"Miss Pet," burst out Mr. Toosypegs, in a sort of desperation, "it's very good of you to ask me, and I'm very much obliged to you; but you don't understand my feelings at all. It's an unfortunate attachment"

"An attachment?" exclaimed Pet. "Whew! that is bad. Why, Orlando, I didn't think you owed anybody anything. When was this attachment issued against you?"

"Oh, Miss Pet! can't you understand? My gracious! that ain't the sort of attachment I mean at all. It's not legal"

"Then it's illegal," said Miss Pet, with a profoundly-shocked expression of countenance.

"Why, Mr. Toosypegs, where do you expect to go to? I never expected to have any such confession from your lips. An illegal attachment! Mr. Toosypegs, the community generally look upon you as a highly exemplary young man, but I feel it my painful duty to announce to them immediately how they have been deceived. An illegal attachment! Oh, my stars and garters! Excuse me, Mr. Toosypegs, but after such a highly improper confession, I must bid you good-morning. No young and unsuspecting female like me can be seen with propriety in your company for the future. I am very sorry, Mr. Toosypegs, and I should never have suspected you of such shocking conduct had you not confessed it yourself." And Pet drew herself up, and put on that severely moral expression only seen on the faces of school-mistresses and committeemen when lecturing young ideas on the proper way to shoot.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Toosypegs, in a distracted tone, nearly driven out of his senses by this harangue. "Oh, land of hope! was a fellow that never done nothing to nobody ever talked to like this before? By granny! it's enough to make a fellow get as mad as anything; so it is! Why, Miss Pet, I haven't done anything improper I wouldn't for any price; upon my word and honor, I wouldn't. I've fell in love with a young lady, and I don't see where's the harm of it. It's unkind of you, Miss Pet, to speak so, and I don't see what I've ever done to deserve it. You mean real well, I'm sure, but it makes a fellow feel bad to be talked to in this way all the time," said Mr. Toosypegs, with a stifled whimper.

“Well, there, don’t cry, Orlando,” said Pet, soothingly, “and I won’t say another word. What young lady have you had the misfortune to fall in love with?”

“Miss Pet, excuse me, but I’d rather not tell, if it’s all the same,” replied Mr. Toosypegs, blushing deeply.

“Oh, fool! tell me, as a friend, you know. Won’t ever mention it again, so help me! Do I know her?”

“Yeyes, Miss Pet, slightly.”

“Hem! It isn’t Annie Grove?”

“No, Miss Petwhy, she’s forty years old, if she’s a day,” said Mr. Toosypegs, indignantly.

“Yes, I knowtwenty-five, she says; but she’s been that as far back as the oldest inhabitant can remember. Well, then, Jessie Masters?”

“Miss Pet, allow me to say I ain’t in the habit of falling in love with women with wooden legs,” said the young gentleman, with dignity.

“Well, I didn’t know; it’s cheaper, in shoe-leather, especially. Hem-m-m! Perhaps it’s Mrs. Jenkins?”

“Mrs. Jenkins! a widow! No, Miss Pet, it ain’t. I should think you might know I don’t like second-hand women,” said Mr. Toosypegs, as near being indignant as he ever was in his life.

“Well, who the mischief can it be then! It must be Huldah Rice.”

“A little stout thing, withwith a hump, and cross-eyes? Miss Pet, it ain’t!” exclaimed Mr. Toosypegs, with tears of vexation in his eyes.

“Not her, either? then I give up. Who is it, Orlando?”

“Miss Pet, I don’t like to tellyou’ll laugh at me,” said Mr. Toosypegs, blushing deeply.

“Laugh! No, I won’t; honor bright! I’ll look as grim as a death’s-head and cross-bones! Now then, out with it!”

“Miss Pet, it’sit’s”

“Yeswell?”

“It’s”

“Well?”

“It’s you,” fairly shouted Mr. Toosypegs, driven to desperation by her perseverance.

“Me! O ye gods and goddesses, without skirts or bodices! Me! Great Jehosaphat! I’ll know what it feels like to be unexpectedly struck by a cannon-ball, after this! Me! Well, I never!”

“Miss Pet, I knew you would laugh; I knew it all along, and I told him so this morning,” said Mr. Toosypegs, with a sniffle; “you mean well, I dare say, but it don’t seem kind at all.”

“Laugh!” exclaimed Pet; “come, I like that, and my face as long as an undertaker’s! You may take a microscope and look from this until the week after next, and then you won’t discover the ghost of a smile on my countenance. Laugh, indeed! I’m above such a weakness, I hope,” said Pet, with ineffable contempt.

"Then, Miss Pet, perhaps you will have me," said Mr. Toosypegs, with sudden hope. "Miss Pet, I can't begin to tell you the way I love you; you can't have any idea of it; it goes right through and through me. I think of you all day, and I dream about you all night. I'm in the most dreadful way about you, ever was. Miss Pet, I'd do anything you told me to. I'd go and drown myself if you wanted me to, or shoot myself, or take ratsbane, and rather like it than otherwise, if you'll only have me, Miss Pet"

"Orlando, I'm very sorry; but I can't."

"Miss Pet, you don't mean it; you can't mean it, surely. I know I ain't so good-looking as some," said Mr. Toosypegs, in a melancholy tone; "but I can get something to take the freckles off, and I expect to fatten out a little by-and-by, so"

"Now, don't go to any such trouble for me," said Pet, with difficulty keeping from laughing at his mildly-anguished look. "I don't mind the freckles at all; I rather like them, in fact; they vary the monotony of the complexion, just as oases do in the deserts we read of; and as for being thinwell, I'm rather on the hatchet-pattern myself, you know. But you must quit thinking about me, Orlando, because I'm only a wild little Tomboy, that everybody gets furious about, and I never intend to get married at all that is, unlesswell, never mind."

"Miss Pet, if you only knew how badly in love I am."

"Oh, you only think so; you'll forget me in a week!"

"I'll never forget you, Miss Pet, never not even if I was to be taken out of this world altogether, and sent up to New Jersey. It's awful to think you won't have me it really is," said Mr. Toosypegs, in great mental distress.

"Well, I'm sorry, Orlando, but I can't help it, you know. Now be a good boy for my sake, and try to forget me won't you?" asked Pet, coaxingly.

"I'll try to, Miss Pet, since you wish it," said poor Mr. Toosypegs, with tears in his eyes; "but it's blamed hard. I wish to gracious I had never been born I just do! I don't see where is the good of it at all."

"Oh, now, Orlando, you mustn't feel bad about it, because it won't amount to anything," said Pet, in a consoling tone; "don't let us talk any more about it. Guess what I heard last night over at Judestown."

"I'm sure I don't know, Miss Pet," said Mr. Toosypegs, giving his eyes and nose a vigorous wiping with his handkerchief.

"Well, then, that the gang of smugglers who have been for so long a time suspected of having a rendezvous around the coast somewhere, have been seen at last. Two or three of them were observed pulling off in a boat, the other night, and going on board a dark, suspicious-looking schooner, anchored down the bay. They are known to have a hiding-place somewhere around here, but the good folks of Judestown can't discover it, and consequently are in a state of mind at having such desperadoes near them. I am going to hunt all over the shore far and near myself, this very day, and see if my eyes are not sharper than those of the Judestown officials. Oh, I would love, of all things, to discover their hiding-place; perhaps my smartness wouldn't astonish the natives slightly."

“But, good gracious, Miss Pet! if they get hold of you,” said Mr. Toosypegs, his blood running chill with horror at the very idea; “why, it would be awful.”

“If they did,” said Pet, “they would find, as others have done, to their cost, before now, that they had caught a Tartar; a snap-dragon; a pepper-pod; an angel in petticoats! Oh, they’d have their hands full, in every sense of the word. I’m bound to go on my exploring expedition this afternoon, wind and weather permitting, anyway, and see what will be the result. Where are you going, may I ask?”

“To Dismal Hollow, orno, I’ve got to go to the White Squall, first.”

“Very well; I won’t detain you, then. I’m off to Judestowngood-bye; remember me to uncle Harry.”

And giving her jaunty, plumed hat another gallant touch, Firefly dashed off, leaving Mr. Toosypegs gazing dejectedly after her until the last flutter of her dark riding-habit vanished amid the trees; and then he slowly and mournfully turned his solemn-faced nag in the direction of the White Squall, to tell the admiral the unsatisfactory result of his proposal.

CHAPTER XXVII

GREEK MEETS GREEK

“‘I scorn,’ quoth she, ‘thou coxcomb silly,
Quarter or counsel from a foe.
If thou canst force me to it, do,’”
Hudibras.

“I had rather chop this hand off at a blow,
And with the other fling it in thy face,
Than stoop to thee.”
Shakspeare.

Petronilla rode gayly along to the little bustling, half-village, half-city, Judestown, thinking over her late surprising proposal, and scarcely knowing whether to laugh at or pity poor Mr. Toosypegs. As she reached the town these thoughts²⁵² were dispelled by the busy scenes around, and Pet found herself fully occupied in nodding to her various friends and acquaintances as she passed.

Pet’s destination was the post-office, a large building which served as a store, hotel, and post, all in one. As she drew rein at the door, the mail-coach drew up, and Pet lingered where she was a moment, in order to avoid the crowd.

The passengers crowded in, and as the coach-door opened, a young gentleman sprung out and assisted a lady, closely veiled, to alight. Neither of them noticed Pet; so they did not observe her quick start, her sudden flush, and the vivid lighting up of her beautiful eyes.

These outward and very unwonted signs of emotion on Pet’s part passed away as quickly as they came, and in one minute more she was as cool, saucy and composed as ever.

“Is there any one here who will drive us to Old Barrens Cottage?” said the young gentleman, glancing at the landlord.

“Yes, sir; in ten minutes, sir; just step in, sir; my boy’s gone off in a gig with a gent, but he’ll be back soon. Walk right in this way, sir,” replied the obsequious landlord, with a profusion of bows to the well-dressed and distinguished-looking stranger before him.

“I would rather not wait,” said the gentleman. “Can you not let me have some other conveyance, and I will drive over myself?”

“Very sorry, sir, but they’re all engaged. Just step in, sir, you and your good lady, sir.”

Pet fancied she heard a low, sweet laugh from under the thick, brown veil, and the gentleman smiled as he followed the bustling host into the well-sanded parlor.

In one moment Pet was off her horse, and consigning him to the care of the hostler, darted in by a side-door and rung a peal that presently brought the hostess, a pleasant-faced, fat, little woman, in a tremendous flutter, into the room.

“Laws! Miss Petronilla, is it you? Why, you haven’t been to see me this long time. How do you do?”

"I'm very well, thank you, Mrs. Gudge; but see here did you notice that gentleman and lady who have just gone into the parlor?"

"That tall, handsome young man, with all them there mustaches? yes, I seen him, Miss Pet."

"Well, do you know who he is?"

"No; though it does kinder seem to me as if I'd seen him somewhere before. The lady, his wife, I take it, kept her veil down, and I couldn't see her face. No; I don't know 'em, Miss Pet."

"Well, that don't matter; I do. And now, Mrs. Gudge, I want you to help me in a splendid piece o' f"

"Mischief, Miss Pet," said the woman, slyly.

"No, not exactly just fun. I want you to bring a suit of your son Bob's clothes up here. I'm going to dress myself in them, and when he comes with the gig let me drive them over. My riding-habit and pony can remain here till I send for them."

"Now, Miss Pet"

"Now, Mrs. Gudge, don't bother me! Go, like a dear old soul. I'll give you a kiss if you do."

"But the judge"

"Oh, the judge won't know anything about it unless you tell him. There, be off! I want to be dressed before Bob comes. If you don't hurry I'll lose the most splendid joke ever was. Hurry now! Put Mr. Gudge up to it, so the cat won't get out of the bag."

With a deprecating shake of her head and upturning of her eyes, the little hostess bustled out, inwardly wondering what "Miss Pet would do next."

Pet, in the meantime, with her wicked black eyes scintillating with the prospect of coming fun, was rapidly divesting herself of her hat and riding-habit. And then little Mrs. Gudge made her appearance with her son and heir's "Sunday-go-to-meetin's" and stayed to assist the fairy in her frolic, and find out who the handsome owner of the "mustarchers" was. But Pet was as close as a clam, and only laughed at the landlady's "pumping," while she dived desperately into Bob's pants and coat, which except being narrow where Pet thought they ought to be wide, and wide where they ought to be narrow, fitted her very well. Then she combed her short, dancing, black curls to one side, over her round, boyish forehead, and setting upon them a jaunty Scotch cap, stood there, bright, saucy, and smiling, as hand254some and dashing a little fellow as you could see in a long summer-day.

"Well, laws! you do make a pretty boy and no mistake, Miss Pet," said the woman, admiringly; "them handsome eyes of yours and shaking, shining curls is jest the thing! But your hands they're a heap too small and deliky-looking for a boy's."

"Oh! well, I'll rub some mud on them when I get out. They're not the whitest in the world anyway; and besides, they won't look very closely at a little cab-boy's hands."

"Now, if you want to be like a boy, you must take long steps, and stick your hands in your pockets, and swear. Can you swear, Miss Pet?" said the woman, seriously.

"Well, I never tried," said Pet, laughing; "and as I don't know any oaths off by heart, I guess I won't mind, for fear the effect would be a failure."

"It's a pity you don't," said Mrs. Gudge, thoughtfully; "all boys allers swears at the horses. You must look sassybut that comes natural enough to you; and you had better smoke a pipe or chew some tobacco, on the roadwhich will you do, Miss Pet?"

"Well, really, Mrs. Gudge, I'd rather not do either, if it's all the same to you," said Pet; "but you mus'n't keep calling me 'Miss Pet,' you know; my name's Bob, now, Bob Gudge."

"So it is. Laws! if it ain't funny; but I'm afraid they'll find you out if you don't do none of those things. Can you whistle, MissBob, I mean?"

For reply, Pet puckered up her rosy mouth, and whistled "Hail Columbia," in a way that made little Mrs. Gudge's eyes snap with delight.

"Here comes Bob!" she cried, as a gig came rattling into the yard. "You wait here a minute and I'll fix things all right."

Out flew Mrs. Gudge, and called off Bob to some secret corner, and then she showed her head in at the door and called:

"Come, now, MissBob, and drive round to the front door while I tell the lady and gentleman all's right now."

Pet, imitating Bob's shuffling swagger, went out to the yard, sprung up on the front seat, took the reins, and, in255 masterly style, turned the horses, and drove around to the front door.

Scarcely had she got there and struck up "Hail Columbia" in her shrillest key, than the dark, handsome gentleman with the "mustarchers" came out with the lady, who was still veiled, followed by the host and hostess, on whose faces rested a broad grin. Pet, with her cap pulled over her eyes, to shade them from the hot sun, and also to subdue their dark, bright splendor a little, sat whistling away, looking as cool as a cucumber, if not several degrees cooler.

The young gentleman handed the lady in, and she took her place on the back seat.

"Now, Minnie, I'm going to sit here with the driver and have a chat with him", said the young man; "these cunning little vagrants know everything."

The shrill whistle rose an octave higher.

"Very well," said the young lady, in low, laughing tones; "anything to put an end to that piercing whistle. I suppose he cannot talk to you and whistle together?"

"Can't I, though?" thought the small urchin, who held the reins. "We'll see that, Miss Erminie Germaine," and higher and higher still rose the sharp, shrill notes.

"Come, my lad, start," cried the gentleman, springing in, "and if it's not too much trouble, might I request you to stop whistling? It may be, and no doubt is, owing to our bad taste, but we cannot appreciate it as it deserves."

"Don't see no harm in whistling; nobody never objects to it," said Pet, imitating to perfection the gruff, surly tones of Master Bob. "I'm fond of music myself, if you ain't,

and so is the hoss, who would not go a step if I didn't whistle; so I'll just keep on if it's all the same to you."

And another stave of "Hail Columbia" pierced the air.

"How long does it take you to drive to the Barrens?"

"Well, sometimes longer and sometimes shorter; and then again not so long," said the driver, touching the horse daintily with his whip.

"Quite enlightened, thank you! Do you know the family at old Barrens cottage?"

"There ain't no family there; there's only the old woman what can't walk or nothin'; and a nigger. Them two don't²⁵⁶ make one whole member of society, let alone a family. Was you acquainted with them, square?"

"Slightly so," said the gentleman, smiling.

"Well, maybe you knew that there cove that went awayyoung Mr. Ray?"

"I believe I had that honor," replied the young man, with the smile still on his handsome face.

"Honor! humph! I reckon you're the only one ever thought it an honor to know him," said the lad, grimly. "He always was a vagabones, and ended as all vagabones must, at last."

For one moment the young gentleman glanced at the driver, evidently hesitating whether to pitch him then and there out of the gig or not; but seeing only a little boy with an exceedingly muddy face, he thought better of it, and said:

"Well, this is really pleasant to listen to! And how did this vagabones, as you call him, end?"

"Why, he was sent away from home, when they couldn't stand him any longer; and the last we heard of him was that he was in State Prison for life."

A low peal of laughter from the young lady followed this, in which, after a prolonged stare of astonishment, the gentleman was obliged to join.

"Well, for cool, innate impudence, and straight-forward bluntness, I'll back you against the world, my good youth," said the young man, while the little driver sat looking as sober as a judge.

"And the young lady who lived there, what became of her?"

"There wasn't never no young lady," said the lad; "there was a little gal with yaller hair, but she went off, too; and I expect, ran away with some one-eyed fiddler or other. They was English, and no better couldn't have been expected," said the boy, in strong accents of contempt.

Another low laugh from the young lady and a prolonged whistle from the gentleman followed this.

"Well, I am sorry my friends have turned out so badly. How about the others, now; Judge Lawless and his family, for instance; Admiral Havenful, Mr. and Miss Toosypegs, and the rest?"

"They're all hanging together! Mr. Toosypegs is going to get married and take in sewing for a living; and Miss Priscilla goes round making vinegar."

“Making what?”

“Vinegar,” said the lad, gravely. “The grocers gets her to look into barrels of water, when they turns into vinegar ’mediately.”

“I shouldn’t wonder,” said the gentleman, laughing; “but the others Judge Lawless, Miss Lawless, what of her?”

“Oh, she’s all right. Don’t expect she’ll be Miss Lawless, though, much longer,” said the boy.

“No? why? how? what do you mean?” said the young gentleman, starting so suddenly that the boy looked up, apparently quite terrified by this unexpected outburst.

“See here, square, you’ll skeer the hoss if you keep on like this. If you’re subjick to ’tacks of this kind you ought for to have told me before we started, and not ’larm the hoss,” said the boy, sharply.

“Tell me what you mean by that? Speak!” said the young man, vehemently.

“By what? skeering the hoss?” said the lad.

“No, about Miss Lawless,” was the impetuous rejoinder.

“Oh! Well, I have hearn tell she was goin’ to be married. Likely as not she is too; got lots of beaux.”

The young gentleman’s face flushed for a moment, and then grew set and stern.

“Did you hear who she was to be married to?” said the young lady, leaning over.

“No, marm; nobody never can tell what she’ll do; likely as not she’ll get married to the one nobody expects her to marry. She always was the contrariest young woman always that ever was,” said the boy, casting a quick, bright, searching glance from under his long eyelashes, at the handsome face of the gentleman. And it was a handsome face, the very handsomest the saucy little driver had ever seen; and it might have been its close proximity to its owner that sent such quick thrills to the heart of the quondam boy, and set it beating so unnecessarily fast under the jaunty black coat. The dark, clear complexion; the straight, classic features; the thick, jetty, clustering hair; the high, princely brow; the bold, flashing, falcon, black eyes; the thin, curving nostril, that showed his high blood; the proud, haughty mouth, shaded by a thick, black mustache; the tall, slight, elegant form; the high, kingly movements—these made up the outward attractions of him by whose side Pet sat. Of course, every reader above the artless age of five knows as well as I do who it is, so there is not the slightest necessity for announcing his name as Raymond Germaine.

There was a long silence after this. The young gentleman, with a cold, almost sarcastic look, watched the objects as they passed, and the little boy drove on, whistling as if his life depended on it.

Then the young lady leaned over and began a conversation in a low voice with her companion, to which he replied in the same tone. The lady had thrown back her veil, disclosing a face of such rare loveliness that it seemed a downright shame, not to say sin, to hide it behind that odious brown covering. The driver turned round to catch a better

view of her face, and the young lady met the full splendor of those dazzling dark orbs. The boy instantly turned, and began whistling louder than ever.

“What a handsome boy!” said the young girl, in a low tone, yet loud enough for the “boy” in question to hear. “What splendid eyes! I thought there could be but one such pair of eyes in the world, and those”

Her companion made a slight gesture that arrested the name she would have uttered; and glancing at the boy, said, rather coldly:

“Yes; he is handsome, if his face was washed.”

“Now, Ray,” said the young lady, laughing “that is altogether too bad. Those radiant eyes are destined to break many a heart yet.”

“That they are!” mentally exclaimed the lad.

“How fortunate for some of your admirers, Ermie, he is not a few years older,” said Ray (we may as well call him so at once, and have done with it). “Those dark, bright, handsome eyes wouldn’t have left you the faintest trace of a heart; and then what would poor Ranty have done?”

“Pshaw, Ray,” said Erminie, with a most becoming blush, “what nonsense! Oh, look! we are almost home. There is Dismal Hollow, and therethereI declare! that’s Mr. Toosypegs himself, riding out of the pine woods. Why, he259 hasn’t changed the least in the world since I saw him last.”

The little driver gave his cap a pull further over his face as Ray shouted to Mr. Toosypegs.

The next moment, that disconsolate wooer was by the side of the gig, shaking hands with Ray and Erminie, and asking a dozen questions in a breath.

“How did you come? When did you come? How did you meet?” breathlessly demanded the astonished and delighted Mr. Toosypegs.

“I called for Erminie at her convent. She is not going back any more; my visit will probably be a short one. I hope Miss Toosypegs and all our friends are well?”

“Yes; all well. I am very much obliged to you. Did you pass through Judestown?”

“Of course. How else could we get here?”

“And didn’t you meet Miss Pet?”

“Miss Lawless? No. Was she at Judestown?” said Erminie, eagerly; while Ray found something so attractive among the trees that he could not possibly remove his eyes from it. “Oh, I should have liked to have seen her so much!”

“Yes; she went to Judestown this morning, and has not got back. My goodness! it is the greatest wonder you didn’t see her. What a pity she didn’t know you’ve come! she would be here in a flash.”

“Is she to be married, do you know, Mr. Toosypegs?” said Erminie, in a low voice; “we heard she was.”

The little boy glanced from the corner of his eye, and saw a faint red on the dark cheek of the tall, handsome, Spanish-looking gentleman beside him.

Mr. Toosypegs turned pale; even his very freckles turned the color of buttermilk curds at the question.

“Get married! Goodness gracious! I was just saying so. Oh, I knew very well she would go and heave herself away on somebody. Who is she going to be married to, Miss Minnie?”

“I don’t know; it was this little boy who told us,” said Erminie, glancing toward him.

“Well, I don’t know neither; only hearn tell,” said the lad, shortly.

“Perhaps it is only a report. When will you come over to the cottage, Mr. Toosypegs?”

“This evening, Miss Minnie; and I guess Aunt Prisciller will come, too. She hasn’t had any new caps or collars since you went away, and has ever so many to get made.”

“Very well; I will make them. Good-by, till then,” said Erminie, smiling as they drove on. A short time sufficed to bring them to the cottage.

The driver was invited in, but declined, and turned to go.

“If you see Miss Lawless on your way, will you tell her to hurry here?” said Erminie, as she alighted.

“Yes’m; all right!” said the boy, closing his hand over the coin Ray gave him; and then touching his cap to Erminie, dashed away.

Lucy’s delight exceeded all bounds at beholding “young mars’r and missis” again; and then Ray and Erminie, with some difficulty, extricated themselves from her violent caresses, went up-stairs, and entered the room of Ketura.

Many and sad were the changes years, and sorrow, and a sort of chronic remorse for her past acts had wrought in her. She sat in a large easy-chair, unable to move any portion of her body but her head; her hard, dark, grim face, bony, sharp, and hollow, the protruding bones just covered by a wrinkled covering of skin; but the fierce, blazing, black eyes were still unchanged.

Erminie, with the exclamation, “My dearest grandmother!” went over, and throwing her snowy arms around her neck, kissed the dark, withered cheek.

The old woman glanced at her, and saw the now beautiful, feminine, but perfect image of Lord Ernest Villiers. The same large, dark, beautiful violet-blue eyes; the same fair, silken, golden hair; the game clear, transparent complexion; the same elegant, graceful movements; the very expression of the features complete. All her old hatred revived at the sight of the lovely, high-born girl. With a quick, fierce gesture, she pushed her aside, and strove to glance around for the other she expected.

Ray stepped forward, and touched his lips tenderly to her forehead.

Holding his hand, she made him stand off where she could the better see him, and then she scrutinized him from head to foot. There, before her, he stood, the living embodiment of what her son had been at his age, the very image of him she had so passionately loved and so sadly lost. She could scarcely persuade herself that Reginald had not risen from the grave to meet her again. There was his very gipsy skin, and eyes of darkened fire; the curling locks of jet, and tall, princely form; but the expression of the mouth was different; his smile was Erminie’s exactly; and altogether there was a

strong, undefined, puzzling resemblance between them, that for a moment darkly clouded the brow of the gipsy as she observed it. The only being in the wide world she cared for now, was Ray. Erminie might win all other hearts, but the gipsy Ketura's was as flint to her. She had hated her from the first; she hated her still; she would hate her until the last, for the sake of the race from which she sprung.

Seeing she was not wanted, Erminie left the room to change her traveling-dress; and Ray, seating himself beside his grandmother, proceeded to tell her of his studies, his progress, his hopes and ambition for the future. One name he did not mention, that of Pet Lawless; and yet it was thrilling and vibrating at his heart-strings, as he listened impatiently for the quick, sharp clatter of her horse's hoofs.

But hours passed, and she came not; and Ray, angry at himself for caring or feeling so deeply disappointed, descended to join Erminie at the tea-table.

"What is Miss Lawless to me?" was the impetuous thought that sent the fiery blood careering to his brow. "She an heiress, and I a paupera beggar, with the tainted gipsy blood in my veins. We were friends something more, perhaps in the years that have passed; but neither of us understood our relative positions, then. No; proud as she is, she shall never know I have dared to lift my eyes to her father's daughter. I was a fool to come on here at all. I have heard she has driven dozens of better men crazy with her witchery; and can I rely on my own strength to shield me from her arts? Pshaw! she will not think it worth while, though, to stoop to flirt with me. I, a menial, educated by the bounty of her uncle. I am safe enough, and will think of her no more."

A very laudable resolution it was, on the young gentleman's part, but one which he found some difficulty in carrying out, inasmuch as Mr. and Miss Toosy and Admiral Havenful came in just then; and after the first greetings were over, the whole conversation turned on Pet, her tricks, frolics, flirtations, capers, and caprices; and Ray found himself listening with an intense eagerness that he was half inclined to be enraged at himself for feeling.

Then, just as night was falling, the gallop of a horse was heard coming through the forest road; and a few minutes later, Pet alighted at the gate, darted up the walk, burst, like the impetuous little whirlwind she was, into the cottage, clasped Erminie in her arms, and kissed her again and again, until Ray though nothing earthly would have made him own it, even to himself would have given untold wealth to have stood in his sister's gaiters. Three somewhat furious embraces, that quite took away Erminie's breath, being over, Miss Lawless found time to glance at the rest of the company, and seeing Ray, as he stood, tall, and dark, and silent, by the window, went over and held out her hand.

There was something more nearly approaching to timidity in the action, and in the quick glance and quicker dropping of her resplendent eyes than any one had ever seen Pet manifest before. Ray bent over the little dark hand, whose touch sent a quick, sudden thrill to his inmost heart, and thought that, in all his life, he had never seen any one so beautiful as she looked then, with her veiled eyes, and drooping ringlets, and long,

waving plumes that bent over her hat, touching her glowing cheeks as if enamored of the darkly splendid face beneath.

“Humph! A cold welcome, my little Mother Cary’s Chicken,” grunted the admiral. “Why don’t you kiss him like you did Snowdrop? That’s no way to welcome a friend you haven’t seen for three whole blessed years.”

Ray’s eyes met hers, and the color flushed to her very brow; then, withdrawing her hand, she tossed her saucy head till all her jetty curls flashed, and throwing herself into a seat, began talking to Erminie, as if for a wager.

“Who told you we were come?” asked Erminie.

“No one,” said Pet. “It was an inspiration from on high, I expect, that told me I should find you here.”

“It’s a wonder you did not see us at Judestown; we remained there some time.”

“Well, how do you know I didn’t see you?” said Pet.

“Why, you surelyoh, Pet! did you see us and never spoke?” said Erminie, reproachfully.

“Well, I was otherwise engaged, you knowin fact, there was a young gentleman, a very young gentleman, in the caseand I couldn’t very well have presented myself any sooner then I did,” said Pet.

“One of her lovers,” thought Ray, with a curling lip.

“Guess what the little boy, who drove us over, told us about you, Pet?” said Erminie, laughing.

“What? Nothing naughty, I hope.”

“Well, I don’t know; that’s as it may be. Shall I tell you what he said?”

“Of course; I like to hear what people say about me.”

“Well, then, he said you were going to be married.”

“Not possible! What an astounding revelation! Did you think I was going to be an old maid?”

“Then it is true? Is it any harm to ask who the happy man is, Pet?”

“Well, I haven’t quite decided yet. I have some four or five on trial, and I generally put them through a severe course of martyrdom every day. The one who survives it (not more than one can possibly survive it) I shall probably make miserable for life, by bestowing upon him my handand heart, I was going to say, only, fortunately, they forgot to give me one when I was made.”

Erminie laughed, and then the conversation became general, and two hours imperceptibly slipped away. Ray having wrought himself up to the belief that Miss Lawless was a heartless flirt, worthy of no higher feeling than contempt, he, in order to resist the dark witchery of her magnetic eyes, wrapped himself up in his very coldest mantle of pride, and addressed just as little of his conversation to her as he possibly could, without being positively rude. Pet, as proud in her own way as himself, noticed this at once, and her cheeks flushed, and her eyes flashed, for a moment, with anger and pride. Then these signs of emotion passed away, and she grew her own cold, careless self again, talking away recklessly, and laughing contemptuously at all sentiment, until Ray

was more than ever convinced that the world had spoiled her, and that she was as arrant a coquette as ever made a fool of a sensible man.

As they arose to go, Ray, feeling himself bound in courtesy, offered to escort her home, but Pet coldly and curtly declined; and vaulting into her saddle, dashed off at a break-neck pace, madly reckless even for her.

Looking back once, she caught a glimpse of a tall dark form leaning against a tree with folded arms and watching her still. Did she, with her light, sparkling, thoughtless nature, realize the struggle going on in that young heart, between love and pride, at that moment?

Of course, the arrival of Ray and Erminie precluded her “exploring expedition,” as she called it, to the seashore. The next morning, and part of the afternoon, were spent with Erminie; but reaching home a little before sunset, she suddenly remembered it, and started off on the spur of the moment, like a female Don Quixote, in search of adventures.

“It’s too late to begin a regular search,” thought Pet, as she ran down the bank leading to the shore; “so I’ll just have a look round the place, and come back some other day and have a real good hunt for smugglers.”

Fifteen minutes brought her to the beach, and there she paused to look round. The sands for a long distance out were bare; but the tide was slowly tramping inward. On the other hand, a huge wall of beetling rocks and projecting crags met the eye; but these walls of rock were so smooth and perpendicular, and so dizzily high, that the boldest sailor, used to climbing all his life, would have hesitated before attempting to clamber up. There were two paths leading to the shore—the one Pet had just descended, and another about half a mile distant. Between these the massive wall of rock chose to indulge itself in a sudden impetuous rush out, forming a huge projecting shoulder, up which a cat could hardly have climbed safely. The tide always covered this a considerable length of time before it could reach the sands on either side, so that a person caught at high tide on either side found himself cut off from crossing over to the opposite side, unless he had a boat, or could swim.

“Now,” thought Pet, “I’ll have to look sharp and not let the tide catch me on the other side of that bluff, there, or if I do, I’ll have a walk of half a mile along the beach to the265 other road, and after that over a mile to get home, which is a promenade I am not anxious for. I might swim across, it is true, but swimming with all one’s clothes on is not the pleasantest or safest thing in the world; and all the smugglers this side of Pompey’s Pillar are not worth the cold I would catch. I’ll just walk over and look at the rocks, and then come back again.”

Following up this intention, Pet walked slowly along, scanning the high, dark, frowning rocks with a curious eye. As far as she could see, there was not the slightest trace of an opening anywhere; yet the people said that some place along the shore the smugglers had a rendezvous. Pet’s keen eye detected every fissure large enough to hold a mouse, but no trace of secret cave or hidden cavern could be seen.

"I might have known it was all nonsense," said Pet, mentally. "The notion of finding an under-ground cave full of robbers and jewels, and all that sort of thing, is too much like a play, or a story in the 'Arabian Nights,' to be natural. However, as the night's fine, I'll just go and look on the other side of the bluff."

By this time she had reached the high projecting bowlders, and she paused for a moment to glance at the sea. It was still several yards distant, and Pet felt sure she could go down some distance, and return again before the rising tide would bar her passage.

The sun had set and there was no moon; but the starlight was bright and the sea-breeze cool and invigorating; so Pet, in high spirits, walked on. Here and there she could catch the white sail of some boat, skimming over the waves; but the long beach was lonely and deserted.

"Well, I guess I may as well turn back now," said Pet, half aloud. "I am afraid my search after smugglers is going to be unsuccessful, after all. I haven't caught anything this evening, that's certain."

"But something has caught you, pretty one," said a voice, close behind her, so close and sudden that Pet jumped round with a startled ejaculation, and found herself face to face with her sometime tutor and discarded lover, Rozzel Garnet.

His face was flushed, his eyes were gleaming with triumph, as he laid one powerful hand on her shoulder, and held her fast.

In one instant the whole danger of her situation flashed upon Pet. She had made this man her deadly enemy; he had probably long waited for an opportunity for revenge where she was completely in his power, alone on the long, dreary, deserted beach, where her cries, if she uttered any, could reach no ear. Above her towered the high, precipitous, beetling rocks that she could not climb; on the other hand, spread out the boundless ocean, more merciful than him into whose hands she had fallen.

Like lightning, it all passed through her mind, and for one moment she quailed. But then her brave heart rose; this was no time for puerile fears, and she faced round, drew up her slight form to its full height, and met her enemy with a dauntless eye.

"Good-evening, Mr. Garnet," she said, composedly. "This is an unexpected pleasure. We thought you had gone away."

"Ah! did you? Gone where, Miss Lawless?" he said, with a sinister smile.

"Well anywhere to the county jail, as likely as not; but people don't always get their deserts in this world."

"Very true, Miss Pet; but you are, at present, in a fair way to get yours."

"Humph! You'll allow me to differ from you, there. I deserve something better than bad company, I hope; so permit me to wish you a very good-evening, Mr. Garnet."

"Not so fast, Miss Lawless; you must do your humble servant the honor of conferring your company upon him for a few days. As I have not seen you for so long a time, it would be highly impolite, not to say cruel, to hasten away so soon now."

"Indeed! Mr. Garnet indeed!" said Pet, arching her brows. "Your lesson in the library did not cure you, I see. Are you aware there is such a thing as a jail in Judestown, where

refractory gentlemen who threaten peaceable citizens are sometimes taken for a change of air? Really, Mr. Garnet, I think a little wholesome correction would not hurt you in the least."

"No, Miss Lawless, I have not forgotten that scene in the library of your father's house," said Garnet, tightening his grasp, till Pet winced with pain. "My hand bears the mark of your sharp teeth yet; and as I am deeply your debtor for that Judas-kiss, I shall pay you in your own coin before either of us are many hours older. Did you think how near retribution was when you gave me that sharp caress, Miss Lawless?"

"Sharp caress.' I suppose that means a bite. If you're not anxious to test their sharpness again, Mr. Garnet, you'll let go my arm. Faith! I wish I had made one of my servants horsewhip you from my gates, that day; you would not have dared to come sneaking round like a white-livered coward, that you are now!"

"Petronilla Lawless, take care!" he hissed, with a fierce gleam of his eye.

"Take care of what? I'm not afraid of you, Rozzel Garnet," flashed Pet. "Anything in the shape of a man who would go round playing the spy on an unprotected girl, has sunk rather low to be feared by me. Take care, you! I vow if there is such a thing as a cowhide in the country, I shall have you thrashed for this, within an inch of your cowardly life."

"And get your attached friend, the gipsy beggar, to administer iteh, Miss Lawless?" he said, with the smile of a fiend. "What a pity he is not here, like a true knight-errant, to rescue his lady-love!"

"It's well for you he's not, or he wouldn't leave a whole bone in your miserable skin. Let me go, I tell you! Your presence is pollution," said Pet, struggling to get free.

He held her with a grasp of iron, and watched her ineffectual efforts with a grim smile.

"I told you when we would meet again you would plead to me," he said, with an evil gleam of his snake-like eyes. "That time has come."

"Has it, indeed?" said Pet. "Well, if you have heard or are likely to hear me pleading to anybody under heaven, I must say you have a wonderful pair of ears. I have read of a gentleman called Fine-ear, who could hear the grass growing; but, upon my word, he couldn't hold a candle to you!"

"The time will come, girl, when you will grovel and plead at my very feet, only to be spurned!" "Now, Mr. Garnet, look here," said Pet; "you're plagiarizing a story out of 'The Arabian Nights' Entertainments.' You needn't think to palm it off on me as original, for I've read it, as well as you, and know all about the glass merchant, who fancied he would marry the vizier's daughter, and have her kneeling at his feet, just as I am to do at your royal highness's, you know; and then he would very ungallantly give her a kick, and in so doing smashed his basket of glass all to pieces. You needn't think to take me in, you see; for my education has not been neglected more than your own."

"Cease this fooling," said Garnet, angrily, "and come with me. Resistance is useless. You are completely in my power, and may as well come quietly."

“I won’t then! Not a step will I budge, if I die for it!” said Pet, planting her feet fairly in the yielding sand. “I am not in the habit of walking out with gentlemen at this hour of the evening, I would have you to know.

‘Come one, come all, this rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I.’”

And Pet, with an undaunted look, that would have made her fortune as a virtuous heroine in difficulties on the stage, looked unflinchingly in his face, though her stout heart was throbbing as she each moment more and more clearly saw her danger.

“Then I shall make you, by!” And he swore a fearful oath, while a terrible frown settled on his face. “Since you will not walk, I shall bind you hand and foot and have you carried. Scream as loud as you like,” he added, grimly; “there is no one far or near to hear you.”

Holding her still with one hand, he began fumbling in his pockets, probably in search of something to bind her hands and feet. Pet cast a quick, sweeping glance around. Along the beach not a living soul was to be seen, and even the boats were now out of sight. They were close to the boulder, around which the waves were now seething and dashing; and the tide was rapidly advancing to where they stood. Pet had her back to the boulder, while he stood facing it, thus wedging her into a narrow prison, with the high, steep rocks²⁶⁹ on one side, and the dashing sea on the other, and preventing all hope of escaping by running along the beach.

His eye followed hers, and he said, with a triumphant chuckle:

“Caged, my bird of paradise! Snared, my mountain eaglet! Trapped, my forest fairy! Won, my dauntless lady-love! Ha! ha! ha! Your ever-triumphant star has set, at last, my beautiful, black-eyed bride.”

Standing between her and all hope of escape, he ventured to relax his grasp for a moment, to aid in the search for something to bind her with. In one second, like a bolt from a bird, she darted forward, and with one wild, flying leap, impossible to anything but desperation, she sprung sheer into the foaming waters and vanished!

Vanished but for an instant. Pet could swim like a fish, or a cork, or a mermaid, or anything else you please, while Mr. Rozzel Garnet had as intense an aversion to cold water as a sufferer from hydrophobia. As quickly as she had disappeared did her black curls glitter above the white foam again, as she dauntlessly struck out for the shore.

She had not far to swim, and she buffeted the waves like a sea-goddess; so, while Mr. Rozzel Garnet stood stunned, speechless, paralyzed, she had gained the shore, fled as fast as her dripping clothes would permit her along the beach, rushed up the path, then back again on the rocks up above, until she stood directly over the spot where the foiled villain still remained, as if rooted to the ground, unable to comprehend which end he was standing on, to use a strong figure of speech.

“Hallo, Mr. Garnet! how do you find yourself?” shouted Pet, from above. “Oh my! how beautifully you did it! My stars! you ought to have a leather medal presented to you for catching girls you do it so cleverly.”

He turned and looked up; and there, in the dusk, bright starlight, he saw Pet all dripping like a Naiad, and her black eyes almost out-flashing the stars themselves.

“Curses light on her!” he hissed between his teeth.

“Thank you, Mr Garnet! Curses, like chickens, come home to roost, you know. Ah, you did it didn’t you?” said Pet, provokingly. “Don’t you wish you had me, though? It’s slippery work holding eels, and dangerous²⁷⁰ to play with exploding bombshells, and stinging occupation pulling nettles; but the coat-sleeves that try to hold me will find a harder and more dangerous job than any of them. Good-night, Mr. Rozzel Garnet, and pleasant dreams; and remember, when you next try to captivate me, that earth, air, fire, and water were never made to hold me.”

“Ah! you may triumph now it is your turn,” he said, looking up, livid with rage; “but mine will come yet! my time will come!”

“Well, it’s consoling to hear. I hope you’ll have a good time when it does come.” And with a taunting laugh, Pet darted off.

Little did either of them dream how closely that time was at hand.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AN UNLOOKED-FOR LOVER

“And yet this tough, impracticable heart
Is governed by a dainty-fingered girl.”

Rowe.

“There is a pleasure in being mad,
Which none but madmen know.”

Dryden.

Judge Lawless was pacing up and down the floor of his study with rapid, excited strides, his brows knit, his face flushed, his hands clenched, his teeth set, his whole look, attitude, and bearing, speaking of deepest, intensest excitement. When in profound or troubled thought, he had a habit (many have) of talking to himself unconsciously; and now he muttered, between his teeth:

“I am going mad! I am mad! bewitched! bewildered! To think that I, at my years, should fall in love like a boy of eighteen. I, who fancied I had outlived all such rubbish. But, oh that girl! that glorious girl! that angel of beauty! that transcendently radiant creature! that lovely, bewildering enchanting, intoxicating Erminie! Good heavens! how the very thought of her sets my head whirling! that electric Erminie! with her angel-smile and irradiated face! Who could help loving her? Not I, certainly, and yet it is only ²⁷¹ one short week since her return home. Oh, that I could win her to love me! Oh, to possess that love-angel! Oh, Erminie! Erminie!” And breathing out his very soul in the syllables of her name, he sunk into a chair, and leaned his throbbing head on his hand.

Judge Lawless had all his life computed himself as a grave, self-possessed, dignified gentleman; excessively proud, excessively unbending, and so calm and unimpassioned that it seemed a matter of doubt whether he was made of common flesh and blood or cast-iron. But now, at the mature age of five-and-forty, all his pride and dignity blew away, like a whiff of down on a blast, at the first glimpse of Erminie Germaine’s fair, sunshiny, blooming young face; and here he was, now, making a downright fool of himself as many another old gentlemen has done, is doing, and will continue to do, while the world goes round. Forgetting that he was nearly treble her age, forgetting his high position in the world and her lowly one, forgetting he was far more likely to be some day her father-in-law than her husband, forgetting everything, in a word, but that her beauty had turned his brain, Judge Lawless sat down to reflect on the best course to pursue in the present somewhat unsatisfactory state of affairs.

Judge Lawless was, as I told you, a grave, calm-pulsed gentleman, who considered himself as good, not to say considerably better, than any other man in the world, and held in the profoundest contempt the little corner of the world in which he lived, and its quiet, hum-drum inhabitants. Therefore, he heard Pet boisterously relating the arrival of Mr. and Miss Germaine with the greatest indifference, and without the remotest idea of

ever giving either of them another thought beyond a cool caution to Pet not to associate too freely with people of "that set"; but when, the next morning, riding past the Old Barrens Cottage on his way to Judestown, a vision met his eyes of such dazzling beauty that involuntarily he stood stock-still to gaze, Judge Lawless found that the only one in the world worth thinking of was one of "that set." There stood Erminie at the gate, in her trim, spotless muslin morning-dress, with her snowy linen collar and cuffs, looking as fresh, and pure, and fair, as the beautiful form they draped. The morning sunshine flashed in her²⁷² shining, waving, thick, soft hair, gilded the roses on her cheeks, kindled a brighter light in the large, soft, violet eyes, and lay like a friend's kiss on the full and rounded lips. Judge Lawless was spellbound, enchanted, bewildered, bedeviled, to use his own phrase. In all his life he had never seen so dazzling a beauty in all his life he had never expected to see anyone half so lovely again; and there he stood, gazing upon her like a man in a dream, quite unconscious that the young lady, whoever she was, might think this prolonged stare very strange, to say the least of it. But she did not think it very strange at all. She recognized him, of course; and thinking he was merely trying to identify her, she pushed open the gate, and came out to him with a blush and a smile, and, being always a little awed and afraid of his stately grandeur, held out her hand to him with a girlish timidity quite charming.

"I suppose you have forgotten me, sir," she said, lifting the irresistible violet eyes to his face. "I am Erminie Germaine."

"Little Erminie? Why, how prettily I mean, how well you are looking!" he said, taking the hand she offered, and holding it a much longer time than was strictly necessary. "Who would ever think! Why don't you come over to Heath Hill some time, Miss Germaine?"

"I have promised Miss Lawless to go and spend the day with her soon," said Erminie, embarrassed by his too-ardent gaze, and striving to withdraw her hand. "I hope she is well?"

"Who? Eh? Oh, yes! she's well. Come over to-morrow, Miss Germaine. I shall be very glad to see you."

"I thank you, sir; I shall be most happy to do so," replied Erminie, growing more and more embarrassed by his open, admiring gazes, and again trying to withdraw her hand. But the judge, quite unconsciously, held the little snowflake fast, and seemed inclined to commit petty larceny by keeping it altogether, while he gazed and gazed in the sweet, blushing face, with its waving hair and drooping eyes, and fell desperately and more desperately in love every moment.

"Won't you come in, Judge Lawless?" said Erminie, at last, confused by her situation, fearing to offend him, yet wishing to get away.

"Come in? Oh, yes to be sure!" exclaimed the judge, with alacrity. "I was just thinking of going in to see your grandmother. I hope she is quite well."

And the judge, who had never entered the cottage before, nor dreamed in the most remote way of ever doing so, actually got off his horse, tied him to a stake, and followed the surprised Erminie into the house. And then, forgetting Ketura, and his business in

Judestown, and all other sublunary things, in the presence of this enchanting maiden, there he remained for three mortal hours, until the unlooked-for entrance of Ray, who had been over the moor gunning, and now returned with a well-filled game-bag, looking happy, handsome, and with a powerful appetite. As his eye fell upon their strange guest, he started, colored slightly, and then bowed with cold hauteur. Judge Lawless returned it with one no less stiff; for though in love with the sister, it by no means followed he was very passionately enamored of the brother. And then discovering, to his horror, that the whole morning was gone, he rode off, followed by the haunting vision of a sweet young face, with waving, floating hair, and dark, lustrous, violet eyes.

And from that hour may be dated the “decline and fall” of Judge Lawless.

His business was given up for visits to the cottage; his family concerns were neglected for day-dreams that, however excusable in youths with faintly-sprouting mustaches, were quite absurd in a dark, dignified, “potent, grave, and reverend seigneur” like Judge Adolphus Lawless. But when love comes in at the door, sense flies out at the window, to change the adage a little, and especially where gentlemen on the disagreeable side of forty are concerned. So Judge Lawless was deaf, blind and dumb to that awful bugbear, “They say,” and might have been seen at the cottage morning, noon, and night, to the utter amazement and complete astonishment of all who knew him, and to none more so than to his blue-eyed inflammation of the heart herself. Erminie was at a loss completely at a loss, and so was Ray. Neither of them dreamed no one dreamed that the pompous, haughty Prince Grandison of a Judge Lawless could have fallen in love at all, much less with the little, obscure cottage-girl, Erminie Germaine tainted, as she was, by that great²⁷⁴est of all crimes, poverty. Obscure, I said; let me retract that word. Erminie Germaine beautiful Erminie was known and celebrated far beyond Old Barrens Cottage for her beauty, and goodness, and gentleness, and all the other qualities that make some women a little lower than the angels. But no one thought that on a heart of flint like his or, rather, no heart at all the Venus de Medicis herself, should she step out alive from her pedestal, could make the slightest impression; and therefore, though our Erminie was every bit as good-looking as that scantily-draped lady of whom the world raves, though she had grown to be another Helen for whom another Troy might have been lost, no one set his visits to the cottage down to her, but rather to eccentricity, to some scheme, to some inexplicable notion, to anything at all but to the real cause.

And so Judge Lawless was in love, and unsuspected. And as he sat there in his library, with his head in his hand, thinking and pondering, and revolving, and wondering, on the best method of bringing matters to a crisis, and astonishing his friends, his intention was to raise Miss Germaine to the dignity of his wife. Judge Lawless was severely moral; but how to propose that was the trying horn of the dilemma. Judge Lawless was not accustomed to proposing; he had not attempted it for the last five-and-twenty years, and then the lady had saved him the trouble. Mrs. Lawless had been a wild young heiress, who fell violently in love with the “sweet” curling hair and “divine” whiskers of the handsome young lawyer, and not being troubled with that disagreeable disease incident

to most very young ladies, yclept bashfulness, had, like a girl of honor, come to the point at once, and, in a very composed, upright, and downright way, tendered him her hand and fortune. The ambitious young lawyer, nothing loth, took her at her word, and, one fine moonlight night, a fourth-story window was opened, a rope-ladder put in requisition; then a carriage; then a parson; then a ring, and “Adolphus Lawless, barrister at law,” as his shingle then announced him, was wooed and won.

But this was quite another thing. He was in love now, which he hadn’t been the first time; and love makes the boldest warrior that ever clove helmets and heads in battle²⁷⁵ as timid as aI was going to say girl; but I won’t, for in such a case, they are not timid at allbut as a newly-fledged gosling. Not that he feared a refusal. Judge Lawless drew himself up until his pantaloons-straps cracked, and looked indignantly in the glass at himself for entertaining such an idea an instant. But he didn’t know the formulathat was it. Things had changed so since he was a garçon, and the manner of popping the question might have changed with the rest. It would never do to make himself ridiculous; though, as the thought crossed his mind, he drew himself up again to the full extent of his six feet, odd inches, and felt indignant at the notion of his being ridiculous under any circumstances whatever.

“Have her I must, come what will!” he said, getting up again, and resuming his : pace up and down the floor. “I am mad about that girl, I believe. The world may laugh and sneer at the idea of my marrying awell, a pauper, in point of fact, when I could win, if I chose, the highest in the land. Well, let them. If Judge Lawless cannot do as he pleases, I should like to know who can. I have wealth enough to do us both; the old admiral will leave his estate and bank-stock to Ranty and Pet, and, h’m-m-m, ah!Yes, have her I mustthat’s settled. And this very afternoon shall I ride over, and let her know the honor in store for her!”

And that very afternoon, true to his promise, Judge Lawless, arrayed in a somber, dignified suit of black, with his hair and whiskers oiled and scented to that extent that his fast mare, Wildfire, lifted up her head and looked at him in grave astonishment, and inwardly resolved to keep a wary eye on her master for the future, lest he should take to dandyism in his old age, made his way to Old Barrens Cottage.

Arriving at the cottage, he fastened his mare, and rapped at the cottage-door with his riding-whip, in a grand and important sort of way befitting the occasion. Erminie herself opened it; and, at sight of her beautiful, rounded form, the taper waist, the swelling bust, the white, rounded throat, on which the graceful little head was poised with the queenly air of a royal princess; the waving, sunshiny hair, the smiling lips, the soft tender, violet eyes, Judge Lawless²⁷⁶ was twice, and thrice, as deeply, and irretrievably, and desperately in love as ever.

He came in. Erminie was alone. How he thanked the gods for that! took a seat, stood his cane in the corner, laid his hat on the table, drew out a snowy cambric handkerchief, redolent of musk, eau de cologne, ottar of roses, and bergamot, from one of those intensely mysterious pockets gentlemen, for some inscrutable reason, wear in their coat-

tails, blew his nose, replaced his handkerchief, laid a hand on each knee, looked at Erminie, and prepared her for what was coming by a loud “ahem!”

Erminie, whose rosy fingers were flying, as if by stress, on some article of dress, did not look up; so all these significant preparations, proper to be done, and which are always done, I believe, whenever elderly men go to propose, were quite thrown away upon her.

“Ahem!” repeated the judge, with some severity, and yet looking with longing eyes at the graceful form and sweet drooping face before him, “Miss Erminie!”

She looked up inquiringly, with a smile.

“Ahem!” The stately judge was rather embarrassed. “Perhaps, Miss Germaine, you are not in utter ignorance ofahemof the object of my visits here. I have revolved the matter over in all its bearings, and have come to the conclusion thatahem!that I am at perfect liberty to please myself in this matter. The world may wonder no doubt it will; but I trust I have wisdom enough to direct my own actions; and though it may stare, it cannot but admire the person Iahem!I have chosen!”

The judge made a dead halt, drew out his handkerchief again, until the air would have reminded you of “Ceylon’s spicy breezes,” and shifted his left leg over his right, and then his right one over his left. Erminie, not understanding one word of this valedictory, had dropped her work, and sat looking at him, with wide-open eyes.

“In short, therefore, Miss Germaine, we will, if you please, consider the matter settled; and you will greatly oblige me by naming the earliest possible day for the ceremony.”

“The ceremony! What ceremony, sir?” said the puzzled Erminie, looking prettier than ever in her perplexity.

“Why, our marriage, to be sure!”

“Our marriage?”

“Certainly, my love. The earlier the day, the sooner my happiness will be complete!”

And the judge raised her hand to his lips, with the stately formality of five-and-twenty years before, fearing to venture any further; for there was a look in the sweet, wondering eyes that made him rather uneasy.

“Judge Lawless, excuse me. I do not know what you mean. I fear I have misunderstood you,” said Erminie, more perplexed than she ever was before in the whole course of her life.

“Misunderstood me? Impossible, Miss Germaine! I have used the plainest possible language, I think, in asking you to be my wife!”

“Your wife?”

“Yes, my wife! Why this surprise, dear girl? Why, Erminie! Good heavens, Erminie! is it possible you really have not understood me all this time? Why, dearest, fairest girl, I love youI wish you to be my wife! Do you understand now?”

He would have passed his arm around her waist; but, crimson with burning blushes, she sprung to her feet, a vivid light in her beautiful eyes, and raised her hand to wave him off.

"You are mocking me, Judge Lawless! If you have had your amusement, we will drop the subject."

"Mocking you, my beautiful Erminie! I swear to you I love you with all my heart and soul! Only make me happy, by saying you will be my wife!"

The conviction that he was really serious, now for the first time dawned upon Erminie's mind. The rosy tide flooded neck and brow again, and she dropped her flushed face in her hands, as she remembered he was Ranty's father.

"I am not surprised that you should wonder at my choice," said the judge, complacently.

"Of course the world expects I should marry a woman of rank; but I like you, and am determined to please myself, let them wonder as they will!"

Erminie's hands dropped from her face, crimson now, but not with embarrassment; her eyes flashed with the fiery²⁷⁸ spirit of the old De Courcys, as she drew herself up to her full height, and calmly said:

"I will spare you the humiliation, and your friends the trouble of wondering at your choice. For the honor you have done me, I thank you, even while I must decline it."

"Decline it!" The judge sat aghast.

Erminie compressed her lips, and silently bowed. She stood there like a young queen, her proud little head erect, her fair cheeks scarlet, her eyes darkening and darkening, until they seemed almost black.

"Decline it!" The judge, in his amazement, was a sight to see.

"Yes, sir."

"Miss Germaine, I'm thunderstruck! I'm confounded! I am utterly confounded! Miss Germaine, you do not mean it; you cannot mean it! it's impossible you can mean it! Refuse me! Oh, it is utterly impossible you can mean it!"

"On the contrary, wonderful as it seems, I must distinctly and unequivocally decline the honor." And Erminie's look of calm determination showed her resolution was not to be shaken. Judge Lawless rose to his feet and confronted her. Indignation, humiliation, anger, wounded pride, mortification, jealousy, and a dozen other disagreeable feelings, flushing his face until its reflection fairly imparted a rosy hue to his snow-white shirt bosom.

"Miss Germaine, am I to understand that you refuse to to marry me?"

"Decidedly, sir."

"May I ask your reason for this refusal, Miss Germaine?"

"I recognize no right by which you are privileged to question me, Judge Lawless, but because of the respect I owe one so much my senior, I will say that, first, I do not love you; second, even if I did, I would not marry one who looks upon me as so far beneath him; and third" She paused, caught his eye fixed upon her, and colored more vividly than before.

"Well, Miss Germaine, and third," he said, sarcastically.

"I will answer no more such questions, Judge Lawless," she said, with proud indignation; "and I repeat it once again, I cannot be your wife."

"That remains to be seen, Miss Germaine. There are more ways than one of winning a lady; I have tried one, and failed; now I shall have recourse to another."

"Judge Lawless, is that meant as a threat?" said Erminie, her proud De Courcy blood flushing in her cheeks and lighting up her eyes again.

He smiled slightly, but made no other reply, as he took his hat and cane and prepared to go.

"Once again, Miss Erminie, before I go, I ask you if your mind is fully made up to reject me?"

The darkening, streaming light of the violet eyes fixed full upon him was his only answer, as she stood drawn up to her full height.

"Good-morning, then," he said, with a courteous smile. "I do not despair, even yet. Time works wonders, you know, Miss Germaine. Give my best regards to your excellent grandmother." And with a stately bow, a la Grandison, the judge left the cottage, and the light of the dark, indignant, beautiful eyes.

But once on his horse, and galloping like mad over the heath, a change wonderful to see came over the bland face of the judge. Dark and darker it grew, thicker and thicker was his scowl, angrier and angrier became his eyes, until his face looked like a human thunder-cloud.

"The proud, conceited, impertinent minx!" he burst out, "to refuse mememe, Judge Lawless. Why, she must be mad! By heaven! she shall be mine yet, if only to teach her a lesson. Black Bart is in Judestown. I saw him yesterday; and he, with his fellow-smugglers, or pirates, or freebooters, or whatever they are, shall aid me in this. It does not sound well, to be sure, for a judge of the land to tacitly favor smuggling, but then those contraband wines and brandies would tempt St. Peter himself. They shall do a different kind of smuggling for me this time. In the Hidden Cave Madame Erminie will be safe enough, and that queen of the smugglers, or whatever she is, can take care of her. Refuse me! by the hosts above, that girl shall repent her temerity! This very day I will see Black Bart, and then"

He compressed his lips tight, and his face assumed a look of dark, grim determination, that showed his resolution was unalterable.

And meanwhile Erminie, with her fair face bowed in her hands, was weeping the bitterest tears she had ever shed in her life.

CHAPTER XXIX

MR TOOSYPEGS IN DISTRESS AGAIN

The time I've lost in wooing,
In watching and pursuing
The light that lies in woman's eyes,
Has been my heart's undoing.
Though wisdom oft has sought me,
I scorned the love she brought me;
My only books were woman's looks.
And folly's all they've taught me.
Moore.

Admiral Harry Havenful sat alone in the parlor of the White Squall, the heels of his boots elevated on the knobs of the andirons, his chair tipped back to that sublime angle which women admire, but men only understand. A long meerschaum, with an amber mouth-piece, protruded from his lips, while whiffs of blue, vapory smoke curled from the corner of his mouth; his hands stuck in his trousers pockets, and his eyes fixed admiringly on the pink and yellow ship-of-war on the mantel. Admiral Harry Havenful was enjoying life hugely on a small scale, when a dispirited knock, such as moneyless debtors give, was heard at the outer door.

"Tumble up, below there! tumble up, ahoy-y-y!" roared the admiral, taking the pipe from his mouth to summon the servants.

In compliance with this zephyr-like request, one of the darkeys "tumbled up," accordingly, and on opening the door, Mr. O. C. Toosypegs stalked in, and with the head of his cane in his mouth, entered the parlor and presented himself to the jolly little admiral.

"D'ye do, Orlando? give us your flipper," said the admiral, protruding one huge hand without rising, or even turning his head, merely casting a glance over his shoulder, and smoking on as placidly as before.

"I'm very wellthat is, I ain't very well at all, Admiral Havenful, I'm very much obliged to you," said Mr. Toosypegs, grasping the huge hand and wriggling it faintly a second or two. "My health ain't so good as it might be, and I don't expect it ever will be again, but I'm resigned to that and everything else that may happen. It's nasty to be always complaining, you know, Admiral Havenful."

"That's so," growled the admiral, in a tone so deeply bass that it was quite startling.

"Therefore, Admiral Havenful, though I ain't so well as I might be, I'm very well indeed, I'm very much obliged to you. It must be nice to die and have no more botherdon't you think so, Admiral Havenful?" said Mr. Toosypegs, with a groan so deep that the admiral took his pipe from his mouth and stared at him.

"What now?" grunted the admiral, who foresaw something was coming; "heave to!"

“Admiral Havenful, would you be so good as not to say that? You mean well, I know, but you can’t imagine the unpleasant sensations it causesugh!” said Mr. Toosypegs, with a wry face and a shudder. “You never were sea-sick, were you, Admiral Havenful? If you were, you don’t require to be told the pang that hearing that inflicts upon me. Therefore, please don’t say it again, for it gives me the most peculiar sensations that even was.”

The admiral grunted, and began smoking away like an ill-repaired chimney. Mr. Toosypegs sat uneasily on the edge of his chair, and continued to make a light and rather unsatisfactory repast off the head of his cane. Thus a mournful silence was continued for some fifteen or twenty minutes, and then the admiral took his pipe from his mouth, wiped it on the cuff of his sleeve, and without looking at Mr. Toosypegs, drew a long, placid breath, and held it out toward him with a laconic:

“Smoke?”

“Thankee, Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs, mournfully, “I never do.”

“More fool you, then,” said the admiral, gruffly, putting it in his own mouth again.

“Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs, in a large tone of voice, “I’m aware that I ain’t so wise as some of my282 friends could wish me; but, at the same time let me assure you that I don’t consider it a proof of wisdom to smoke at all. Smokers mean real well, I know, but it’s unpleasant to others, besides setting the in’ards in a dingy state, blacking the teeth, adulterating the breath, and often producing spontaneous combustion. Which means, Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs, elevating his cane to make the explanation, “getting worked up to a high degree of steam, and going off quite unexpected and promiscuous, some day, with a bang, and leaving nothing behind to tell the melancholy tale but a pinch of ashes, and that”

“Oh, bother!” cut in the admiral, impatiently, “Belay your jawing tackle, young man, and let somebody else have sea-room. What port do you hail from last?”

“Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs, in no way offended at this cavalier mode of treating his digression on the evils of smoking, “if you mean by that where I was all morning, I’ve just come from Dismal Hollow. Aunt Prisciller wasn’t inwell, she wasn’t in very good spiritsand so I got out of the back door and come away. I was going to Old Barrens Cottage, only I saw Judge Lawless’ horse before the door, and so I came here.”

“Always welcome, Orlando, boyalways welcome,” said the admiral, briskly. “But hold on a minute! What the dickens brings that stiff bowspirit of a brother-in-law of mine so often to that cottage? Eh, Orlando?”

“I don’t know, I’m sure, Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs. “It’s real singular, too, because he never used to go there at all, and now his horse is at the door every day.”

“So’s yours, for that matter. Hey, Orlando?”

Mr. Toosypegs blushed to the very roots of his hair, and shifted his feet uneasily over the floor, as though it burnt them.

“Orlando,” said the admiralholding his pipe between his finger and thumb, and regarding significantly these emotions“Orlando, I see breakers ahead!”

“Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs, in a tone of mingled uneasiness and anguish, “I dare say you do; but, my gracious! don’t keep looking at a fellow so! I couldn’t help it, you know; and I know it’s all my own²⁸³ fault to be miserable for life. I don’t blame anybody at all, and I rather like being miserable for life than otherwise. I know you mean well, but I’d rather you wouldn’t keep looking at me so. I’m very much obliged to you.”

“Orlando,” solemnly began the admiral, without removing his eyes from the other’s face, “you’re steering out of your course altogether. Come to anchor! Now, then, what’s to pay?”

The unexpected energy with which this last question was asked had such an effect on the nerves of Mr. O. C. Toosypegs, that he gave a sudden jump, suggestive of sitting down on an upturned pin cushion, and grasped his stick in wild alarm.

“Now, Orlando,” repeated the admiral, with a wave of his pipe “now, Orlando, the question is, what’s to pay?”

“Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs in terror, “there ain’t nothing to pay; I don’t owe a cent in the world, s’elp me Bob! I don’t owe a single blamed brass farthing to a child unborn!”

“Pah!” said the admiral, with a look of intense disgust at his obtuseness, “I didn’t mean that. I want to know what’s up, where the wind sits; what you keep cruising off and on that cottage for all the time. Now, then, hold hard!”

“It’s my intention to hold hard, Admiral Havenful,” replied Mr. Toosypegs, blushing like a beet-root. “But I’d rather not mention what takes me there, if it’s all the same to you. It’s a secret, locked deep in the unfathomable recesses of this here bosom; and I never mean to reveal it to anybody till I’m a melancholy corpse in the skies. You’ll excuse me, Admiral Havenful; a fellow can’t always restrain his tears, you know; and I feel so miserable, thank you, of late, that it’s a consolation even to cry,” said Mr. Toosypegs, wiping his eye.

“Now, Orlando, you just hold on a minutewill you?” said the admiral, facing briskly round, with much the same air as an unfeeling dentist who determines to have your tooth out whether you will or not; “now, look here and let’s do things ship-shape. Has our Firefly got anything to do with it?”

“Admiral Havenful, I’m happy to say she has not. I felt²⁸⁴ pretty badly about Miss Pet, there, one time; but I have got nicely over that. It wasn’t near so dangerous as I expected it would be; but thisthis is. The way I feel sometimes, Admiral Havenful, is awful to contemplate. I can’t sleep nor eat, and I don’t take no pleasure even in my new pantaloons with the blue stripe down the side. I often lie awake nights crying now, and I wish I had never been born! I do wish it!” said Mr. Toosypegs, with a sudden howl. “Where’s the good of it, if a fellow’s going to be made miserable this way, I want to know?”

“Orlando Toosypegs,” said the admiral, rising, sternly, “just look here, will you? I’m not going to stand this sort of talk, you knowthis flying in the face of Providence”here the

admiral raised his glazed hat, and looked reverently at a blue-bottle fly on the ceiling“because it’s not proper nor ship-shape, nohow you can fix it. Now, Orlando, I’ve advised you time and againI’ve been a father to you before you was the size of a tar-bucketI’ve turned you up and spanked you when you wasn’t big as a well-grown marlin-spike, and I’ve often given you a good kicking when you were older, for your shortcomings; I’ve talked to you, Orlando Toosypegs, for your good till all was blueI’ve made myself as hoarse as a boatswain splashing showers of good advice on you; and now what’s my return? You say you don’t see no use in being born. Orlando, it grieves meit makes me feel as bad as if I had drank a pail of bilge-water; but there is no help for it! I give you up to ruinI’ve lost all faith in human moralsI wash my hands of you altogether!”

Here the admiral looked around for some water to literally fulfill his threat; but, seeing none, he wiped his hands on the table-cloth, and resumed his seat with the air a Spartan father may be supposed to have worn when condemning his own son to death.

So deeply affected was Mr. Toosypegs by this pathetic exhortation that he sobbed away like a hyena in his flaring bandanna, with a great noise and much wiping of eyes and nose, which showed he was not lost to all sense of human feeling.

“Yes, Orlando,” said the admiral, mournfully, “I repeat it, I’m determined to wash my hands of you. The basin ain’t²⁸⁵ here; but it’s no matter. Your father was a nice man, and I’m sorry his son ever come to this.”

“Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs, hiccoughing violently, “I’m ashamed of myself. I oughtn’t to have said it and I won’t do so no more at any price. I knowI know I oughtn’t mind being wretched, but somehow I do, and I can’t help it. If you’ll only forgive me, and not wash your hands of me, I’ll tell you what’s the matter and promise to try and do better for the time to come.”

“Well, heave ahead!” said the somewhat mollified mariner.

“Admiral Havenful!” exclaimed Mr. Toosypegs, springing to his feet with such startling energy that the old sailor jumped up, too, and brandished his pipe, expecting a violent personal assault and battery“will you be good enough not to say that? Oh, my gracious!” exclaimed Mr. Toosypegs, in a wildly-distracted tone, “if it ain’t too darned bad. Ugh!”

And with a violent shudder and a sea-green visage, the unhappy young man sat down, with one hand on his mouth and the other on his dinner.

With a violent snort of unspeakable contempt, the admiral flung himself back in his chair, and turned up his Roman nose to the highest possible angle of scorn.

“Excuse me, Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs, at length, in a fainting voice, “I feel better, now. It was soso sudden, and took me so unexpected, thatthat it rather startled me; but I’m quite well now. I’m very much obliged to you. Ugh! The very mention ofyou know what follows sea-sicknessturns my very skin to goose-flesh. We won’t speak of it any more, if it’s all the same to you, Admiral Havenful. I promised to tell you the cause of my miserydidn’t I? Yes? Well, it’sit’s Miss Minnie.”

“Little Snowflake! heaI mean go ahead.”

“I went and fell in love with her, Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs, looking around blushing.

“Stand from under!” growled the bewildered admiral.

“Admiral Havenful, it’s my intention to stand from under as much as possible. I’m very much obliged to you,” said Mr. Toosypegs, politely. “I dare say you’re surprised to hear it, but I really couldn’t help it. I assure you she was286 soso stunning, so asI don’t know what to call it; but it’s enough to turn a fellow crazy, by granny! I know she don’t care a pin for me. I know she don’t, and nobody can tell the state it throws me into. I thought I felt dreadfully about Miss Pet’s black eyes, and I did, too; but it ain’t no circumstance to the state Miss Minnie’s blue ones pitches me into. Admiral Havenful, I don’t expect you’ve ever been in love, but it’s the most awful state to be in ever was. It makes you feel worse than sitting down into a wasp’s nestit really does. In fact, I don’t know anything, except, perhaps, sea-sickness, that’s equal to it in unpleasantness.”

So completely unexpected was this declaration, that the admiral so far forgot himself as to look appealingly at his pipe and growl out, “Heave ahead!”

The effect of this command on Mr. Toosypegs, in his present disordered state of mind was perfectly electrifying. Springing to his feet, he seized his hat and cane, clapped his bandanna to his mouth, and, with a look of intense anguish no pen can describe, made a rush from the door, fled from the house, and vanished for the remainder of that day from mortal eye.

CHAPTER XXX

MISS LAWLESS IN DIFFICULTIES

“The hypocrite had left his mask, and stood
In naked ugliness. He was a man
Who stole the livery of the court of Heaven
To serve the devil in.”

Pollock.

Three hours after his interview and rejection by Erminie, Judge Lawless alighted at the inn-door in Judestown. The obsequious landlord came out all bows and smiles to greet the grand seignor of this rustic town, and ushered him into the parlor with as much, and considerably more, respect than he would have shown to the king of England, had that gentleman condescended to visit the “Judestown House,” as the flaming gilt sign-board announced it to be.

“Glass wine, sir? brandy water, sir? s’gar, sir? anything you want, sir?” insinuated mine host, all in a breath.

“No, my good man, I want nothing,” said the judge, with a pompous wave of his jeweled hand; “I have come on important business this afternoon. Is there a somewhat dissipated character, a sailor, called BlackBlackreally I”

“Bart, sir? Yes, sir. Here five minutes ’go sir,” breathlessly cut in the landlord.

“Ah!” said the judge, slowly, passing his hand over his mustache; “can you find him for me? I wish to see him. I have reason to believe he can give me some information concerning these smugglers who of late have alarmed the good people around here so much.”

“Yes, sir, hunt him up five minutes sir.” And off bustled the host of the Judestown House in search of Black Bart.

Judge Lawless arose with knit brows and began pacing excitedly up and down the room when alone. He knew this Black Bart well, knew all about the smugglers, too, as his well-stocked cellar could testify. Judge Lawless found them very useful in various ways and having a remarkably elastic conscience of his own was troubled with no scruples about cheating the revenue, so long as his wine-bin was well supplied. But this was abductionsomething more dangerous, something that required all his wounded self-love, and disappointed passion, and intense mortification to give him courage for. But his plans were formed. For money he knew Black Bart and his comrades would do anything, and money Judge Lawless had in plenty.

Half an hour passed. The judge began to cast many an impatient glance toward the door, when a bold, vigorous knock was heard. Knocks are very expressive to those who understand them; they speak as plainly as words; and this one was given with a loud, surly independence, that said, just as plainly as lips could speak: “I am as good a man as you are, Judge Lawless, and I don’t care a curse for you or all the revenue officers from

here to Land's End." Judge Lawless understood it, and throwing himself into a chair, he called out, blandly:

"Come in."

The door opened, and a short, thick-set, weather-beaten, grim-looking old sea-dog made his appearance, and giving his head a slight jerk to one side, by way of acknowledging²⁸⁸ the judge's presence, walked straight up to the fireplace, and deliberately spit a discharge of tobacco-juice right into the eyes of an unoffending cat, by way of commencing business. Then turning his back to the mantel, he put his hands behind him, crossed his feet, and stood ready to commence operations.

"Well, square, what's in the wind now?" demanded the new-comer, at length, seeing the judge did not seem inclined to speak.

"Bart," said the judge, in a low, cautious tone, "I have a job for you."

"All right I'm there! what's it, square? Anything in the old line?"

"No; this is something quite different. How long do you remain here this time?"

"Can't say for certain, boss. The schooner's off a-repairin' and we're tryin' the land dodge till she's ready again! no telling though, yet, when that may be."

"Is that woman who accompanies you here likewise?"

"Cap'n's wife? Well, yes, square, I reckon she is. What do you want of her?"

"I want her to take charge of a young girl that you must carry off. Do you understand?"

"Forcible 'duction, 'saultin' and batterin.' Come, square, you're goin' it strong."

"Speak lower, for heaven's sake! Will you undertake to do this for me?"

"If you make it worth while! Fork over the needful, and I'm there!"

"Money you shall have; but do you think this woman will undertake to look after the girl?"

"See here, square; don't say 'this woman.' Call her the cap'n's lady sounds better. Oh, she's got nothing to do with it; she's got to mind the cap'n. Who's the gal?"

"Sh-sh! not so loud, man! Do you know the cottage on the Barrens, between Dismal Hollow and Heath Hill?"

"Like a book. Why, square, it's not that beauty they talk about here: Miss Missdanged if I don't forget the name?"

"Never mind the name it's of no consequence. She's the girl. Do you know her?"

"Hain't the honor; but one of our crew, a sort of dry-water sailor, knows her; I'll bring him along, and everything will go off like a new broom."

"You must be careful to not mention my name not even to her; because it would be a dreadful thing for me if this were found out."

"Don't be scary, square, I'll be as close as a clam at high water. When do you want us to captivate the little dear?"

"To-night any time the sooner the better!"

"Will you be on hand yourself, square?"

"No! To avoid the faintest shadow of suspicion though such is not likely to rest on me in any case I will start for Baltimore immediately, within the very hour, and there remain

till all the hubbub her disappearance causes has passed away. You will keep her securely in your hidden cave all the time; and when the excitement has died out I will come and relieve you of your charge.”

“You’re a brick, square you are, by Lord Harry! What will be your next dodge, then?”

“That’s as may be; most probably I shall take her with me to England. That’s to be thought of yet, however; but I’ll find a way, never fear.”

“Square, they ought to ’lect you to the Senatedang my buttons if they oughtn’t! When I get unseaworthy I’m going to set up for myself; can lie and fight, and roar at ’tagonists like a brick; and got all the other qualifications, too numerous to mention.”

And with this slander on senators in general, Black Bart clapped half a plug of tobacco in the other cheek, and indulged in a quiet chuckle.

“Well, that’s all, I believe,” said the judge, rising. “You think you will know this girl when you see her?”

“I won’t’t’other one will trust me, square; I’ll go off and see him now, and him and me will take a stroll round that way.”

“If she could be inveigled from the house after night it would be the best time and way,” said the judge, musingly.

“Leave all them particulars to me, square: I’ll fix things up about the tallest. When’s the needful to come?”

“When I return. You know me. Now, Bart, remember, to-night if you can; in three or four weeks at the furthest, I will return.”

The judge turned and left the room, mounted his horse and rode off. Black Bart hitched up his pantaloons, and then fell back in a chair, snapping his fingers, flourishing his heels, and indulging in such tremendous roars of laughter that the landlord rushed in, in deadly alarm, to see what awful calamity had happened.

But still Black Bart gave vent to such appalling laughter-claps, without speaking, throwing himself back as if his spine was made of steel springs, and then jerking himself straight again, kicking his heels, snapping his finger and thumb, and indulging in such extraordinary antics of delight, that Boniface, completely at a loss, stood staring at him in silent wonder, thinking the judge’s communication, whatever it might have been, had completely turned his brain.

“There, Bart, be quiet now,” said the host, soothingly. “You’re scaring the people in the shop out of their wits. What’s the matter with you, anyway?”

“Nothing!” replied Black Bart, going off into another roar, more deafening, if possible, than the first.

“Well, I must say ‘nothing’ seems to be rather funny,” said the puzzled landlord. “Was the judge pumping you about the smugglers?”

“Oh, Lord, don’t!” shouted the sailor with such a yell of laughter, and putting himself into such frightful contortions of delight that the startled host stepped back and grasped the handle of the door with an alarmed glance toward his strange customer.

"I'm off now," said Bart at length, as soon as he had recovered from this last paroxysm; and wiping the tears from his eyes, he started at a Flora Temple pace down the street, pausing, however, now and then, as his lively sense of the ridiculous overcame him, to indulge in another terrifying peal of laughter, till affrighted pedestrians fled from him in horror, thinking a dangerous lunatic had somewhere broken loose.

He reached a low, smoky, obscure drinking den, near the end of the town, at last, and passing through the bar-room he entered another low, dirty, dingy apartment, where the first individual on whom his eyes rested, was our some-time friend, Mr. Rozzel Garnet.

"Well, Bart," asked that gentleman, eagerly, "what did Judge Lawless want of you in such haste?"

"Oh! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!" roared Black Bart, in a perfect agony of enjoyment. "If it isn't about the best fun I've ever heard tell on. Why, man alive, you'd never guess if you were to try from this to doomsday. Judge Lawless, the saint, the angel, the parson, has fell in love, and wants the girl carried off! Oh! ha! ha! ha! ha! I'll split my sides!"

Mr. Rozzel Garnet did not join in Black Bart's merriment. He opened his eyes to their widest extent, and indulged in a long, low whistle, expressive of any amount of astonishment.

"Who's the girl?" he asked, at length.

"That wonderful beauty at Old Barrens Cottagenothing shorter. Everything arranged, and the square will come down like a princeor if he doesn't, we'll make him. I don't know her; so you're to come with me, and together we'll carry off the girl the first chance. The judge has gone to Baltimore to keep out of harm's way, and won't be back for three or four weeks. Ain't it beautiful? The old judge in love! Ha! ha! ha!"

Like lightning there flashed a project of revenge across the mind of Rozzel Garnet. None of the smugglers knew either Erminie or Pet Lawlesswhy not carry off Pet instead of the other, and thus gratify his own passions, disappoint the judge, and have revenge. The blood flashed fiercely and hotly to his face as he thought of it; and he rose and walked to the window to hide his emotion from the keen eyes of his fellow-smugglerfor Garnet had joined them in their roving life after leaving the judge's.

"Well, old fellow, what do you say to it?" asked Black Bart.

"I'm your man!" exclaimed Garnet, turning from the window, all his customary cool composure restored. "We will start immediately, and keep watch until night; it is more than probable we will see her before then, and, as the judge says, the sooner the better. Come along."

Had Petronilla's lucky star set? had her good angel deserted her? had Satan come to the assistance of his earthly myrmidons? had the Fates willed it, that her pony "Starlight" should on that eventful day cast a shoe, lame himself, and so be unfit to ride?

Pet rambled restlessly about the house, one minute terrifying rooks, and bats, and swallows from their homes in the eaves and chimneys, by banging away at some new polka on the piano; the next, seizing the bellows for a partner, and going waltzing round

the room; the next, rushing like a mad thing as she was, up stairs, and then sliding down the banisters.

“For,” said Pet, “exercise is good for the health; and as Aunt Deb won’t let me ride the clothes-horse, I’m going to try this.”

And try it she did, till she tore the dress nearly off her back; and then, getting tired of this, she determined to go over to the Old Barrens Cottage, and see Erminie.

The day was beautiful; so Pet determined to walk. Throwing a light muslin cape over her shoulders, and pulling a broad straw flat down over her eyes, the dark-eyed “heiress, beauty, and belle,” set out, singing as she went.

Somehow, since the return of Ray, Pet had visited the cottage much less frequently than usual and in all probability would not have gone now, only she knew he had gone to Judestown that morning and was not expected back until the next day. Pet saw that he shunned and avoided her: and no matter how easy and natural he had been a moment before, the instant she entered he wrapped himself in his very coldest mantle of reserve, and looked more like a banished prince than common Christian. Pet saw this; and her own heart, as proud as his in another way, swelled with wounded feeling and indignation; and she inwardly vowed to let him see that she cared just as little for him as he could possibly care for her. Poor Pet! this conviction and resolution cost her the first bitter tears she had ever shed in her whole sunshiny life; but as she felt them falling warm and fast, she sprung quickly up, dashed them indignantly away, as if ashamed to own even to her own heart how much she cared for him.

“No; he shall never know that I cared two pins about him!” exclaimed Pet, with flashing eyes and flushing cheeks. “He dislikes me; I can see that plainly enough; and if he was a prince of the blood royal, I would not stoop to sue for his favor. I don’t care for him; I won’t care for him. I just hate him a stiff, haughty, young Turk there now!”

And then having relieved her mind by a “real good cry,” Pet got up and whistled to her dogs, and set off for a scamper round the yard, to the great detriment of her gaiters, and the alarming increase of her appetite. Pet wasn’t sentimental; so she neither took to sighing nor star-gazing, nor writing poetry; but pursued the even, or rather uneven, tenor of her way, and inwardly vowed that, “if nobody cared for her, she would care for nobody.”

Little did Pet know the real cause of Ray’s avoidance. High-spirited and proud, almost morbid in his pride at times, and loving this dazzling, sparkling vision of beauty and brightness more and more every time he saw her, he felt it his duty to shun her as much as possible. To know this star-eyed, dazzling, dancing fay without loving her was a simple impossibility; and Ray Germaine, with his passionate admiration of beauty, and fiery gipsy blood, loved her with an intensity that only hot, passionate, Southern natures like his can feel. And with this mad love was the certain conviction that he might as well love a “bright, particular star,” and hope to win it, as the wealthy heiress of Judge Lawless, who was soon destined to make her *début* in the gilded salons of Washington city, where all the lions of the capital would soon be in adoration at her feet. And hewhat

was he? The grandson of a gipsy woman, educated by the bounty of a stranger. What was he that he should dare to lift his eyes to this peerless beauty and belle? Proud, as we have said he was, to excess, he shunned and avoided her for whom he would have given up the wide world and all it contained, has he possessed it, lest in some unguarded moment he should divulge the one secret of his fierce and daily increasing love.

And in this unpleasant way matters stood on the day when Pet set out from Heath Hill to Old Barrens Cottage. Pet was a good walker; but, owing to the intense heat, she was completely tired out by the time she reached the cottage. Erminie alone was there, ready to welcome her friend with her own peculiar sunshiny smile.

It was very pleasant, that cool, breezy sitting-room, that scorchingly hot day, with its plain straw matting, its cool, green, Venetian blinds, its plump, tempting, cushioned rocking-chairs, and fragrant bouquets of flowers in glasses of pure, sparkling water. But the prettiest, pleasantest sight of all was its lovely young mistress in her simple, beautifully-fitting dress of blue gingham, with its snowy collar and little black silk apron boasting the cunningest pockets in the world; her shiny hair floating twined in broad damp braids round her superb little head; and where the sunshine lingered lovingly upon it, seeming like a shining glory over her smooth white brow. Yes, it was very pleasant the pretty cottage-room; the lovely cottage maiden; and yet the dark, bright, dazzling brunette in her glancing shot silk, with her flashing jetty curls, her lustrous, splendid Syrian eyes, of midnight blackness; her whole vivacious, restless, glittering, entrancing face and form lost nothing by contrast with any one in the world.

“Well, I declare, Ermie, I don’t know any place in the wide world half as cool and pleasant as this cottage of yours. Now, at Heath Hill it’s enough to roast an African. Goodness! how hot I am!” said Pet, commencing to fan herself vigorously.

“The sea-breeze makes this cool,” said Erminie; “that is the reason. I am so glad you came over this afternoon, for Ray, you know, is not coming home to-night. It is really too bad, I think, that he should leave us and go back again to that tiresome New York so soon.”

“Ah! when is he going?” said Pet, still violently fanning herself, though her bright bloom of color was far less vivid then it had been a moment before.

“The day after to-morrow, he says; and not to return for perhaps a year. I will feel dreadfully lonesome, I know, and grandmother will miss him so much. But young men are so headstrong and self-willed that there is no doing anything with them don’t you think so, Pet?” said Erminie, smiling.

“Never thought on the subject as I know of; but I dare say they are. They’re not to be blamed for it, though; it runs in man’s wretched nature. Ah! I never was properly thankful for not being a man till one day I went and dressed myself in a suit of their clothes. Such wretchedly feeling things as they were, to be sure! I’ve never been in the stocks, or the pillory, or stretched on a rack, or walking through a treadmill, or any of those other disagreeable things; but even since then I’ve a pretty good notion of what they must be like. It was a regular martyrdom while I had them on, and how the

mischievous anybody ever can survive in them is more than I know. Think of descending to posterity in a pair of pants!"

Erminie laughed, and Pet rattled on till tea was ready. Then they drank Lucy's fragrant black tea, and ate her delicate nice waffles, and praised her jam; and then, when the sun had long set, and the dark, cool, evening shadows began to fall, Pet got up, put on her hat, kissed Erminie, and set out on her return to Heath Hill.

"You ought to have told some of the servants to come for you," said Erminie. "It is rather far for you to go alone."

"Oh, there is no danger," said Pet; "on the forest road and the shore there may be; but here on the heath all is safe enough. Good night." And Pet started off at a brisk walk.

Two men, crouching behind a clump of stunted spruce bushes, were watching her with lynx eyes, as her slight, graceful form approached. It was not quite dark, but what the Scotch call "the gloaming," and the bright draped figure was plainly conspicuous on the brown, bare heath.

"There she comes at last," whispered the younger of the two, in a quick fierce tone, breathing hotly and quickly while he spoke; "I will spring out as she passes and throw this shawl over her head, while you tie her hands and feet."

"All right," said the other, in the same low tone. "Jupiter! how she goes it! Can't she walk Spanish, though! I tell you, Garnet, she's a regular stunner, and no mistake."

The other made no reply. His lurid, burning eyes were fixed on the dark, brilliant face of Petronilla.

All unconscious she passed on. Scarcely had she done so when, with the quick, noiseless spring of a panther, Garnet darted from behind the bushes, and flung a large plaid over the head of Pet, and grasped her firmly in his arms. With equal agility the other followed; and Pet was securely bound hand and foot before she had sufficiently recovered from her surprise to make the slightest struggle.

"Mine! Mine! at last!" whispered a voice she knew too well, as his arms enfolded her in a fierce embrace. "Beautiful eaglet, caged at last!"

In vain she struggled in vain she strove to cry out for help. Feet and hands were securely bound; the heavy shawl was half-smothering her, and her captor's arms held her like a vise.

"Now for the cave! On! on! there's no time to lose!" cried Garnet, with fierce impatience, starting forward as though he were carrying an infant over the heath.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE OUTLAW'S WIFE

For some moments Pet continued to struggle violently, but finding all her efforts vain worse than vain and being half-suffocated for want of air, she fell back in her captor's arms, and lay perfectly still and quiet.

In that dreadful moment, she lost not one particle of her customary self-possession. She realized all her danger and peril vividly. She knew she was completely in the power of her worst enemy, and beyond all hope of extricating herself. Her whole appalling danger burst upon her at once; and though for one instant her very heart seemed to cease its beating, she neither fainted nor gave herself up to useless tears or hysterics, according to the usual custom of young ladies, when in real or imaginary danger. Not she, indeed! Pet's thoughts as she lay quietly in her captive's arms, ran somewhat after the following fashion:

"Well, Pet, child, you've went and put your foot in it beautifully, haven't you? Ain't you ashamed of yourself, to let Rozzel Garnet catch you, and lug you along like this? I wonder where they're going to bring me to, anyway, and what they're going to do with me next? Oh! won't there be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and pulling off of wigs at home when they find I've gone, vanished, evaporated, made myself 'thin air,' and no clue to my whereabouts to be found? Phew! this villainous shawl is fairly smothering me. I wish I could slip²⁹⁷ it off for about five minutes; and the way I'd yell would slightly astonish Mr. Garnet. I suppose papa will have flaming posters stuck up all around Judestown, in every color of the rainbow. I fancy I'm reading one of them: 'Lost, strayed, stolen, or run off with some deluded young man, a small, brown, yellow and black girl, not quite right in her head, wearing a red-and-green silk dress, with black eyes, a pair of gaiter boots, and black hair. Any person or persons giving information concerning the above will be liberally rewarded with from five to ten cents, and possess the everlasting gratitude of the community generally.' That's it! I wonder where they're taking me to? We're down on the beach now, for I can hear the waves on the shore. Good gracious! If they should carry me off to sea, the matter would be searious. 'Pon my word and honor! if I ever get out of this scrape, if I don't make Mr. Rozzel Garnet mind what he's up to, then my name's not PetUr-r-r! I'm strangling, I declare. Suffocation must be a pleasant death, if I may judge by this specimen!"

While Pet was thus cogitating, Rozzel Garnet and his companion were rapidly striding over the wet, slippery beach. A being more perfectly guileless than Pet, in some ways, never existed, and this may in some measure account for the light manner in which she treated her captivity. Saucy, spirited, daring, full of exuberant life, fun, freedom and frolic, she was; but, withal, in some matters her simplicity was perfectly wonderful. For instance, she knew now she was a prisoner; she fancied she might be taken off somewhere, or held captive for a while. But she had the most perfect faith in her own

wit, cunning and courage to ultimately escape. She feared no worse fate; she knew of none; she never even dreamed of any. She knew Rozzel Garnet pretended to love her might urge her again to marry him; but that gave her not the slightest uneasiness in the world. In fact, Pet's love of adventure made her almost like this scrape she had got into. It would be something to talk about for the rest of her life; it made her quite a heroine, this being carried off; it was really like something she had so often read of in novels, or like a tragedy in a play.

With these sentiments, Pet lay quite still, listening intently, and wondering what was to come next. It seemed to her²⁹⁸ they must have walked nearly half an hour, when they came to a dead halt, and she heard Rozzel Garnet say:

"Now, Bart, give the signal quick!"

A low, shrill, peculiar whistle followed; and then Pet, whose ears would have run themselves into points to hear the better, if she could, heard a rustling, as if of bushes pushed aside; a heavy sound, as if of rocks removing; and then Garnet, gathering her tighter in his hated embrace, stooped down, and passed through something which she knew must be a narrow aperture, and thence, carefully guiding himself with one hand while he held her with the other, he descended a short flight of steps. Then he paused, and, to the great relief of our half-stifled heroine, removed the thick shawl in which he had enveloped her. Pet's first use of her breath was to burst out angrily with:

"Well, it's a wonder you took the blamed thing off until you choked me dead! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Garnet, smothering a young lady this way, in a big blanket like that. I wish you'd let me go. I don't want to be carried like a baby any longer."

"Not so fast, pretty one," said Garnet, in a low tone of of mocking exultation. "Be in no haste to quit these arms, for they are to be your home for the future."

"Humph! a pretty home they would be!" said Pet, contemptuously. "You'll have to consult me about that, Mr. Rozzel Garnet. Let me go, I tell you! I want to walk. A body might as well let a bear carry them as you!"

"As you please, my pretty lady-love!" said Garnet. "I do not think you will escape so easily this time as you did the last! That was your hour of victory: this is mine. Then you said neither earth, air, fire, nor water could hold you. Perhaps stout walls of rock can?"

"Don't be too sure, Mr. Garnet. There is such a thing as blowing up rocks, or an earthquake might happen, or the sea might overflow, or you and all your brothers in villainy might get paralytic strokes, or Satan might come and carry off the whole of you bodily to your future home. I'm sure I wish he would. You'll be an ornament to it when you get there a 'burning and shining light,' in every sense of the word! Ain't you proud of yourself to have carried off a little girl so beautifully? When you found you couldn't do it²⁹⁹ alone you got another to help you, and so you bravely won the battle. Two great, big men to carry off one little girl! What an achievement! What a victory! You ought to have a leather medal and a service of tin plate presented to each of you! Oh my!" said Pet, in tones of withering irony.

Had it not been pitch dark where they stood, Pet would have seen his sallow face blanch with anger; but subduing his rage in the comforting thought that this little double-refined essence of audacity was completely in his power, he smiled an evil and most sinister smile, and replied:

“Jet, flash, and sparkle, little grenade! Dart fire, little stiletto, but you can do no more! Snarl and show your white teeth, little kitten; but your claws are shielded you cannot bite now. Expand your wings, my bright little humming-bird; but you will find them clipped. Try to soar to your native heaven, my dazzling, glorious bird of paradise; and your drooping plumes will fall, fluttering and earth-stained, to the dust.”

“Well, that all sounds mighty fine, Mr. Garnet, and is a grand flourish of rhetoric on your part. I made no doubt but you’ll excuse me if I don’t understand a single blessed word of it. You’re a schoolmaster, and, of course, ought to understand what’s proper; but your grand tropes and figures of speech are all a waste of powder and shot when addressed to me. Just talk in plain English, and don’t keep calling me names, and I’ll feel greatly obliged. What a grenade and all them other things are I haven’t the remotest idea; but I expect they’re something dreadful bad, or you wouldn’t keep calling me them. It’s real impolite in you to talk so; and I wonder you ain’t ashamed of yourself, Rozzel Garnet!”

“No, you don’t understand, Miss Lawless,” he said slowly, and with the same evil smile.

“Shall I tell you in plainer words my meaning?”

“No, you needn’t bother yourself,” said Pet, shortly. “The less you say to me the better I’ll like it. I’m not in the habit of talking to the offcasts of society, such as you are, Mr. Garnet; and, like frog-soup, though it does well enough for a time, one doesn’t like it as a constant thing.”

“Here, push on! push on!” said the gruff voice of Black Bart behind them. “No use standing palavering here all300 night. Get along, Rozzy, boy, and taking this little snapping-turtle along with you. Up with the glim, Jack, till ma’m’selle sees where she’s going.”

All this time they had been wrapped in the blackness of Tartarus, but now the two men descended the stone steps, and one of them, holding up a dark-lantern, let its rays stream round. Pet curiously cast her eyes about and saw she was in a narrow, rocky passage, with her head not more than an inch from the top. How far it led she could not tell, for the rays of light penetrated but a few feet, and beyond that stretched a black, yawning chasm that might have been the entrance into Pandemonium itself.

“Now, in we goes,” said Black Bart, giving Pet a slight push forward. “Go first, Rozzy, lad, and show little mustard-seed, here, the way. Jack and I will keep in your wake.”

“Mustard-seed and snapping-turtle,” muttered Pet, as she prepared to follow Garnet.

“Pet, my dear, you will have as many aliases before long as the most notorious blackleg from here to the Cannibal Islands. Well, if I’m not in a fix to-night! What will they say at home?”

As they went on the passage grew wider and broader, until at last Pet found herself in a spacious rock-bound apartment, well lighted, rudely furnished, and occupied by some half-dozen rough, hard-looking men in the garb of sailors. They were lying in various attitudes about the floor, with the exception of two, who sat at a rough deal-table playing cards.

They turned their eyes carelessly enough as Rozzel Garnet entered; but as their eyes fell upon Pet each man sprung to his feet, and stared at her in undisguised wonder.

There she stood, in the full glare of the light; her slender, girlish form drawn up to its full height; her brilliant silk dress flashing and glittering in the light; her short, dancing, flashing curls of jet falling around her crimson cheeks; her bright, undaunted black eyes wide open, and returning every stare as composedly as though she were sitting in her father's hall, and these men were her servants. Very much out of place looked Pet, in her rich, sheeny robes and dazzling beauty, amid those roughly-clad, savage-looking men, and in that dismal under-ground apartment.

"Where is she?" asked Rozzel Garnet, unheeding their blank stare of surprise.

"Who? the missis?" asked one of the men, without removing his eyes from Pet.

"Yes of course."

The man pointed to the remote end of the room; and Pet, turning her eyes in that direction saw a sort of opening in the wall, serving evidently for a door, and covered by a screen of thick, dark baize.

Garnet went toward it and called:

"Madame Marguerite."

"Well," said a woman's voice from within, with a strong foreign accent.

"Can I see you a moment, on business?"

"Yes enter." And Pet saw a small, delicate-looking hand push aside the screen, and Garnet disappeared within.

"Here, little nettle, sit down," said Black Bart, pushing a stool toward Pet, gallantly, with his foot. "How do you like the looks of this here place, young woman?"

"Well," said Pet, "I should say there was no danger of thieves breaking in at night; and by the look of things, I don't expect they would find much for their pains, if they did break in. There's no danger of its blowing down windy nights there?"

"Well, no, I reckon there isn't," said Black Bart with a grin, "seeing it's right under a hill, and nothing but solid rocks above and below."

"A strong foundation," said Pet; "Like the true Church it's built on a rock. I should think it would be damp, though, when the tide rises and fills it; and I am subject to rheumatism"

"No danger," said Bart. "I'll risk your drowning. There! Garnet's calling you. Go in there."

Pet arose, and Garnet, holding back the baize screen, motioned her to enter. She obeyed and looked curiously around.

The room was smaller than the one she had left and better furnished. The rocky floor was covered with India matting, and chairs, couches, and tables were strewn indiscriminately around. A bed with heavy curtains stood in one corner, and a stand containing books, writing materials, and drawing³⁰² utensils stood opposite. Pet gave all these but a fleeting glance, and then her whole attention was caught and occupied by the person who stood between them, with one hand resting on the back of a chair, and her eyes fixed with a sort of stem, haughty scrutiny on Pet.

It was a woman of some five-and-thirty years of age, of middle size, and dressed in a solid and frayed black satin dress. Her face had evidently once been very handsome; for it still bore traces of former beauty; but now it was thin, sallow, and faded looking still more faded in contrast with the unnaturally large, lustrous black eyes by which it was lit up. Her hair, thick and black, hung disordered and uncombed far over her shoulders, while jewels flashed from the pendants in her ears, and sparkled on the small, beautiful hands. Something in that face moved Pet as nothing had ever done before there was such a look of proud, sullen despair in the wild, black eyes; a sort of fierce haughtiness in the dark, weird face; a look of passionate impatience, hidden anguish, undying woe, in the slumbering depths of those gloomy, haunting eyes, that Pet wondered who she could be, or what great sorrow she had ever endured. There was an air of refinement about her, too lofty, commanding hauteur that showed she was queen and mistress here, and as far above the brutal men surrounding her as heaven is above the earth.

"This is the girl, Madame Marguerite," said Garnet, respectfully, "I entrust her to your care until the captain comes."

"She shall be cared for. That will do," said the woman, waving her hand until all its burning rubies and blazing diamonds seemed to encircle it with sparks of fire.

Garnet bowed low, cast a triumphant glance on Pet as he passed, and hissed softly in her ear: "Mine own mine own, at last." And then he raised the screen and disappeared.

The cold, proud, black eyes were fixed piercingly on Pet; but that young lady bore it as she had done many another stare, without flinching.

"Sit down," said the woman, with her strong foreign intonation, pointing to a seat.

Pet obeyed, saying, as she did so:

"I may as well, I suppose. Am I expected to stay here all night?"

"Yes," said the woman, curtly, "and many more nights after that. You can occupy my bed; I will sleep on one of these lounges while you remain."

"Well," said Pet, "I would like to know what I am brought here for anyway. Some of Rozzel Garnet's capers, I suppose. He had better look out; for when I get free, if the gallows don't get their due it won't be my fault."

"Rozzel Garnet had nothing to do with it; he was but acting for another in bringing you here."

"For another?" said Pet, with the utmost surprise; "who the mischief is it?"

"That you are not to know at present. When the proper time comes, that, what many other things, will be revealed."

“So I’m like a bundle of goods, ‘left till called for,” said Pet; “now, who could have put themselves to so much unnecessary trouble to have me carried off, I want to know? I thought I hadn’t an enemy in the world, but his excellency, the right worshipful Rozzel Garnet. It can’t be Orlando Toosypegs, surelyhum-m-m. I do wonder who can it be,” said Pet, musingly.

While Pet was holding converse with herself, the woman, Marguerite, had gone out. Pet waited for her return until, in spite of her strange situation, her eyes began to drop heavily. A little clock on a shelf struck the hour of midnight, and still she came not. Pet was sleepy, awfully sleepy; and, rubbing her eyes and yawning, she got up, and holding her eyes open with her fingers, knelt down and said her usual night-prayers, and then jumped into bed, and fell into a sound sleep, in which Rozzel Garnet, and Marguerite, and the under-ground cave, and her previous night’s adventure, were one and all forgotten.

When Pet awoke she found herself alone, and the apartment lit up by a swinging-lamp, exactly as it had been the night before. She glanced at the clock and saw the hands pointed to half-past ten. A little round stand had been placed close to her bed, on which all the paraphernalia of a breakfast for one was placed. On a chair at the foot of the bed was a basin and ewer, with water, combs, brushes, and a small looking-glass.

Pet, with an appetite not at all diminished, sprung out of bed, hastily washed her face and hands, brushed out her silken curls, said her morning-prayers, and then, sitting down at the table, fell to with a zest and eagerness that would have horrified Miss Priscilla Toosypegs. The coffee was excellent, the rolls incomparable, the eggs cooked to a turn, and Miss Pet did ample justice to all.

As she completed her meal, the screen was pushed aside, and the woman Marguerite entered.

“Good-morning,” said Pet.

The woman bent her head in a slight acknowledgment.

“I suppose it’s daylight outside by this time?” said Pet.

“Yes, it was daylight five hours ago,” was the reply.

“Well, it’s pleasant to know even that. What am I to do for the rest of the day, I want to know?”

“Whatever you please.”

“A wide margin; the only thing I would please to do, if I could, would be to go out and walk home. That, I suppose, is against the rules?”

“Yes; but there are books and drawing materials; you can amuse yourself with them.”

“Thankee; poor amusement, but better than none, I expect. Who is commander here, the captain I heard them speak of?”

“My husband,” said the woman, proudly.

“And where is he now? I should like to have a talk with him, and have things straightened out a little if possible.”

“He is absent, and will not be back for some days.”

"Hum! this is, then, the hiding-place of the smugglers they make such a fuss abouteh?" said Pet.

"Yes, they are smugglersworse, perhaps," said the woman, sullenly.

"There! I knew I'd find it; I always said so!" exclaimed Pet, exultantly. "Oh, if I could only get out! See here, I wish you would let me escape!"

The woman looked at her with her wild, black eyes for a moment, and then went on with her occupation of cleaning off the table, as if she had not heard her.

"Because," persisted Pet, "I'm of no use to any one here, and they'll be anxious about me up home. They don't know I'm out, you know."

The woman went calmly on with her work without replying, and Pet, seeing it was all a waste of breath, pleading, got up and went over to the shelf where the books were, in search of something to read. A number of pencil-drawings lay scattered about. Pet took them, and little as she knew of art, she saw they had been sketched by a master-hand.

"Oh, how pretty!" she exclaimed; "was it you drew these?"

"No; my husband," answered the woman. "They are all fancy sketches, he says."

There was a sort of bitterness in the last words, unnoticed by Pet, who was eagerly and admiringly examining the drawings. One, in particular, struck her; it represented a large, shadowy church, buried in mingled lights and shades, that gave a gloomy, spectral, weird appearance to the scene. At the upper end, near the grand altar, stood a youth and a maiden, while near a white-robed clergyman, book in hand. A dying bird seemed fluttering over their heads, and ready to drop at their feet. The face of the youth could not be seen, but the lovely, childlike face of the girl was the chief attraction of the drawing. Its look of unutterable love, mingled with a strange, nameless terror; its rare loveliness, and the passionate worship in the eyes upturned to him who stood beside her, sent a strange thrill to the very heart of Pet. A vague idea that she had seen a face bearing a shadowy resemblance to the beautiful one in the picture somewhere before, struck her. The face was familiar, just as those we see in dreams are; but whether she had dreamed of one like this, or had really seen it, she could not tell. She gazed and gazed; and the longer she gazed, the surer she was that she had really and certainly seen, if not that face, some one very like it, before.

"Can you tell me if this is a fancy sketch?" said Pet, holding it up.

"My husband says so. Why?" asked the woman, fixing her eyes, with a keen, suspicious glance, on Pet.

"Oh, nothing; only it seems to me as if I had seen that306 face before. It is very strange; I cannot recollect when or where; but I know I have seen it."

"You only imagine so."

"No, I don't. I never imagine anything. Oh, here's another; what a pretty child! whywhy, she looks like you!"

It represented a beautiful, dark little girl, a mere infant, but resplendently beautiful.

"She was my child," said the woman, in a low, hard, despairing voice, as she looked straight before her.

“And where is she?” asked Pet, softly.

“I don’t know dead, I expect,” said the woman, in that same tone of deep, steady despair, far sadder than any tears or wild sobs could have been.

Pet’s eyes softened with deep sympathy; and coming over, she said, earnestly: “I am so sorry for you. How long is it since she died?”

“It is seven years since we lost her; she was two years old then. I do not know whether she is living or dead. Oh, Rita! Rita!” cried the woman, passionately, while her whole frame shook with the violence of emotion.

No tear fell, no sob shook her breast, but words can never describe the utter agony of that despairing cry.

There were tears in Pet’s eyes now in those flashing, mocking, defying eyes; and in silent sympathy she took the woman’s hand in her own little brown fingers, and softly began caressing it.

“It was in London we lost her in the great, vast city of London. I was out with her, one day, and seeing a vast crowd at the corner of the street, I went over, holding my little Marguerite by the hand, to see what was the matter. The crowd increased; we were wedged in, and could not extricate ourselves. Suddenly some one gave her a pull; her little hand relaxed its hold; I heard her cry out; and shrieking madly, I burst from the crowd in search of her; but she was gone. I rushed shrieking through the streets until they arrested me as a lunatic, and carried me off. For a long, long time after, I remember nothing. My husband found me out, and took charge of me; but we never heard of our child after that. I nearly went mad. I was mad for a time; but it has passed. Since that day, we never heard of Rita. I heard them say she was stolen for her extraordinary beauty; but, living or dead, I feel she is forever lost to me forever lost forever lost!”

She struck her bosom with her hand, and rocked back and forward, while her wild, black eyes gazed steadily before her with that same rigid look of changeless despair.

“I loved her better than anything in earth or heaven, except her father my heart was wrapped up in her she was the dearest part of myself; and, since I lost her, life has been a mockery worse than a mockery to me. Girl!” she said, looking up suddenly and fiercely, “never love! Try to escape woman’s doom of loving and losing, and of living on, when death is the greatest blessing God can send you. Never love! Tear your heart out and throw it in the flames sooner than love and live to know your golden idol is an image of worthless clay. Girl, remember!” and she sprung to her feet, her eyes blazing with a maniac light, and grasped Pet so fiercely by the arm that she was forced to stifle a cry of pain, “never love never love! Take a dagger and send your soul to eternity sooner!”

She flung Pet from her with a violence that sent her reeling against the wall, and darted from the room.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE OUTLAW

“He knew himself a villain, but he deemed
The rest no better than the thing he seemed;
And scorned the best as hypocrites, who hid,
Those deeds the bolder spirit plainly did.
He knew himself detested, but he knew
The hearts that loathed him crouched and dreaded, too.
Lone, wild and strange he stood, alike exempt
From all affection and from all contempt.”

Byron.

That first day of her imprisonment seemed endless to Pet. She yawned over her books, and dozed over the drawings, and fell asleep, wondering what they were doing at home, and when they would come in search of her; and dreamed she was creeping through some hole in the wall, making her escape, and awoke to find herself crawling on all fours between the legs of the table. It was the longest, dreariest day Pet had ever known. The woman Marguerite did not make her appearance again, and Pet's meals were served by a bright, bold-eyed lad, whom she plied with some fifty questions or so in a breath; but as the boy was a Spaniard, and did not speak nor understand a word of English, Miss Lawless did not gain much by this. As there was no means of telling day from night, Pet would have thought a week had elapsed but for the little clock that so slowly and provokingly pointed out the lagging hours.

“This being taken captive and carried off to a romantic dungeon by a lot of bearded outlaws is not what it's cracked up to be, after all,” said Pet, gaping fit to strain her jaws. “It's all very nice to read about in story books, and see at the theater; but in real life, come to look at it, it's the most horridly-slow affair ever was. Now, when I used to read about the lovely princess being carried off by the fiery dragon (by the way, I'd like to see a fiery dragon I never did see one yet), I used to wish I had been in her place; but I know better now. She must have had a horrid stupid time of it in that enchanted castle, until that nice young man, the prince, came, and carried her off. Heigho! What a pity I have no prince to come for me! Wonder if Ray Germaine's gone yet but, there! I don't care whether he is or not. He does not care two pins whether he ever sees me again or not. Nobody cares about me, and I'm nothing but a poor, abused, diabolical little wretch. Oh, yaw-w-w! Lor'! how sleepy I am! I do wish somebody would come and talk to me, even Rozzel Garnet, or that man with all the black whiskers, who was impolite enough to call me names, or that wild, odd-looking outlaw queen anybody would be better than none. I'll blue-mould I'll run to seed I'll turn to dust and ashes, if I'm kept here much longer; I know I will!”

And, yawning repeatedly, Pet pitched her book impatiently across the room, and, stretching herself on a lounge, in five minutes was sound asleep.

The clock, striking ten, awoke her. She rubbed her eyes and looked drowsily up, and the first object on which her eyes rested was the motionless form of Rozzel Garnet, as309 he stood near, with folded arms, gazing down upon her, with his usual sinister smile.

“Oh! you’re hereare you?” said Pet, composedly, after her first prolonged stare. “I must say, it shows a great deal of delicacy and politeness on your part to enter a young lady’s sleeping-apartment after this fashion. What new mischief has your patron saint with the cloven foot put you up to now?”

“Saucy as ever, little wasp! You should be careful how you talk now, knowing you are in my power.”

“Should I, indeed? Don’t you think you see me afraid of you, Mr. Garnet? Just fancy me, with my finger in my mouth and my eyes cast down, trembling before any man, much less you! Ha, ha, ha! don’t you hope you may live to see it?”

“It is in my power to make you afraid of me! You are here a captive, beyond all hope of escapemind, beyond the power of heaven and earth to free you. Say, then, beautiful dragon-fly, radiant little fay, how are you to defy me? Your hour of triumph has passed, though you seem not to know it. You have queened it right royally long enough. My turn has come at last. I have conquered the conqueress, caged the eaglet, tamed the wild queen of the kelpies, won the most beautiful, enchanting, intoxicating fairy that ever inflamed the heart or set on fire the brain of man.”

“Yesboast!” said Pet, getting up and composedly beginning to twine her curls over her fingers. “But self-praise is no recommendation. If by all those names you mean me, let me tell you not to be too sure even yet. It’s not right to cheer until you are out of the woods, you know, Mr. Garnet; and, really, you’re not such a lady-killer, after all, as you think yourself. You can’t hold fire without burning your fingers, Mr. Garnet, as you’ll find, if you attempt any nonsense with me. So, your honor’s worship, the best thing you can do is, to go off to your boon companions, and mind your own business for the future, and leave me to finish my nap.”

“Sorry to refuse your polite request, Miss Lawless,” he said, with a sneer; “but, really, I cannot leave you to solitude and loneliness, this way. As I have a number of things310 to talk over with you, and as you have forgotten to ask me to sit down, I think I will just avail myself of a friend’s privilege, and take a seat myself.”

And very nonchalantly the gentleman seated himself beside her on the lounge. Pet sprung up with a rebound, as if she were a ball of India-rubber, or had steel springs in her feet, and confronted him with blazing cheeks and flashing eyes.

“You hateful, disagreeable, yellow old ogre,” she burst out with; “keep the seat to yourself, then, if you want it, but don’t dare to come near me again! Don’t dare, I say!” And she stamped her foot, passionately, like the little tempest that she was. “It’s dangerous work playing with chain-lightning, Mr. Rozzel Garnet; so be warned in time. I vow to Sam! if I had a broomstick handy, I’d let you know what it is to put a respectable

young woman in a rage. You sit beside me, indeed! Faugh! there is pollution in the very air you breathe!"

He turned for an instant, livid with anger; but to lose his temper was not his rôle now, and so gulping down the little draught of her irritating words as best he might, he said:

"Ay! rave, and storm, and flash fire, my little tornado; but it will avail you nothing. You but beat the air with your breath, though, really, I do not know as it is useless, either, for you look so dazzlingly beautiful in your roused wrath, my dear inflammation of the heart, that you make me love you twice as much as ever."

"You love me indeed!" said Pet, contemptuously; "I don't see what awful crime any of my forefathers have ever done, that I'm compelled to stand up here, like patience on a monument, and listen to such stuff as that. I won't listen to it! I'll go and call that woman, I declare I will, and make her pack you off with a flea in your ear."

"Not so fast, my pretty one," said Garnet, with his usual cold smile, as he put out his long arms and caught hold of Pet; "Madame Marguerite has gone away, and may not be back to-night. The men have all gone, too, but one, and he is lying under the table out there, dead drunk. How now, my little flame of fire? Does this damp your courage any?"

For the first time, the conviction that she was completely in his power thrilled through the heart of Pet, making her, for one moment, almost dizzy with nameless apprehension. But the mocking, exulting eyes of his everywhere bent tauntingly upon her, and the high spirit of the brave girl flashed indignantly up; and, fixing her flashing black eyes full on his face, she answered, boldly:

"No, it doesn't! Damp my courage, forsooth! Do you really suppose I am afraid of you, Rozzel Garnet? of you, the most arrant, white-livered coward God ever afflicted the earth with! Ha! ha! why, if you think so, you are a greater fool than even I ever took you to be."

His teeth closed with a spasmodic snap; he half rose, in his fierce rage, to his feet, as he hissed:

"Girl, take care! tempt me not too far, lest I make you feel what it is to taunt me beyond endurance!"

"Barking dogs seldom bite, Mr. Garnet; little snarling curs, never."

"By heaven, girl, I will strangle you if you do not stop!" he shouted, springing fiercely to his feet.

She took one step back, laid her hand on a carving-knife that had been on the table since dinner-time, and looked up in his face with a deriding smile.

In spite of himself, her dauntless spirit and bold daring struck him with admiration. He looked at her for a moment, inwardly wondering that so brave and fierce a spirit could exist in a form so slight and frail, and then, with a long breath, he sunk back into his seat.

"That's right, Mr. Garnet: I see you have not lost all your reason yet," said Pet, quietly; "if you value a whole skin, it will be wise for you to keep the length of the room between us. I don't threaten much, but I'm apt to act when aroused."

“Miss Lawless, forgive my hasty temper. I did not come to threaten you, to-night, but to set you at liberty,” said Garnet, looking penitent.

“Humph! set me at liberty! I have my doubts about that,” said Pet, transfixing him with a long, unwinking stare.

“Nevertheless, it is true. To-night they are all gone; you are all alone; say but the word, and in ten minutes you will be as free as the winds of heaven.”

“Worse and worse! Mr. Garnet, just look me in the eye, will you, and see if you can discover any small mill-stones³¹² there? Do you really think I’m green enough to believe you, now?”

“Miss Lawless, I swear to you I speak the truth. In ten minutes you may leave this, free and unfettered, if you will.”

“Well, I declare! Just let me catch my breath after that, will you? Mr. Garnet, I have heard of Satan turning saint, but I never experienced it before. So you’ll set me free, will you? Well, I’m sure I feel dreadfully obliged to you, though I don’t know as I need to, since but only for you I wouldn’t be here at all. I’m quite willing to go, though, and am ready to start at any moment.”

“Wait one instant, Miss Petronilla. I will set you free, but on one condition.”

“Ah! I thought so! I was just thinking so, all along! And what might that condition be, if a body may ask?” inquired Pet.

“That you become my wife!”

“Phew-w-w! Great guns and little ones! bombshells and hurricanes! Fire, murder, and perdition generally! Your wife! Oh, ye gods and little fishes! Hold me, somebody, or I’ll go into the high-strikes.”

“Girl, do you mock me?” passionately exclaimed Garnet, springing to his feet.

“Mr. Garnet, my dear sir, take things easy. It’s the worst thing in the world, for the constitution and by-laws, flaring up in this manner. It might produce a rush of brains to the head, that would be the death of you, if from nothing but the very novelty of having them there. ’Shsh! now; I see you are going to burst out with something naughty; but don’t you really mus’n’t speak of your kind friend and patron with the tail and horns, to ears polite. Mock you! St. Judas Iscariot forbid! I trust I have too much respect for your high and mighty majesty, to do anything so impolite. Sit down, Mr. Garnet, and make your unhappy soul as miserable as circumstances will allow. No, now that I’ve eased my mind, I’d rather not get married just at present, thank you. I intend to take the black veil some of these long-come-shorts, if I may be allowed so strong an expression, and second-hand nuns are not so nice as they might be. No, Mr. Garnet, I’m exceedingly obliged for your very flattering³¹³ offer; but I really must decline the high honor of sharing your hand, heart, and tooth brush,” said Pet, courtseying.

“And by all the fiends in flames, minion, you shall not decline it!” shouted Garnet, maddened by her indescribably taunting tone. “By the heaven above us you shall either be my wife or”

“Well,” said Pet, sitting down at the table, resting her elbows upon it, dropping her chin in her hands, and staring at him as only she could stare; “what? Why don’t you go on? I never like to have a burst of eloquence like that snapped short off in the middle like the stem of a pipe; it spoils the effect!”

“Then, mad girl, you shall either be my wife, or share a worse fate.”

“Well, Mr. Garnet, I don’t like to contradict you; but if there can be a worse fate than to have anything to do with you, I’d like to know it that’s all.

“Then you will not consent!” he said, glaring on her like a tiger.

“Mr. Garnet, for goodness’ sake don’t make such an old goose of yourself, asking silly questions!” said Pet, yawning. “I wish you would go! I’m sleepy, and you look just now so much like a shanghai rooster with the jaundice, that you’ll give me the nightmare if you don’t clear out. Mr. Garnet, I don’t want to be personal, but even the nicest young men get tiresome after a while.”

“Petronilla Lawless, take care! Have you no fear?”

“Well, no, I can’t say that I have; at least, I don’t stand very much in awe of you, you know. I expect I ought to, but I don’t. It’s not my fault, for I can’t help it.”

“Then, since fair means will not do, something else must!” exclaimed Garnet, making a spring toward her, while his eyes were blazing with a terrible light. But Pet was as quick as himself and seizing her formidable weapon she darted back, and flourished it triumphantly, exclaiming:

“Now for a game of hide-and-go-seek. Catch me if you can, Mr. Garnet; but if you have any consideration for this clean floor, keep a respectful distance. Blood-stains are not the easiest removed in the world, especially such bad blood as yours; and this long knife and a willing hand can make an ugly wound.”

She had him at bay again. There was a fierce, red, dangerous light in her flaming eyes, now; and a look of deep, steady determination in the dark, wild little face. Rozzel Garnet perceptibly cooled down for a moment; but then, as if maddened by her taunting, deriding smile, he bounded toward her with the fearful spring of a wild beast, and had her in his arms before she could elude his grasp.

But the bright-winged little wasp had its sting yet. Up flew the blue, glittering knife, down it descended with all the force of her small arm; but her aim was not sure, and it lodged in his shoulder.

With an awful oath, he seized her hands in his vise-like grip, and with his other pulled out the knife. The wound was not deep, yet the blood spurted up as he pulled it out, in his very face.

The sight seemed to rouse him to madness; and Pet writhed with pain in his fierce grasp. She felt herself fainting. A dreadful weakness was stealing through her frame; when as if sent by Heaven, a quick, heavy step was heard without, and then a commanding voice calling:

“Hallo, Garnet! where are you?”

With a fierce imprecation of rage, the baffled villain hurled the nearly swooning girl from him, and turned to leave the room, hissing in her ear:

“Foiled again! But you are still in my power. By Heaven and all its hosts, I will yet have my revenge!”

Pet dropped into a seat, and, feeling sick and giddy, bowed her head on her hands. Never in her life before had she fully realized her own weakness. What would all her boasted strength have availed her but for that heavenly interposition? A moment ago, and she was as a child in the grasp of a giant. What an escape she had had! How she blessed, in her heart, he, whoever it might have been, who had saved her!

Pet’s emotions, no matter of what nature, never lasted long. Ten minutes now sufficed to make “Richard himself again;” and with a short but fervent prayer of thanksgiving, she sat up, drew a long breath of unspeakable relief, and began looking ruefully at her wrists, all black and blue from his iron pressure.

“Natural bracelets!” said Pet, with a slight grimace of pain. “Jet and azure. I can’t say I approve of such violent love-making; it’s unpleasant and excites one rather! However, ‘the course of true love never did run smooth,’#; according to that nice man, Mr. Shakespeare; though I hope it isn’t always as rough as the severe course I underwent just now. Good gracious! What a tiger I have raised in that quondam tutor of mine! Pretty instructor he was for youth, to be sure! But lo! the curtain rises! What is to be the next scene, I wonder?”

As she spoke, the curtain was pushed aside, and a new actor appeared. He walked over to the opposite side of the room, and leaning his elbow on a sort of mantel, gazed with a look of careless curiosity on Pet.

From the moment that young lady laid her black eyes upon him, she gave a violent start, and looked at him in utter amaze. For, save the disparity in their years, and a certain devil-may-care recklessness that this man had, she saw before her the living image of Ray Germaine!

The new-comer was a man apparently about forty years of age, with the bold, handsome features, the flashing black eyes, and raven hair of Ray Germaine. His face was bronzed by sun and wind many shades darker than that of his young prototype; and in his coarse sailor’s garb he looked the very beau ideal of a bold, reckless buccaneer. And yet, withal, he bore about him the same air of refinement Pet had noticed in the woman Marguerite, as if both had originally belonged to a far different grade of society than the branded outlaws to whom they now were joined.

But that likeness that wonderful resemblance to Ray Germaine it completely upset Miss Lawless’ nonchalance, as nothing in the world had ever done before. There she sat and stared, unable to remove her eyes from the dark, browned, handsome face that was turned toward her with a look half-careless, half-admiring, and wholly amused.

The man was the first to break the silence.

“You are the young lady they brought here last night, I presume?” he said, watching her curiously.

His voice, too, was like Ray's, and bespoke him, even if nothing else had done so, above his calling being those low, modulated tones that can only be educated into a man.

Pet did not reply. She did not hear him; in fact, being³¹⁶ still lost in digesting her surprise at this astounding resemblance. He watched her for a moment as if waiting for an answer, and then a smile broke over his face. Pushing back his thick, clustering, raven hair, he said:

"Yes, look at me well, young lady. I presume you never saw an outlaw with a price upon his head before. Is it to curiosity alone, or is it to some concealed deformity, that I am indebted for that piercing scrutiny?"

Pet was aroused now, and reddened slightly at his words and look. Then her old impudence came back, and she answered quietly:

"No, you're not the only outlaw with a price upon his head I have ever seen. I have just had the honor of holding an interview with one; though, really, I don't think his head is worth a price above ten cents, if that. I suppose I have the sublime happiness of beholding his mightiness, the commander-in-chief of all the smugglers?"

"Even so! I have returned, you perceive, sooner than was expected; in fact, solely upon your account. I heard you were here, and came to see you."

"Indeed! Well, I hope you like me?" said Pet, pertly.

"Most decidedly," said the outlaw, passing his hand caressingly over his whiskers; "so much, in fact, that if I were not a married man I should be tempted to fall deplorably in love with you on the spot."

"Well, you'll greatly oblige me by doing nothing of the sort," said Pet. "I have had enough of love to last me for one while. Love's not the pleasantest thing in the world, judging by what I've seen of the article; and with the blessing of Providence, I'm going to have nothing whatever to do with it. May I ask the name of the gentleman whose prisoner I have the unspeakable happiness of being?"

"Certainly. I am called, for want of a better, Captain Reginald."

"Captain Reginald what? That's not a whole name."

His brow darkened for a moment at some passing thought, then he replied:

"Never mind; it serves the purpose, and it's the only one I believe I ever had a right to. I am afraid you find the solitude here rather irksome do you not?"

"Well, Captain Reginald, to be candid with you, it's not³¹⁷ to say a place where a body would like to spend their lives. There's no danger of one's growing dissipated here, or anything that way, you know which is, of course, an advantage. And now, might I ask who the gentleman is who has put himself to the very unnecessary trouble of having me carried off? All the rest seem to be dumb on the subject, from some cause."

"I fear I will have to be dumb, too, my dear young lady; the gentleman who has shown his good taste by falling in love with you does not wish to be known at present. Can you not guess yourself?"

"Haven't the remotest idea, unless it be Rozzel Garnet, or Orlando Toosypegs?"

"Noneither! Garnet, of course, brought you here, but he was paid to do it by anotherwe outlaws do anything, from murder down, for money. As for Toosypegs, or whatever the name may be, I haven't the pleasure of knowing him; but I can assure you it is not he."

"Well, then, I give it up. I never was good at guessing, so I'll not bother my brain about it. Is it high treason to ask how long I am to be cooped up here in this under-ground hole?"

"Perhaps a fortnight, perhaps longer."

"Vipers and rattlesnakes!two whole blessed weeks!whew! Well, Mr. Captain, all I have to say is that I'll be a melancholy case of 'accidental death' before half the time, and then I wish your patron, whoever he may be, joy of his bargain."

"We will hope for better things, my dear young lady. By the way, I have not heard your name yetwhat is it?"

"Pet Lawlessbetter known to her unhappy friends as 'Imp, Elf, Firefly, Nettle, Pepperpod,' and many other equally proper, appropriate and suggestive names. 'Queen regent and mistress imperial to all the witches and warlocks that ever rode on broomsticks,' and leaves a large and disagreeable circle of friends to mourn her untimely loss. Requiescat in pace."

All this Pet brought out at a breath, and so rapidly that the smuggler-captain looked completely bewildered.

"Lawless!" he exclaimed. "I did not thinkdo you know Judge Lawless of Heath Hill?" he asked abruptly.

"Slightly acquainted. They say I'm a daughter of his," said Pet, composedly.

"His daughter? Young lady, are you jesting?"

"Well, I may bequite unintentional on my part, though; if it sounds funny, you're perfectly welcome to laugh at it till you're black in the face. What was it?"

"You Judge Lawless's daughter?" said the astonished captain.

"Nothing is certain in this uncertain world, Captain Reginald. I've always labored under that impression; if you know anything to the contrary, I am quite willing to be convinced."

"Young lady, I wish you would be serious for one moment," said the smuggler, knitting his dark brows. "If you are his daughter, there has been a terrible mistake here. Did not Rozzel Garnet live at Heath Hill for some years as the tutor of Miss Lawless?"

"Yes, sir, and he was sent about his business for wishing to teach her some things not laid down in the books."

"Then he would know you at once. Oh! it's impossible you can be Miss Lawless."

"Very well, if it affords you any consolation to think so, you are perfectly welcome to your own opinion. Who am I then?"

"You were mistaken for, or rather you ought to be, a young lady, a celebrated beauty who lives in a cottage somewhere on the heath."

"What! Erminie?"

"I really do not know the name. Is it possible you are not the one?"

“Well no, I rather think not. Though I may not be Pet Lawless; and as you say I’m not, I won’t dispute it but I most decidedly am not Erminie Germaine.”

“Erminie who?” cried the outlaw, with a violent start.

“Germaine. Perhaps you object to that, too.”

“Pardon me; the name is” He paused and shaded his fine eyes for a moment with his hand, then looking up, he added: “She was the one who was to be brought here; if you are really Miss Lawless, then there has been a tremendous mistake.”

“Humph! it seems to me to have been a mistake all through. I shouldn’t wonder the least if it turns out to be some of Master Garnet’s handiwork. So they wanted to carry off Erminie? Now, I’m real glad I was taken, if it had saved Minnie. It appears to have been a pretty piece of business, from beginning to end.”

“I shall put an end to this mystery,” said the captain, starting up and going to the door.

“Marguerite,” he said, lifting the screen, “send Rozzel Garnet here.”

“He has gone,” replied the voice of the woman. “He went away the moment you entered the room.”

“Sold!” cried Pet, jumping up, and whirling round like a top in her delight. “He has taken you all in made April-fools of every mother’s son of you! Carried off me, Pet Lawless, for Erminie Germaine! He knew he would be discovered, and now he has fled; and when you see last night’s wind again, you will see him. Oh! I declare if it’s not the best joke I have heard this month of Sundays!”

And overcome by the (to her) irresistibly ludicrous discovery, of how the smugglers had been “sold” by one of themselves, Pet fell back, laughing uproariously.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HOME FROM SEA

“The dark-blue jacket that enfolds the sailor’s manly breast
Bears more of real honor than the star and ermine vest;
The tithe of folly in his head may wake the landsman’s mirth,
But Nature proudly owns him as her child of sterling worth.”

Eliza Cook.

“Clear the track! off we go! whip up old lazybones there, and don’t let him crawl on at that snail’s pace! That’s more like; now for it, at five knots an hour! It’s pleasant to see the old familiar faces again, after knocking about in strange ports for half a dozen years—don’t you think so, messmate?” and the speaker, a dashing, handsome, good-humored-looking young fellow, with the unmistakable air of a sailor about him, gave his fellow-passenger, an elderly, cross-looking old gentleman, who sat beside him on the roof of the stage-coach, a confidential dig with his elbow, that nearly pushed him, head-first, out of his seat.

“Lord bless my soul! young man, there’s no necessity for breaking a man’s ribs about it, is there?” said the old gentleman, snappishly. “I dare say, it’s all very nice, but you needn’t dislocate your neighbor’s bones about it. Do you belong to this place?” asked the old man, after a short pause, during which his companion had politely apologized for the unnecessary force of the blow in the ribs.

“Yes, sir,” said the young man, with emphasis, “that I do! and in all my rambles round the world, I never saw a place I liked better! No place like home, you know. Hurrah! for good old Judestown!”

“I wonder you go to sea, then,” said the old man, crossly; “you’re a fool to do it, getting drowned fifty times a day. I warrant you, you are always on the spree whenever you get on shore, like the rest of them, spending all your money instead of putting it in the savings bank, as you ought to do, as a provision for your old age.”

“Me get on the spree?” said the sailor, drawing himself up; “no, sir-ee. All my money goes to provide bread and molasses for my wife and family.”

“Why, bless my soul and body!” exclaimed the old gentleman, surveying his young companion through his spectacles in utter surprise, “you’re surely not married yet, youngster.”

“Yes, I regret to say I am,” said the youngster in question in a passive tone, “and got a large family with large appetites to support. It’s melancholy to reflect upon, but it’s true. My wife keeps a billiard-saloon, and the children keep apple-stands at the corner of the streets, except my oldest daughter, and she’s at service. Fine family, sir! Halloo! here we are, at the Judestown House, and there’s my old friend, Mrs. Gudge.”

“Humph!” grunted the old gentleman, doubtfully; “where are you from last, young man?”

“Liverpoolship ‘Sea Nymph;’ master, Burleigh; first mate, Randolph Lawless, Esq., late of Heath Hill. Had some distinguished passengers out with us, too,” said the young man, tightening his belt.

“Humph!” again grunted the old man. “Who were they, may I ask?”

“Certainly, you may ask, and I have great pleasure in answering, the Earl and Countess De Courcy, and their daughter, Lady Ritaperhaps you’re acquainted with them already,” said the young man, with a wicked look in his knowing eyes.

“No, sir, I’m not,” snapped the old man, “and, what’s more, I don’t want to be, either, whether you believe it or not.”

“Well, it’s their loss then; that’s all I have to say about it. Here we are at anchor, at last. Halloo, Mrs. Gudge! don’t you know me?” exclaimed the young man, springing lightly from his lofty perch and alighting like a cat on his feet.

“Why, Master Ranty! is this yourself?” cried Mrs. Gudge, clasping her fat hands and going off into a transport of delight, wonderful to behold. “Dearie me! how glad I am! how tall you are, and how brown, and handsomer than ever, I declare!”

Our old friend, Ranty, laughed, and dashed back his sun-browed locks off his happy, thoughtless face, as he answered:

“I believe you, Mrs. Gudge; so handsome, in fact, that they wanted to take away the Apollo Belviderea gentleman you are not acquainted with, Mrs. Gudge and put me in his place. My modesty, of which I have at least the full of a tar-bucket, would not permit me to listen to such a proposal a moment. And now, my dear madam, how are all my friends at Heath Hill and Old Barrens?”

“First-rate!” replied Mrs. Gudge; “the judge was here, not ten minutes ago, with that big, rough fellow, with all the hair about his face; Black Bart they call him.”

“One of those notorious smugglers! whew! I hope my excellent father is not taking to contraband courses in his latter days. What, in the name of Amphytrite, could he want of Black Bart?”

“Well, he said he wanted information about the smugglers, and he sent my old man to look for Bart.”

“Humph! Set a fox to catch a fox! I wonder how he succeeded. Seen our Pet, lately?”

“No, not since one day she dressed herself in my Bobby’s clothes, and drove young Mr. Germaine and Miss Erminie over to the cottage,” said Mrs. Gudge, laughing.

“Dressed herself in Bob’s clothes! what the dickens did she do that for?”

“For fun, she said; none of us knew them that day except her, and she drove them over without their ever finding her out. Miss Pet always is doing something out of the way, you know, Master Ranty.”

“And how is Mr. Germaine and Miss Erminie, Mrs. Gudge?”

“Very well, indeed! Lor’ bless me! you would hardly know Mr. Ray; he’s shot up like a Maypole, and got one of them nasty mustaches onto his upper lip. Of all the ugly things they beats all. It actually makes my flesh creep to see them eating or drinking with them

on. I'm glad you don't wear one, Master Ranty, for of all the disgraceful things" Mrs. Gudge paused, and rolled her eyes as in intense disgust, by way of filling up the hiatus.

"It's no merit of mine, I am afraid," said Ranty, passing his hand over his lip; "I've been mowing away for the last three years; but owing to some mysterious dispensation of Providence, or the barrenness of the soil, or some other inscrutable reason, nothing can be induced to sprout. I feel myself put upon by Fate, I do so, Mrs. Gudge! There's Ray, now with whiskers, flourishing, no doubt, like a green bay tree; and here am I, a young man twice as deserving, with a face as smooth as a sheet of foolscap. It's a darned shame, and I won't put up with it, hanged if I do! Mrs. Gudge, let me have a horse and wagon, or a superannuated gander, or a go-cart, or some other quadruped to take me home. Since I must tear myself away, I may as well do it first as last."

Mrs. Gudge opened the door, and called to Bobby to bring round a horse; and soon after that hopeful made his appearance, leading the animal by the bridle. Ranty waved a good-by to Mrs. Gudge, flung a handful of coppers to her son, jumped into the saddle, and was off, as Bob Gudge afterward expressed it "like Old Nick in a gale of wind."

Ranty's eyes lit up with pleasure as the old, familiar scenes came once more in view. There was the forest road, bringing back the memory of the dangerous, practical joke they³²³ had played on Pet. There was Dismal Hollow, silent, grim gloomy, and lonely a fit habitation for Miss Priscilla Toosypegs. There was the Barrens; there was the little, white, vine-shaded cottage; and yonder in the distance, dazzling in its spotless paint, was the staring, garish White Squall. There, too, was the brown-scorched road leading through the purple bloom of the heath to his own ancestral home of Heath Hill.

"Now to give them a surprise," said Ranty, as he alighted at the little cottage-gate and approached the door; "wonder if Minnie will know me; I hope she is in."

The parlor-door lay wide open, and he looked in unobserved. It was the day on which Judge Lawless had proposed, a few hours later; and Erminie, whose gentle nature had not quite recovered from the wound his threats and harsh words had given her, sat alone with the evening shadows falling around her her head resting on her hand, and her large, soft blue eyes dark with unshed tears. Pet had just departed; and the quietness and reaction following the luster of her exciting presence made the silence and loneliness more dreary still.

Ranty's first impulse had been to rush in, catch her in his arms, and give her a rousing salute; but the moment he saw her sweet, pale face and drooping figure, a feeling more nearly approaching to timidity than anything our impudent young sailor had ever felt before, held him back. Somehow he had expected to see a slender, delicate little girl, such as he had last beheld her; but she had passed away forever, and here in her place sat a tall, elegant girl, with a face as lovely as the hazel-haired Madonna's that had smiled upon him in the dim, old cathedral-aisles of glorious Italy. He took one step forward; she lifted her head with a startled look; her eyes met his, and she started impetuously to her feet.

"Erminie!"

"Ranty! Oh, Ranty! I am so glad!"

She caught his hand in both hers, while her face, a moment before so pale, flushed with delight, and the violet eyes were fairly radiant with joy.

"Oh, Ranty, I am so glad! When did you come?"

"Got to Baltimore day before yesterday. I suppose you hardly expected to see me to-night, Erminie?"

"No, indeed! And it is the most delightful surprise!" exclaimed Erminie, her beautiful face irradiated with joy, and forgetting she was no longer speaking to the boy Ranty. But when she caught his eyes fixed upon her with a look the boy had never worn, the flush rose painfully even to her very forehead. She dropped his hand, while her eyes fell, and she said, in a less assured tone:

"Sit down; you must be tired after your journey. I am very sorry Ray is not at home to meet you."

"Never mind; I will see him to-morrow. And all my friends have been quite well since I left, Erminie?"

"Yes, all. If you had arrived ten minutes sooner, you would have seen Pet. She has just gone."

"Well, I will shortly have that pleasure. How tall you have grown, and how you have changed since I saw you last, Erminie!"

He meant more the emphatic but undefinable change from childhood to womanhood, than that of her looks. Perhaps Erminie understood him, for she said, laughing:

"Not for the worse, I hope. You, too, have changed, Master Ranty."

"Well, not much, I think; I have grown five or six feet taller, and my complexion has become a genteel brown; but, otherwise, I am the same Ranty Lawless I went away."

"A little quieter, I should hope, for the peace and well-being of the community at large. Do you still retain the high opinion you had of yourself before you left?"

"Yes, slightly increased," said Ranty, who had now recovered all his customary nonchalance of manner. "There was a little lady out with us from England whose precious life I had the pleasure of saving; and with whose raven eyes and coal-black hair I would have fallen in love, but for the thought of a dear little blue-eyed fairy at home, who promised to wait for me until I could come back. Do you remember that promise, Erminie?"

"I only remember you were very absurd," said Erminie, laughing and blushing. "Don't talk nonsense; but tell me how you were so fortunate as to save the lady's life?"

"Well, one windy evening, a little before dark, this little Lady Rita, who by the way, though the haughtiest, sauciest³²⁵ young damsel I ever encountered, was quite courageous, came upon deck, and insisted on remaining there, in spite of all expostulations to the contrary. She was leaning over the side, and I was standing near, watching her, for want of something better to do, when the vessel gave a sudden lurch round. I heard a scream, and beheld the place where her little ladyship had lately stood vacant. I caught sight of her the next moment struggling in the waves; and, in a

twinkling, I was in after her. Lady Rita, who had hitherto looked down upon me and all the rest of us with sublimest hauteur and vestal prudery, made not the slightest objection to be caught in my arms now; on the contrary, she held on with an energy that nearly strangled me. A boat was lowered, and we were fished up, clinging to each other, as if bound to hold on to the last gasp. Lady Rita, according to the incomprehensible custom of the female sex in general, fainted stone dead the moment she found herself in safety. It's interesting to faint, and I was looking round for a nice place to follow her example; but upon second thoughts I concluded I wouldn't. There were no nice young ladies round who understood my case; and to be tickled with burnt feathers, and be drenched with cold water by a lot of sailors, was not to be thought of. Lady Rita was carried to the cabin; and a great fuss and commotion reigned there for the next two or three hours, while I was taking life easy, smoking a cigar on deck. Then the earl, her 'parient,' made his appearance, and completely deluged me with gratitude and thanks, which I stood like a hero, until the countess also came. Her tears and protestations of everlasting gratitude were a little too much, and I fled. I blush to say it, but I beat an inglorious retreat, for thanks are things one easily gets a surfeit of."

"Why, Ranty, you have sailed in high company lately," said Erminie; "earl and countessdear me! I begin to feel quite an awe of you."

"So you ought; and I hope you'll continue to cherish the feeling. But, Erminie, do you knowthough, as you have never seen him, it's likely you don'tbut you have the most wonderful resemblance to Lord De Courcy I ever beheld in my life."

"Lord De Courcy!" exclaimed Erminie, growing pale as³²⁶ she remembered Ketura's fearful denunciations against all who bore that name.

"Yes, Lord and Lady De Courcy are at present in Washington City. The earl says he always felt a desire to visit this country; but, hitherto, circumstances prevented him. The countess is a lovely womanone of the most beautiful, I think, I ever saw; and as good as she is beautiful, every one says."

"I have heard of her before," said Erminie, in a low, subdued tone. "Mr. Toosypegs saw her many years ago, when he was in England. At least, I imagine it was her; for she was the wife of the old earl's son, and Mr. Toosypegs says that since the death of his father he has been Lord De Courcy."

"Yes, so he has," said Ranty; "he was then Lord Villiers; but really, Minnie, your likeness to him is quite wonderful."

"Well, it is not unusual for strangers to resemble one another; though I suppose I ought to feel flattered by looking in the remotest degree like one so great and distinguished. How much I should like to see them both!" said Erminie, musingly. "I have heard so much about them from Mr. Toosypegs, andanother, that my curiosity is quite excited. And their daughterthis Lady Ritawas that what you called her? By the way, Ranty, I never heard they had a daughter."

"Yes, they had two; the oldest died, I believe, when a child; and Lady Ritawell, some say she is not their daughter, but an adopted child. I don't know how that may be; though,

certain it is, she does not look like either of them not half so much as you do, Erminie. Both of them have very fair complexions, while Lady Rita is as dark as a creole. The countess, to be sure, has dark hair and eyes; but still her haughty little daughter does not resemble her in the least."

"Do they remain here long?" said Erminie, half musingly. "Oh, Ranty, how much I should like to see them!"

"Well, perhaps you may; in the overflowing of their gratitude, they made me promise to visit them en famille, while they remained; and if you'll only consent to keep your promise, and become Mrs. Lawless, why, you can come with me, and I know they will be delighted to welcome my wife."

"Nonsense, Ranty," said Erminie, a little impatiently, "how absurd you are! I am not to be accountable for your silly talk when we parted, I hope?"

"Well, all I have to say about it is, that there will be a case of 'breach of promise' up before the court one of these days, if you attempt to back out. Are you prepared to pay me five or six thousand dollars damages, as a plaster for my wounded feelings, may I ask, Miss Germaine?"

"As if your affections were worth one-tenth that sum, Mr. Lawless! Now, do be sensible, if you can, and tell me how long you are going to stay home."

"As to being sensible, Miss Germaine, I flatter myself I am that now; and my stay, or departure, must depend in a great measure on you."

"Now, Ranty, I shall get angry if you don't stop being so nonsensical!" said Erminie, flushing slightly. "I did hope going to sea would have put a little sense into your head; but I perceive it has had quite a contrary effect. I wish you could see Ray. These six years have made him as grave and thoughtful as a judge. I expect he will be quite famous in his profession yet."

"Well, I wish him joy of it," said Ranty. "But how any man can reconcile it to his conscience to be a lawyer, while honest, straight-forward piracy is flourishing in the South Seas, and old-fashioned, upright brigands infest the Pyrenees, is beyond my comprehension! However, every one to their taste; and, luckily, this is a free country. Good-by, now, Miss Germaine. Fate and the approach of night compels me to be off; but you may look out for me an hour or so before day-dawn to-morrow."

And Ranty got up, shook hands with Erminie, mounted his horse, and rode off.

"Now Ranty Lawless," said that gentleman to himself, when fairly on the road, "it's my private belief and impression that you are falling in love, young man! What a sweet, artless, lovely face the girl has got, any way! And those eyes those wistful, tender, violet eyes how they do go through a fellow's vest-pattern, though! Ranty, my son, take care! Have you escaped the witchery of dark-eyed Spanish donas; the melting glances of Italia's raven-haired daughters; the enchantment of the little knobby-footed, suffron-skinned ladies of the Celestial Empire; the bedevilment of the free-and-easy mesdames of free-and-easy France, to be hooked the moment you land, by the blue eyes, golden hair, pearly skin, and pink cheeks of this little cottage-girl, Erminie? What will

the governor say, I want to know? Well, it's time enough to think of that yet. No use worrying till the time comes. 'Care killed a cat,' they say; so, lest I should share in that unfortunate quadruped's fate, I shall take things easy. There's the White Squall. I think I shall go over and see my worthy uncle, the admiral."

So saying, Ranty rode rapidly in the direction of the flaring white mansion, and entered, without ceremony. The admiral, as usual, was alone in the parlor, and gave his nephew a boisterous welcome, shaking his hand as if he had hold of the handle of a pump, until Ranty winced and jerked it away. Then, having replied to the avalanche of questions with which the ancient mariner overwhelmed him, Ranty rose, and rode homeward, to surprise the household there.

Surprise the household he did at least all of them to be found which were only the servants. The judge was gone, and so was Pet.

"Why, Aunt Deb, Pet started for home nearly an hour ago," said Ranty, somewhat alarmed. "What can have become of her?"

"Lors! Mars'r Ranty, how de debbil I know?" said Aunt Deb, who was given to profanity now and then. "Dar ain't nebber no tellin' whar dat ar little limb pokes herself. She might be at dem old Bar'ns, or she might be at Dismal Holler, or she might be gone to old Harry"

"Old Harry!" interrupted Ranty, angrily. "What do you mean?"

"Why, ole Mars'r Harry Hateful; dar ain't no tellin' whar she is!"

"Well, that's true enough. I wish she were here, however. Perhaps she won't be back to-night," said Ranty, walking up and down the room, and whistling a sea air.

Aunt Deb bustled out to prepare supper, to which meal our young sailor sat down alone, wondering, alternately, where Pet could be, and thinking of the witching, violet eyes of Erminie. Then, when it was over, he took up a book, to beguile time, hoping still to see Pet; but when eleven o'clock struck, he gave up the idea of seeing her that night, and retired to bed, to dream of Erminie.

As he had partaken of the evening meal alone the evening before, so was he forced to sit solo at breakfast. Neither Pet nor the judge had returned, nor were any tidings to be obtained of their whereabouts; and, after breakfast, Ranty immediately rode over to the Barrens.

In the cottage he found Ray, who had just returned, who was receiving an account of Ranty's arrival from the lips of Erminie, when the entrance of that young gentleman himself cut it short. Warm and hearty was the greeting between the two friends; for never brothers loved each other better than did they.

"I suppose Pet was in perfect ecstasies of delight at your unexpected return," said Erminie, taking her work and sitting down on her low rocking-chair by the window.

"Pet! why the little gadabout never was at home at all last night; and where the deuce to find her, I don't know."

"Not at home!" said Erminie, in surprise. "Why, where can she be, then?"

"Well, Miss Germaine, that is just what I would feel very much obliged to you to tell me. It's very like looking for a needle in a hay-stack, I'm inclined to think, to go hunting for her. The best way, is to take things easy, and let her come home when she likes."

"Why, it is most singular," said Erminie. "I know she started for home, and took the road leading to Heath Hill. Perhaps she changed her mind, and went to the White Squall."

"No; that she didn't," said Ranty. "I was there last night after leaving here. The girl's bewitched; and perhaps she rode off on some Quixotic expedition by herself."

"She was on foot," said Erminie, now really growing alarmed. "Starlight was lame or something; so she started to walk home. Oh, Ranty! I am afraid that something has happened to her," she cried, looking up in terror.

"Oh, pooh, Ermie! What could happen to her between this and Heath Hill? Nonsense!" said Ranty, beginning to look uneasy.

"What hour did she leave here, Minnie?" asked Ray, his dark face paling slightly at the thought of danger to her.

"It was nearly dark, and she had to walk all alone over that lonesome heath. Oh, Ray! something must have happened to her!" cried Erminie, growing white with vague alarm.

"Why, what in Heaven's name could have happened to her?" asked Ranty, catching the infection of Erminie's fears. "No one has ever been molested on the heath."

"Those lawless smugglers are continually prowling around now; and it is very unsafe for a young girl to venture in such a lonely place, unprotected, after night. Good heavens! if she should have fallen into their hands!" cried Ray starting up, in consternation.

"Oh, Ray! I hope not. Oh, Ray! do you really think she has?" exclaimed Erminie, clasping her hands in mortal terror.

"There is no telling. Some of that lawless gang are continually prowling about the woods, and shore, and heath, and if they saw PetMiss Lawless," he added, checking himself, and biting his lip "they would have made her a prisoner at once. There is no deed of violence too dark or dreadful for them to do. They are something worse than smugglers, I more than suspect. This smuggling, I fancy, serves but as a cloak for the far worse crime of piracy. I have heard that their leader Captain Reginald, they call him is one of the most reckless and daring desperadoes that ever made general war under the black flag; and those of his crew that I have seen roving about here, look to be cut-throats, savage enough for anything, from wholesale murder downward. Great Heaven! if Petronilla should have fallen into their hands!" said Ray, pacing up and down in much agitation.

"But it cannot be, Ray; it is impossible, absurd, I tell you. Why, man, what could these buccaneers possibly want with Pet? A nice prize she would be for any one to take in tow!" said Ranty, getting alarmed in spite of himself.

"They might take her in the hope of obtaining a large ransom for her release, or they mightoh! the thought is too horrible to contemplate!" exclaimed Ray, almost fiercely.

"Ranty, why are we losing time here, when your sister may be in such danger? This is no time for idle talking. About! mount! and off in search of her! I will instantly follow!"

“Well, but wait a minute, Ray, before starting on this wild-geese chase,” said Ranty. “How do we know that she is not safely housed in Dismal Hollow, or somewhere in Judestown, all this time, while we are raving about pirates and abductors?”

“Oh, she is not! she is not!” cried Erminie, wringing her hands. “She started for Heath Hill, and had no intention of going anywhere else. Wild and daring as she is, she would not venture to walk alone through the forest after night. Oh, holy saints! what can have become of her?”

“We are losing time talking,” said Ray, whose face was now perfectly colorless with contending emotions. “Mount, Ranty, and ride back to Heath Hill and the White Squall, and see if she has returned to either place since you left. I will go to Dismal Hollow and Judestown, and search for her there. If she is to be found in neither of these places, then it must be too true that she has fallen into the hands of the smugglers.”

Ranty, alarmed, but still incredulous, sprung on his horse and galloped rapidly in the direction of the White Squall, while Ray, at an equally rapid and excited pace, took the opposite road leading to Dismal Hollow. And Erminie, white with vague, nameless, but terrible apprehension, remained behind, to pace up and down the floor, wringing her hands and strain her eyes in anxious watching for their return.

Ranty was the first to return, with the alarming tidings that nothing had been heard of her at either place since. Nearly wild with terror now, Erminie continued her excited pace up and down the room, crying bitterly.

“Oh! I should not have let her go! I should not have let her go! I ought to have kept her all night. I knew it was dangerous crossing the heath, and I should not have let her attempt it alone. Oh, if Ray would only come!”

But another long, seemingly interminable hour passed before Ray made his appearance, and then he came dashing up, pale, wild and excited.

His eyes met Ranty’s as he entered. That glance told all both had failed.

“You have not found her?” said Ranty, hurriedly.

“No; but I heard enough to confirm my worst suspicions. Late yesterday afternoon, Orlando Toosypegs says he saw one of the gang, a fellow called Black Bart, accompanied by some one else, he could not discern who, but doubtless another of the outlaws, take the forest-road leading this way. Pet has been waylaid and entrapped by them, there can be no doubt; for neither of them have been seen since.”

Erminie dropped, like one suddenly stricken, into a seat, and hid her face in her hands. Brother and lover looked in each other’s pale faces with an unspoken: “What next?”

CHAPTER XXXIV

FACE TO FACE

"Ah me!

The world is full of meetings such as this."

Willis.

"What next?"

It was Ranty who spoke in a deep, excited voice. Ray, white and stone-like, stood with one arm resting on the mantel, his face shaded by his heavy, falling hair, his deep breathing painfully breaking the silence. Ah! in that moment how the gossamer wall of his sophistry was swept away! He had flattered himself his resolution was strong enough to keep him from loving Pet; but now, now that she was gone, and perhaps forever, the truth stood glaring out in all its vividness, and he felt that he loved her with his whole heart and soul, as only a strong, fervid, passionate nature like his could love. His strong chest heaved with an emotion too deep and intense for words; and as he thought of her, alone and unprotected, in the power of those ruthless men, his very respiration stopped, until it became painful to listen for its return. Ranty's question roused him; and the necessity for immediate action restored, in some measure, his customary calmness and clear-headed energy.

"We ought instantly engage the services of the Judestown police, and begin a vigorous search, I think," said Ranty.

"Search! have not the police and the revenue officers searched for this infernal smugglers' den for the last six333 months without ceasing? and yet they were as near finding it the first day as they are now."

"Then what is to be done?" said Ranty. "We must try some means to find her, that is certain. Poor Pet! Oh! I always had a sort of presentiment that mad girl would get herself into some scrape of that kind, sooner or later. Hang the villains! I would like to swing every one of them to the yard-arm myself."

"Ought you not to send word to your father?" suggested Erminie whose face was perfectly colorless with fear for Pet.

"I suppose I ought; but where am I to find him? He has gone, as well as Pet, and no one seems to know in what direction he may be found. The smugglers can't surely have taken him, too."

"Though I know it will be fruitless, I see nothing for it but to follow your advice, and inform the Judestown authorities. The shore in every direction must be searched; for if heaven and earth has to be roused, we must find your sister!" exclaimed Ray.

"What if they have taken her off to sea?" suggested Ranty.

Ray started violently for a moment, at the terrible idea; the next, a contrary conviction settled in his mind and he said:

"I hardly think so; they would not be so precipitate. At all events, by commencing a thorough search immediately we may discover some clue to her whereabouts. We had best return immediately to Judestown, and enlist all we can in the search."

"We will have no difficulty in finding volunteers for the hunt," said Ranty. "Pet was always an immense favorite with every one, and the whole town, I believe, would rise in a body to look for her, did we wish it. I would not give much for Black Bart's life if he attempts to show himself to the mob after they hear this."

So saying, the two passed out, mounted their horses, and set off for Judestown.

If that morning had seemed long to Pet in her prison, doubly long did it appear to Erminie, who, too uneasy and restless either to sit still or work, paced up and down the 334 room, or passed in and out of the cottage, straining her eyes to catch a glimpse of the first who would come with news of Pet. But the morning passed and no one came; and sick, weary, and worn out with anxiety and disappointment, she sunk down on a seat, and hid her face in her hands in a passionate burst of tears.

A heavy, plodding step coming up the graveled walk in front of the cottage roused her, at last. She sprung to her feet, and stood with cheeks flushed, lips parted, eyes dilated, and bosom heaving, with eager expectation.

But it was only the admiral, who came stumping in, looking more completely mystified and bewildered than any one had ever seen him before in their lives.

"Helm-a-lee!" roared the admiral, thrusting his huge head in the room. "What the dickens has little Firefly run afoul of now, or what's in the wind, anyway?"

"Oh, Admiral Havenful! Pet's lost! been carried off by those dreadful smugglers!" said Erminie, sinking back in a fresh burst of passionate grief.

"Stand from under!" exclaimed the old sailor, in a slow, bewildered tone, every reasoning faculty completely upset by this astounding intelligence.

"Oh, it was my fault! it was my fault!" cried Erminie, with bitter self-reproach. "I should not have allowed her to go last night at all. Oh, I will never, never forgive my self as long as I live," and another burst of tears followed the declaration.

"Stand from under!" reiterated the admiral, still "far wide"; "Firefly carried off by the smugglers! Good Lord! Keep her round a point or so."

"They will take her off to sea, and she will never come back again. Oh, Pet," wept Erminie in a wild outburst of grief.

"Now, Snowdrop, just hold on a minute, will you?" said the admiral, facing briskly round. "Just stand by till we see how we're coming. The question is, now, where's Firefly? That's the question, ain't it, Snowdrop?"

Erminie's sobs were her only answer.

"Just stand by a minute longer, will you?" said the admiral, lifting up the forefinger of his right hand, and aiming it at Erminie's head. "Firefly's gonesunkwent to the 335 bottom, and no one left to tell the taleain't that it, Snowdrop?"

Erminie, knowing the admiral must be answered, made a motion of assent.

"Now the question is," went on the admiral, bringing the finger down upon the palm of his other hand, and looking fixedly at them; "the question; what did Firefly run afoul of? She must have run afoul of something, mustn't she, Snowdrop?"

"Y-e-s, I suppose so," said Erminie, not very clearly understanding the admiral's logic.

"And that something she run afoul of is supposed to be smugglers. Port your helm," roared the admiral, on whose somewhat obtuse mind the whole affair was slowly beginning to dawn.

"Oh, Admiral Havenful! what do you think they will do with her? Surely they will not kill her!" exclaimed Erminie looking up imploringly.

"Just you hold on a minute longer, will you, Snowdrop?" said the admiral, looking fixedly at the fingers lying on his broad left palm, "and don't you keep putting me out like this. Pet's run afoul of smugglers; they have boarded her, and she's knocked under and surrendered. Ain't that it, Snowdrop?"

"They have carried her offyes, sir," wept Erminie.

"They have carried her offyes, sir," slowly repeated the admiral, in the same tone of intense thoughtfulness, "they have carried her off, but where to? There it is, Snowdrop, where to?"

"Oh, I wish I knew! I wish I knew! If we could only discern that, all would be well. Oh, dear, dear Pet!"

"Pet has run afoul of smugglers and been carried off, nobody knows where. Stand from under!" yelled the admiral, in a perfect paroxysm of grief and consternation, as the whole affair now burst in full force upon him.

There was no reply from Erminie, who still wept in silent grief.

"Main topsail haul!" shouted the old man, in mingled rage and grief, as it all dawned clearly upon his mind at last. "Pet's gone! Been captivated; been boarded, scuttled, and sunk. Oh, perdition!" yelled the admiral, jumping up and stamping up and down, grasping his wig with both hands, in his tempest of grief. "Oh, Firefly, you dear, blessed little angel! You darned, diabolical little fool! Going and trusting your nose into every mischief that ever was invented. Oh, you darling, merry little whirligig! You confounded, blamed, young demon! To go and get yourself into such a scrape. Oh, if I only had hold of the villains! They ought to be hung to the yard-arm, every blessed one of them. Oh, Pet, my darling! By the body and bones of Paul Jones, you ought to be thrashed within an inch of your life. Oh, oh, oh, oh!" roared the admiral, in a final burst of grief, as he flung himself into his chair and began a fierce mopping of his inflamed face.

While thus engaged, another step resounded without a slow, lingering, dejected step and the next moment the pallid features, and mild blue eyes of Mr. Toosypegs beamed upon them from the door.

"Orlando," shouted the afflicted admiral, "she's went and did it! Firefly's gone and did it! Yes, Orlando, she's gone to Davy's locker, I expect, before this, and the Lord have mercy on her soul!"

“Admiral Havenful, I’m really sorry to hear it, I really am,” said Mr. Toosypegs, wiping his eyes with the north-west corner of his yellow bandanna. “I never felt so bad about anything in my life. I never did, I assure you, Admiral Havenful. But why can’t they go to Davy’s locker after her? I should think they wouldn’t mind the expense in a case like this.”

“Orlando C. Toosypegs,” said the admiral, severely; “I hope you don’t mean to poke fun at people in grief; because if you do, it shows a very improper spirit on your part, and a total depravity I should be sorry to see, Orlando Toosypegs.”

“Why, my gracious!” said the astonished and aggrieved Mr. Toosypegs; “what have I said? I’m sure, Admiral Havenful, I hadn’t the remotest idea of being funny, that ever was; and if I said anything that wasn’t right, I beg your pardon for it, and can assure you I never meant it.”

“Well, then, enough said,” testily interrupted the admiral. “Now, Snowdrop, look here; what are they going to do about Pet?”

“Ray and Ranty have gone to Judestown to get the people to search. They think she is somewhere along the beach, in some hidden cave the smugglers have there.”

“U-m-m! very good,” said the admiral, nodding his head approvingly; “perhaps they will find her yet. I’ll go over to Judestown myself, and ship along with the rest. We’ll scour the whole coast; so that if she’s above water anywhere, we must find her.”

“I’ll go, too, Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs, with more alacrity than he usually betrayed; “that is, if you think there is no danger with them smugglers. You don’t think there is any danger, do you, Admiral Havenful?”

“Blame themyes!” roared the admiral, fiercely. “I wish to the Lord Harry I could only come across some of them! I’ll be blown if I wouldn’t give them the confoundest keel-hauling they ever got in their lives! If you are afraid, Orlando Toosypegs,” said the admiral, facing round with savage abruptness, “stay at home! Any man that wouldn’t volunteer in a case like this, ought to be swung to the yard-arm and left to feed the crows. You would be a blue lookout for the commander of a privateerwouldn’t you?”

“Admiral Havenful,” said Mr. Toosypegs, abashed and rather terrified by this outburst, “I beg your pardon, and I ain’t the least afraid. I’ll go with you, and do my best to help you to keel-haul the smugglers, whatever that may be. Miss Minnie, good-by. Don’t take on about it, because we’ll be sure to find Miss Pet and bring her home. I dare say the smugglers will give her up, if they’re only asked politely.”

The admiral heard this comforting assurance with a snort of unspeakable contempt, and then waddled out; and groaning bodily and mentally, mounted Ringbone, and accompanied by Mr. Toosypegs, set out at the rate of half a knot an hour to Judestown.

During the remainder of the day, Erminie was left alone, half wild with alternate hope, terror, anxiety, expectation. Her busy fingers, for a wonder, were idle now, as she passed continually in and out, watching, with feverish impatience, the forest road, in the hope of seeing some one who could give her some news of how the search progressed.

But night came, and no messenger had arrived to relieve her torturing anxiety.

It was a sultry, star-lit night. Not a breath of air stirred the motionless leaves of the forest trees, and the clear chirp of the katy-did and lonely cry of the whippoorwill alone broke the oppressive silence. Down on the shore below, she could faintly hear the dreary murmur of the waves as they sighed softly to the shore; and at long intervals the wild, piercing cry of some sea-bird would resound about all, as it skimmed wildly across the dark, restless deep. The wide, lonesome heath was as silent as the grave; and the long line of cherry-red light that usually shone over it from the parlor-windows of the White Squall was not visible to-night the dreary darkness betokening its master was away. The forest lay wrapped in somber gloom, looming up, like some huge, dark shadow, in the light of the solemn, beautiful stars.

All within the cottage was silent, too. Ketura had long ago retired, and the negress, Lucy, was sleeping that deep, death-like sleep peculiar to her race.

Standing in the shadow of the vine-shaded porch, Erminie watched with restless impatience for the return of some one from Judestown her whole thought of Pet and her probable fate. Unceasingly she reproached herself for having allowed her to depart at all that night; never pausing to reflect how little Pet would have minded her entreaties to stay when she took it into her willful little head to go.

The clock struck nine, and then ten; and still no one came.

Half-despairing of their return that night, Erminie was about to go in, when the thunder of horses' hoofs coming through the forest road arrested her steps.

The next moment horse and rider came dashing at a mad, excited gallop up to the gate, and Ray leaped off and approached.

"Oh, Ray, is there any news of her? Is she found?" eagerly exclaimed Erminie.

"No; nor is she likely to be as far as I can see," said Ray, gloomily. "Not the slightest trace of her has been found, though the whole beach has been searched, from one end to another. They have given it up now, and gone home for to-night. Ranty and the admiral stay in Judestown all night, and the hunt is to be resumed to-morrow, with the same success, I suppose. They are mad worse than mad to think they will ever see her again."

He flung himself into a chair, and leaned his head on his hand, while his thick, jet-black hair fell heavily over his face.

Something in his look, tone, and attitude awed and stilled Erminie into silence. Though her own gentle heart seemed bursting with grief, there was a depth of passionate despair in his that repressed all outward sobs and tears. In silence they remained for a while, she silently watching him, and trying to choke back her sobs; and then, going over, she touched him gently on the arm, and said:

"Dear Ray, let me get you some supper; you have tasted nothing since early this morning."

"Supper! Do you think I could eat, now?" he cried, with fierce impatience. "I do not want any. Go!"

"Dear Ray, do not look and speak so strangely. Perhaps you will find her to-morrow."

“Perhapsperhaps! When a man has lost all he loves in the world, there is a great consolation in a cool ‘perhaps he may find it again.’ Do you think those hell-hounds would spare her a moment, once they got her in their power! Oh, Petronillabright, beautiful Petronilla! lost, lost, forever!”

“Ray, Ray!” exclaimed Erminie, in low, terrified tones, as a new light broke upon her, “did you love Petronilla?”

“Love?” he cried, with passionate fierceness, starting up and shaking back his thick, dark hair. “Yes; I loved her with a love that you with your gentle nature and calmly-beating heart can never dream of. I loved her as only those can love whose veins, like mine, run fire instead of blood. Now that she is forever lost to me, I may confess; what no living mortal would ever have discovered else. Yes; I loved her! What do you think of my presumption, little sister? I, the beggared grandson of a despised gipsy, educated by the bounty of her uncle, dared to lift my eyes to this heiress, beauty and bellethis proud daughter of a prouder father. Loved her? Yes; beyond the power of words to tell!”

One white arm was around his neck, and Erminie’s soft, pitying lips were pressed to his forehead of flame. She did³⁴⁰ not speakno words were needed; that silent caress bespoke her deep sympathy.

He sat still and silent for a moment; and then he started up and seized his hat to go.

“Are you going out again, Ray?” asked Erminie, surprised and uneasy.

“Yes; for an hour or so. I cannot stay here, with this fever fire in heart and brain.”

He walked rapidly away from the cottage, and, as if involuntarily, his steps turned in the direction of the shore. Right over the shore, in one place, the rocks projected in a sort of shelf not more than five feet from the ground. Underneath they went in abruptly, and thus a sort of natural roof was formed; and the sheltered place below had been the favorite play-ground of his boyhood.

Up and down this ledge he paced, now, absorbed in his own bitter thoughts, and totally unheeding the flight of time. One hour, two, three passed; and still he remained, thinking of the lost one.

Suddenly he paused. Did his ears deceive him, or did he hear voices underneath. His own steps were muffled by the velvety carpet of moss and grass that covered the place, and he walked to the outer edge and listened intently. Yes; there were voices underneath, talking in low, cautious tones. His heart gave a great throb, and he got down on his hands and knees and peered for one moment over the cliff. Right beneath were some half-dozen rough, uncouth-looking fellows, in the garb of sailors, and one of them, Black Bart, he remembered to have often seen in Judestown. Had he discovered the smugglers’ haunt at last?

Laying his head close to the ground, he could catch, at intervals, this conversation:

“Yes; he’s gone for good; cleared out when he found he must be discovered. What a pretty mess you made out of it, Bart, taking the wrong gal, after all,” said one of them.

“Well, it wasn’t my fault,” growled Black Bart. “How was I to know one from t’other? Serves the old sinner right, too, to get taken in. Curse Garnet! This comes of trusting these infernal land-sharks.”

“What a beautiful hunt they had over the beach to-day!” said another, with a low chuckle. “They’ll be at it to341-morrow, too, and have their labor for their pains. Well, cap’n, does the gal still stick to her story that she ain’t the one she ought to be?”

The reply to this was given in so low a tone that Ray could not hear it, and in his intense eagerness he leaned further over to listen. But, as he did so, he lost his balance. He strove to save himself, but in vain; over he must go; and seeing there was no help for it, he took a flying leap, and landed right in the midst of the astounded freebooters!

With interjections of surprise and alarm, half a dozen bright blades instantly flashed in the moonlight; but ere any violence could be offered, the tall form of the outlaw chief interposed between them, and father and son stood face to face!

CHAPTER XXXV

FATHER AND SON

“When lovers meet in adverse hour,
'Tis like a sun-glimpse through a shower
A watery ray, an instant seen,
Then darkly-closing clouds between.”

Scott.

Silently they confronted each other those two, so nearly connected so long separated so strangely encountered now. Did no “still, small,” inward voice whisper to each that they were father and son? Was the voice of Nature silent, that they should gaze upon each other as strangers gaze?

Yes, even so; for although the outlaw chief started for a moment to see before him the living embodiment of himself at the same age, the emotion passed in a moment, and the strange resemblance was set down to one of those accidental likenesses that so often surprise us, and which cannot be accounted for. Ray, too, fancied this dark, daring, reckless-looking chieftain resembled himself somewhat; but the passing thought had even less effect upon him than it had on the other.

The men, still grasping their swords, had encircled Ray, and were glaring upon him with darkly-threatening eyes, as he stood boldly erect, and undauntedly confronting the smuggler-chief.

“Well,” said that personage, at last, breaking the silence, and calmly surveying the intruder from head to foot, “who the foul fiend are you, young man, that you come tumbling from the clouds among us in this fashion?”

“He is a revenue spy. Let us pitch him in the river, cap'n!” said Black Bart.

“Silence, sir! Come, my good youth, answer: What is your business here?”

“My business is, to discover the young lady you have so basely abducted. If you are the leader of this gang of cut-throats, I demand to be instantly informed where she is!” said Ray, determined to put a bold front on the matter since he was in for it.

“Whew-w!” whistled the captain, while the men set up an insolent laugh. “For coolness and effrontery, that modest demand cannot be easily beat. And what if we refuse, young sir?”

“Your refusal will not matter much, since to-morrow your retreat will assuredly be discovered, and then you will every one meet the doom your diabolical actions deserve!”

“And what may that be, most candid youth?” said the smuggler chief, with a sneer.

“Hanging!” said Ray, boldly; “a fate too good for villains base enough to forcibly carry off a helpless young girl!”

With low, but passionate imprecations of rage, the outlaws closed around Ray; and his mortal career might have ended then and there, but that the captain a second time interfered.

“Back, men!” he said, authoritatively. “Let there be no bloodshed to-night. Do you not know there are two places where a man ought to speak without interruption? in the pulpit and on the gallows. This foolhardy fellow is as completely in our power as though he were swinging in mid-air, so he can speak with impunity. Pray proceed, my dear sir. Your conversation is mighty edifying and interesting. So, hanging is too good for some of us, eh? Now, what³⁴³ would you recommend to be done with us supposing you were our judge?”

“Burning at the stake, perhaps!” suggested Black Bart; “and after that to be hung, drawn and quartered!”

“This is no time for fooling!” exclaimed Ray, impetuously. “I demand to be instantly led to Miss Lawless, wherever she may be!”

“A demand I am most happy to comply with,” said Captain Reginald. “I always do like to oblige my guests when I can. This way, my young sir. But just keep your eye on him will you? and see that he does not give you the slip.”

“Ay, ay, cap’n,” said Bart. “Hadn’t I better bind and blindfold him?”

“No, it will be needless, as in all probability he will never set foot on this shore again.”

“I understand: ‘Dead men tell no tales!’ All right, cap’n,” said Black Bart with a demoniacal laugh, as the whole party, with their prisoner in their midst, started along the beach after the captain.

The cheering assurance that his fate was sealed did not in the slightest degree intimidate Ray as he walked along, with his fine form erect, his princely head thrown back, his full, falcon eye, with its clear, steady gaze, making the insolent stare of the outlaws fall. One thought was uppermost in his heart, thrilling through every nerve, throbbing in every pulse; he was drawing near Petronilla would soon meet her, speak to her, comfort her in her captivity. What pair of pantaloons over the innocent and unsusceptible age of seven has not felt a decidedly queer sensation under his left ribs when about to meet the woman he loves? And if he fancied her pining away in “durance vile,” how much his eagerness to meet, to comfort, to console her would be increased! At least, it is to be hoped it would; and it had at least that effect on Ray Germaine, who, rapidly as they walked, in his burning impatience it seemed as though they were going at a snail’s pace. Even before him he beheld Pet, locked up in some desolate prison, weeping as if her heart would break, and calling on her friends to save her. Little did he dream that at that very moment she was rolling over on the floor of her room, in convulsions of³⁴⁴ laughter at the mistake Black Bart had made, and the consequent rage its discovery had thrown that worthy into.

For upward of a quarter of a mile, they walked along the long, sandy, slippery beach, and then they suddenly diverged, and turning an abrupt angle among the rocks, they came to a part of the hill overgrown with stunted spruce and cedar bushes. It was a bleak, lonely place, little frequented and with no sign of anything like a hut, or cavern, or habitation, far or near. But here the whole party came to a simultaneous halt; and the smuggler-chief, putting his fingers to his lips, gave a long, loud, sharp whistle. While Ray watched

these proceedings with intense interest, part of the thick underbrush seemed to move; a huge rock was violently dislodged from its place, and a narrow, low opening, that it seemed hardly possible to enter, save on one's hands and knees, was revealed. The narrow chasm had evidently, at some remote period, been made by a convulsion of Nature, but Art had since been employed to widen, enlarge, and conceal it. The huge rock was made to fit securely, and could only be opened from within, thus defying detection. Those in search of Pet that day had passed over the spot a dozen times, without dreaming in the most remote way that there could be an opening concealed among the apparently-solid rocks.

Captain Reginald turned to the utterly-astonished Raymond, and gazed at him for a moment, with a peculiar smile of sarcastic triumph. Then stooping his tall body, he passed through the opening, and disappeared in the seemingly interminable darkness beyond.

"You go next," said Black Bart, to Ray.

Without a moment's hesitation, the young man obeyed; and having entered the aperture, found himself in the same long, narrow, dark passage into which Garnet had borne Pet the evening before. Ray descended the narrow, steep steps, faintly illuminated by the dim rays of a dark-lantern held by the man who admitted them; and following the smuggler-captain through the long, rocky passage, entered, at last, the large outer-room the rendezvous of the outlaws.

The roughly-dressed, rougher-looking men lay, or sat, scattered about in every direction, some asleep on the floor, some talking in low tones, and others amusing themselves³⁴⁵ as they pleased. In a remote corner sat the woman Marguerite, her arms dropped on a little table, her head lying on them, as if asleep. Her presence accounted for the unusual stillness of the men.

She was not asleep, however. As the new-comers entered, she lifted her head quickly, and after a fleeting glance at her husband, fixed her eyes steadfastly on the stranger. His strange resemblance to her husband was the first thing to strike her. She half-started up, dashed back her wild, disheveled black hair, and gazed upon him with a sharp, suspicious look. The men, too, stopped in their customary avocations to look at the new-comer, and scan him from head to foot with inquiring eyes. Ray's dark, flashing eyes fearlessly encountered theirs, as he glanced vainly around the room in search of Pet.

"Another prisoner, my good lads," said Captain Reginald, as he entered.

"Who is he, captain? who is he?" chorused half a dozen voices together.

"His name I have not yet had the pleasure of hearing. Seeing us under the rocks, and being of an inquiring spirit, he leaped down among us, and without ceremony, presented himself. Wishing to indulge the said spirit of inquiry, I persuaded him to accompany me here, and have much pleasure in making you acquainted with him now. He is very urgent to find out what has become of Miss Lawless: and as he is evidently a friend, perhaps a lover of hers, I could do no less than promise to let him see and console her in her captivity."

This speech, which was delivered in his customary half-careless, half-mocking tone, was received with a cheer and a laugh by the men. Ray, flushed and irritated, turned to the speaker, and said, passionately:

“Let me see her, then! Where is she?”

“Easy, my dear young friend! Getting excited and fierce never pays in this world. You will see the young lady time enough.”

At this moment, the woman Marguerite approached, and laying her hand on her husband’s arm, and fixing her sharp black eyes on his face, pointed to Ray, and said something in a low, rapid tone in French.

“Ya-as,” drawled Captain Reginald, passing his hand carelessly over his thick, black whiskers, and looking indifferently at the young man. “It is rather strange. I noticed the resemblance myself. How is your captive?”

Before she could reply, the curtain was pushed aside; and with wide-open eyes, flushed cheeks, and wonder, delight and incredulity on every feature, Pet stood before them. Ray’s voice had reached her ear, and half-inclined to doubt the evidence of her senses, she stood there, literally rooted to the ground. Yes, there he was his own proud, fiery, handsome self, and forgetting everything in her delight, Pet uttered a cry of joy, and sprung toward him. He took a step forward, his face flushed with many feelings, and the next moment, for the first time, Pet was held clasped in his arms.

“Oh, Ray! dear Ray! I am so glad!” exclaimed Pet, scarcely knowing what she said, in her joy and amazement. “Dearest Ray my gracious! I didn’t mean that; but, oh, Ray! I am so glad to see you again!”

“My own Petronilla! my dearest love!” he passionately exclaimed, bending over her.

“How on earth did you ever find me out, Ray, stowed away here under the earth?” asked Pet, whose utter amazement at seeing him here completely overmastered every other feeling. “Who told you these fellows had carried me off to this black hole?”

“No one we only suspected it.”

“And you know, Ray, it was the greatest mistake all through. They meant to carry off Erminiethink of that! and they took me in a mistake. I expect they are making an awful time about it up in the upper worldain’t they? I suppose papa’s gone out of his head altogether.”

“Your father is not at home, Petronilla. Ranty is nearly distracted.”

“Ranty? Why, Ray my goodness, Ray! is Ranty home?”

“Yes arrived late last night.”

“Did you ever! And they had to take and carry me off at such a contrary time, and I wanted to see him so much. Well, if it’s not the funniest, most disagreeable affair, from beginning to end! I say, Ray, how did you find me out, though?”

“It was all an accident. I will tell you another time. What was the cause of your being abducted this way, Pet?”

“Why, if your coming was an accident, mine was a mistake thought it was your Erminie, you know, because I look so much like her, I expect. And now, what’s going to turn up next? Are you going to take me home?”

“Hardly, I fancy,” said Captain Reginald, who, with the rest, had all this time been watching them and listening, half-curious, half-amused. “Mr. Ray, if that is his name, will hardly get back as easily as he came.”

“Why, you hateful old brigand! You wouldn’t be so ugly as to keep him whether he wanted to or not?” said Pet, with flashing eyes.

“Sorry to disoblige a lady, but in this case, I fear I must,” he said bowing sarcastically.

Pet, having by this time got over the first shock of her surprise, like all the rest, was forcibly struck with the resemblance between the smuggler-captain and her handsome lover. Her bright eyes danced, for a few seconds, from one to another, and then she burst out with:

“Well, now, if you two don’t look as much alike as two strung mackerels, my name’s not Pet. I said all along, Ray, you were his very image, and I’ll leave it to everybody in general if you ain’t. If you were only twenty years older, and had whiskers sticking out from under your chin like a row of shaving-brushes, you would be as much alike as a couple of peas.”

“Pon my soul, the likeness is stor’nary!” exclaimed Black Bart, looking from one to another. “You look enough alike to be his mother, cap’n.”

“Really, I feel flattered to resemble a young gentleman half so handsome,” said the captain, in his customary tone of careless mockery, “The resemblance must be very striking, since it attracts the notice of every one.”

“I declare, it’s real funny!” said Pet. “Maybe you will turn out to be relatives, by-and-by who knows? It always ends so in plays and novels, where everybody discovers, at last, they are not themselves at all, but somebody else.”

“May I ask the name of the gentleman whom I have the honor to resemble? I hardly think, Miss Lawless, we will turn out to be relatives, as I have not one in the wide world,” said Captain Reginald, with something like a cloud settling on his dark face.

“My name is Raymond Germaine,” said Ray, coldly.

“Germaine!” exclaimed the smuggler, starting suddenly and paling slightly, “did you say Germaine?”

“Yes, sir; what is there extraordinary in that?” asked Ray, whose arm still encircled Pet.

Captain Reginald did not reply, but paced abruptly up and down the floor for a few moments. All were gazing at him in surprise; but there was fierce suspicion in the dusky depths of Marguerite’s black eyes.

He came back at last, and resuming his former posture, said, but no longer in his cold, sarcastic tone:

“I once knew a person of that name, and its utterance recalled strange memories. It is not a very common name here may I ask if you belong to this place?”

“No; I am English by birth, but I have lived here since a child.”

“English!”

He started wildly again, and this time looked at the young man in a sort of terror.

“Yesor rather, no; for though born in England, I am not English. I come of another race.”

The fixed glance of the smuggler’s eyes grew each moment more intense, his dark face paled and paled, until, contrasting with his jet-black hair and beard, it looked ghastly. His breath came quick and short as he almost gasped:

“And that race is”

“The gipsy! Yes, I am of the degraded gipsy race,” exclaimed Ray, with a sort of fierce pride, as though he dared and defied the world to despise him for that.

The smuggler-captain reeled as though some one had struck him a blow, and grasping Ray by the arm, he exclaimed, in a low, husky whisper:

“Tell me who brought you here. You were a child, you say, when you left Englandwho had charge of you?”

“My grandmother a gipsy! What in the name of heaven, sir, is all this to you?” exclaimed Ray, like the rest completely astounded by this strange emotion.

“Her name!” said the outlaw, hoarsely, unheeding his question and the wonder of the rest.

“Among her tribe she was known as the gipsy queen, Ketura.”

“Just God!” exclaimed the smuggler-chief, as his grasp relaxed and with a face perfectly colorless, he stood like one suddenly turned to stone.

“Sir, what under heaven is the meaning of this?” said the bewildered Ray, while the rest looked on almost speechless with astonishment.

There was no reply. The outlaw had leaned his arm on a sort of mantel, and, with his head dropped upon it, stood like one stunned by some mighty blow. All were white and mute with wonder.

He lifted his head at last, and they started to behold its dreadful ghastliness. His eyes for some moments were fixed in a long, inexplicable gaze on the surprised face of Ray, then, in the same low, hoarse tone, he asked:

“And she, your grandmotherdoes she still live?”

“Yes.”

“Where?”

“In Old Barrens Cottage; but she is a helpless paralytic.”

“So near, so near! and I never knew it. Great Heaven! how wonderful is thy dispensations!” he groaned.

“Is it possible you knew her?” asked the bewildered Ray.

“Yes, I knew her,” he replied, slowly. “Tell me, did she ever speak to you of your father?”

Ray’s brow darkened, and his eyes filled with a dusky fire.

“She didoften. My father was drowned! He was branded, tried, convicted, and condemned for the guilt of another. His day of retribution is to come yet! Enough of thisI cannot understand what possible interest all this can have for you.”

“You will soon learn. Come with me; Miss Lawless, remain with my wife until my return. This way, young man,” said the outlaw, turning to the inner apartment and motioning the other to precede him.

The astonished Ray did so, and the curtain fell between the wonder-struck assembly outside and the twain within.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE OUTLAW'S STORY

"They did not know how hate can burn
In hearts once changed from soft to stern,
Nor all the false and fatal zeal
The convert of revenge can feel."

Byron.

"Be seated," said the outlaw, with a wave of his hand.

Silent and wondering, Ray obeyed.

His strange companion walked across the room, and for some moments stood with knit brows and downcast eyes, like one absorbed in painful thought. Then he began pacing up and down, while Ray watched him, inwardly wondering whether this half-smuggler, half-pirate captain was quite right in his mind.

He stopped, at last, in his quick, excited walk as rapidly as he had commenced, and facing round to where Ray sat, demanded:

"Why did mythis gipsy, Ketura, leave England?"

"I do not knowshe never told me," replied Ray.

"Old Earl De Courcy died shortly after I, her son, left Englandperhaps she was instrumental in his death and was obliged to fly."

"Of that I know nothing," said Ray, impatiently. "What has all this to do with the revelations you are to make?"

"Not much, perhaps; but I wish my question answered. You say she resides in Old Barrens cottage?"

"Yes."

"You live there too, with her, of course?"

"Yes."

"If she is, as you say, a helpless paralytic, how has she contrived to support and educate youfor I perceive you are educated?"

"It was not she who did it. I am indebted for my education to the kindness of an old gentleman who resides near us," said Ray, flushing and biting his lip till it was bloodless.

"Who attends to her now, in her helplessness?"

"Erminie and her servant."

"Erminie who? Oh, I remember; Miss Lawless spoke of some Erminie Germaine, who was to have been brought here instead of her. Who is this Erminie?"

"I cannot tell. My grandmother brought us from England togethershe was a mere infant, then."

"Perhaps she is your sister?"

"No; her very looks forbid such a supposition. That there is no gipsy blood in her veins, I am confident."

“And gipsy Ketura brought her from England? Strangestrange! Who can she be?” said the outlaw, musingly. “She has often spoken to you of the De Courcy family, no doubt!”

“Yes, often.”

“Did she tell you Lord Ernest Villiers married Lady Maude Percy?”

“She did.”

“Do you know if they had any children?”

“I do not know.”

“She never told you?”

“Never,” said Ray, wondering where this “Catechism of Perseverance” was to end.

“Strange, strangevery strange!” said the outlaw, pacing up and down, with brows knit in deep thought. “And so you are determined to avenge the wrongs of your father, young man?” he said, after a pause stopping before him again.

“Yes, Heaven helping me, I will!” exclaimed Ray, fiercely.

“Heaven?” said the outlaw, with his old sneer. “It is the first time I ever heard Heaven aided revenge; Satan helping you, you mean. And how is this revenge to be accomplished?”

“Time will tell,” said Ray, impatiently. “It cannot concern you in anyway, Captain Reginald; and on this subject you need ask me no more questions, for I will not answer them.”

“As you please,” said he, with a strange smile. “You have inherited the fiery, passionate spirit of your race, I see. Your father is, you say, drowned?”

“Yesyes! To what end are all these questions?”

“Patience, Mr. Germaine; I will come to that presently. Did your grandmother ever speak to you of your mother?”

“Very little,” said Ray, in a softer tone. “She told me she never saw her, but that she was a lady of rank. That, however, I am inclined to doubt.”

“And why?”

“Because my father was a gipsy. No lady of rank, knowing it, would have anything to do with one of his class. Proud England’s proud daughters would not mate with despised gipsies.”

A streak of fiery red darted for a moment across the dark face of Captain Reginald, and then passed away, leaving it whiter than before.

“Love levels all distinctions, young sir,” he said, haughtily. “If she loved him would not that be sufficient to break through all the cobweb barriers of rank? Have not all social ties been proven, thousands of times, to be more flimsy than paper walls before the irresistible whirlwind of human love and passion?”

Ray thought of Pet, and his dark cheek flushed slightly. What a convenient belief this would be, dared he adopt it. He loved her, and thrilling through his heart came the conviction that she loved him. Would she, too, break down these “paper walls” for his sake? Would she give up all the world for him, as thousands had done before, according to this strange man’s story?

“Your mother was a lady of rank is a lady of rank, for she still lives!” were the next words, spoken rapidly and excitedly, that aroused him from his dangerous reverie.

“My mother lives?” exclaimed Ray, springing to his feet.

“Yes.”

“Great Heaven! Where?”

“In England, most probably.”

“My mother lives? Can it be possible? Who is she? What is her name?” demanded Ray, like one beside himself.

“Lady Maude Villiers, Countess De Courcy!” exclaimed the outlaw, while his dark, fierce eyes blazed.

Ray stood for an instant paralyzed; then an expression of anger and utter incredulity flushed his face and flashed from his eyes.

“My mother the Countess De Courcy!” he said, scornfully. “Do you take me for a fool, Captain Reginald?”

“Young man, before high Heaven I swear I speak the truth!” said the outlaw, solemnly.

“Did not Ketura tell you the manner in which your father’s marriage was brought about?”

“That he inveigled my mother into it by some unlawful means? Yes; she told me that. But, good heavens! the idea of it being Lady Maude Percy! Oh, it is absurd, ridiculous, incredible, impossible!” exclaimed Ray, vehemently.

“It is the truth! Reginald Germaine, look me in the face, and see if I am not speaking the truth.”

Yes; no one could look in those dark, solemn eyes and doubt his words.

Stunned, giddy, bewildered, Ray dropped into his seat, feeling as if the room was whirling round him.

“And you who, in Heaven’s name are you, that know all this?” he passionately asked.

“That I will tell you presently. Suffice it to say that I do know that I am speaking God’s truth.”

“Angels in heaven! the Countess De Courcy my mother! From whom did you learn this?”

“From your father.”

“My father is dead.”

“Your father is not.”

“What?”

“Your father is not dead!”

“Sir, you are either mad or mocking me!” exclaimed Ray, springing fiercely to his feet.

“Young man, I am neither.”

“My father was drowned on his way to Van Diemen’s Land.”

“Your father was not.”

“Great heavens, am I sane or mad?” exclaimed Ray, in a loud, thrilling tone. “Man, demon, devil! whoever you³⁵⁴ are, was not the transport wrecked on her way from England?”

“She was.”

“And all on board lost?”

“No.”

“No?”

“No; I repeat. All were lost but two your father was one of these.”

“Heaven of heavens! And where is my father now?”

“That, too, you will learn anon. If you please, we will take things in the order of their occurring. Listen, now. Sit down and be calm; getting excited will do no good and only retard matters. The transport struck a sunken reef and was wrecked one stormy night. Your father and one sailor clung to a spar until daylight. By that time all the rest had disappeared were engulfed in the ocean and perished. Captain, sailors, convicts and all were equal, at last, in the boundless sea. Before noon the next day your father and the sailor were seen and picked up by a passing vessel.”

“Were you that sailor?”

“Patience, my dear sir,” said Captain Reginald, with a slight smile: “who I was does not matter just now. The ship was a merchantman, bound to a far-distant port. They took us with them, and over a year elapsed before our sails filled for ‘Merrie England’ again. We were in the South Seas then, as now, infested with pirates; and we never reached our island-home. For one day we were chased, overtaken, attacked and defeated by a pirate, and more than half our number found graves in the wide ocean, where many a brave heart had grown cold before, and will while the great sea rolls.”

“We?” broke in Ray at this point, fixing his eyes piercingly on the other’s face “we? Then you were the sailor saved with my father?”

Again that fleeting, quickly-fading, inexplicable smile flickered for an instant round the lips of the outlaw, as he said:

“Hasty and impatient yet. You must learn that great Christian virtue, patience, Mr. Germaine; one cannot well get through the world without it. Whether I was the sailor in question, or not, does not matter; suffice it to say, I was³⁵⁵ on board the ship when she was mastered by the pirates. They were short of hands, and the captain very graciously offered their lives to those that remained, on condition of their taking an oath of allegiance to him, and becoming rovers and free lords of the high seas. One or two honest souls preferred the red maws of hungry sharks who went swimming round the ships, casting longing eyes up at us, asking, as plainly as looks could speak, for another mouthful of an old salt. They were gratified, too; for three of as good, brave, warm-hearted fellows as ever climbed the rigging walked the plank that hour, and found their graves in the capacious stomachs of the ravenous devils of sharks. Poor fellows! if there is such a place as heaven they went there straight; for heaven is as easily reached by water as land. I suppose it doesn’t matter whether people are conveyed to it in canvas shrouds or inside of sharks.”

“Very true,” said Ray; “and you joined the pirates to aid my father?”

“Yes, we joined them; I was reckless and so was he; we did not care a fillip whether we cruised under the black flag or the red cross of St. George. Life was not of much value to him for its own sake, but he had to live for sundry notions—revenge, I fancy, being the strongest. Then he had a child living—you, Master Raymond; and though considerable of a devil himself, he had some human feeling left, and the only white spot in his soul was his love for you, for his mother, and for Lady Maude Percy. For he loved her then, loves her still, and will while life remains for him.”

“And yet she scorned him,” said Ray, with flashing eyes and dilating nostrils.

“Yes, she scorned him,” said the outlaw, “no one else could have done it and live. But he loved her, and though he had resolved never to see her more, yet her memory and that of her child were the only bright spots remaining in his darkened life.

“Well, Mr. Germaine, he sailed along with the pirates. They were a motley assembly, that crewmen from every nation, whom crime, wrong, revenge, hatred, or any other dark, dreadful cause had driven together here to wage eternal war against the world they hated, and find their only delight in scenes of blood, pillage and murder. There were 356 French, Spanish, Italians, English, Corsicans, and Heaven knows what besides, all jabbering together there raising the most infernal commotion sometimes, when they got drinking and fighting, that ever shamed Babel. The discipline was pretty strict, about as strict as it could by any possibility be among such a gang, but they would break out at times, and then the diabolical regions themselves might have found it hard to raise such scenes as ensued. There were worse crimes than murder committed, sometimes, by these human fiends; your father never took part in them, though; the memory of the past kept him from that. Standing by myself, sometimes, after witnessing things that would make your blood curdle, I used to wonder if there was a deep enough pit in hell for these fellows. When I was young I used to believe in such a place. Mr. Germaine, no doubt you do now; but somehow I got over that and sundry other pleasant beliefs of late years. Though, whenever I think of what I saw and heard on board of that cursed floating pandemonium, I wish, from the bottom of my soul, there was one to grill them alive for their deeds in the flesh.”

“Did my father ever take part in these horrible scenes?” asked Ray, with a slight shudder.

“No, never!” replied the outlaw, emphatically; “your father had been a gentleman once, and his whole nature revolted against this brutality. No, he never joined these fearful revels, but he fought like the very fiend himself in open warfare, especially against the English ships. When they were attacked he was worth the whole pirate crew together. He fought, and cut, and clove, and slashed them, like the devil and all his angels. Burning and smarting still under the sense of his mighty wrongs and degradations, he seemed determined to wipe out all his sufferings in their blood. Many an English heart grew cold in death to atone for the wrong one of their countrymen had done him. He had vowed vengeance against the whole nation, and I doubt whether St. Senanus himself kept a vow more religiously both in letter and spirit.

“Well, Mr. Germaine, we cruised along with these sea-wolves for some four or five months, and kept on at our old trade of throat-cutting, plank-walking, scuttling, sinking and³⁵⁷ burning ships. Sometimes, to vary the amusement, and breathe a spell, we used to go ashore and raise old Nick generally among the peaceable inhabitants of various sea-port towns and cities. These places very soon got too hot to hold us, and we never ventured back to the same place twice; for some of the men, getting tender-hearted at times, would take a fancy to the pretty wives and daughters of the good citizens, and carry off two or three of them for the benefit of sea-air. Of course there always was the devil to pay when these little escapades were found out, and it was like running our heads into a hornet’s-nest to go back. Your father wished to go to England and see after you, I fancy, but there was no opportunity. He managed to make his escape, however, after a long time; gave the high sea-wolves leg-bail one moonlight night, and was off. He reached England in safety, and there, the first news he had was his own death, and the marriage of Lady Maude Percy to the son of his enemy, Lord Ernest Villiers.

“The news nearly drove him mad, for his love for that beautiful lady amounted to frenzy. His intentions had been to seek you out; but when he heard of that marriage he fled from England as if the old demon was after him, and never rested till he reached the place where he knew he was most likely to meet his old friends, the pirates, again.

“Well, he found them, gave some plausible reason for his absence, and was admitted among that happy band of Christian brothers once more. He reached them just in the nick of time, too; for their commander was dead, and the whole crew were plunged in deepest affliction about it, as they were never likely to find another who could kill, slay, burn, and murder all before him, and send insubordinate sailors to kingdom come, with a rap of a marlin-spike, as neatly as he could. Your father had, from the first, been an immense favorite with them, and had obtained that powerful ascendancy over them that men of refined and strong minds always possess over coarse, brute natures; and besides, he had the amiable qualities of his lamented and accomplished predecessor in a very high degree. Therefore, no sooner did he arrive than he was unanimously and with one accord, elected to the vacant command, and stood in the shoes of the never-to-be-sufficiently-mourned-for Captain³⁵⁸ Diago who, having served his Satanic Majesty like a faithful servant for five-and-twenty years in this whirligig world, went to aid him in keeping the Kingdom Infernal in order, with five ounces of lead through his skull.

“Well, Mr. Germaine, under the command of your worthy father, who, by the way, dropped his alias of Germaine when he first joined the pirates, the ‘Diable Rouge,’ as we called, very appropriately, our ship, did a flourishing business, and sunk more goodly vessels belonging to their various Christian Majesties than all the other gay crafts sailing under the black flag at the time. He did some good, too, among his own crewput a stop to all their not-easily-to-be-told excesses, of more kinds than one, and let them know they had found their master at last. They were inclined to rebel, and did rebel at first; but he very coolly took out a brace of pistols and shot two of the ringleaders of the mutiny dead; and then, in a speech much shorter than sweet, gave them to understand

that every symptom of insubordination would, in the future, be put a stop to in the same gentle and fatherly way. Well, Mr. Germaine, would you believe it, instead of flying into a rage at this, and kicking up a rumpus, they immediately conceived an immense respect for him, and from that day no Caliph Haroun Alraschid ever reigned it more royally over his bastinadoed subjects than did Captain Reyour father, on board the 'Red Devil.' On board a French privateer, that we sent to Davy Jones' one night, we found a lot of ladies; and after sending their masculine friends to another, and it is to be hoped a better world, we transferred the fair portion of the cargo to our own ship. It was nothing unusual for us to take ladies in this way; but since your father took command they were always well and respectfully treated, and landed at the first port we touched, well supplied with money, and left to make the best of their way home. Therefore, our having three or four of the dear creatures on board now would not have been worthy of notice, had not one of them, a most beautiful French girl, and a daughter of a great magnate of the landa marquis de somethingtook it into her head to fall in love with our dare-devil of a captain; and when the ship arrived at the place where the rest were to be landed, mademoiselle absolutely 'put her foot down,' to use³⁵⁹ a common expression, and flatly refused to leave him. In vain he expostulated: told her he did not love her; that the life he led was too dangerous for her to think of sharing; that his life was never safe for two consecutive minutes; that she would be wretched with him, and so forth; in fact, he talked to her as if he had been the greatest old anchorite that ever looked upon the adorable sex as a special invention of Satanthe whole thing was the old story of St. Revere and Cathleen over again. Mademoiselle wouldn't listen to reason, and determined to have him at any price. Our moral young captain hesitated at first; but she was young, beautiful, 'rounded and ripe,' and he was only frail flesh and blood like the rest of us; and the result of all her tears and pleadings was, that one evening they both went on shore together, and perpetrated downright matrimony, in free and easy defiance of all the statutes and by-laws against bigamy that ever were made. Perhaps he thought he had made enough miserable for life, and that there might be some merit, after all, in making this infatuated young creature happy. It is really wonderful how girls, all the world over, will cling to the most undesirable set of men, black-legs, pugilists, loafers, all sorts of outlawed people, and give the cold shoulder to sensible, straight-forward, every-day Christians. You may talk to them till your tongue aches, and show them the evil of their ways in the most glaring colors, their reply will be: 'I love him,' and after that you might as well try to drain the Atlantic with a teaspoon as to make them give him up; they'll cling to him like a barnacle to the bottom of an old ship. But hold on! it won't do to indulge in a train of moral reflections; for if I begin I won't know when to stop.

"Well, our captain took his pretty wife to sea with himfor, though he offered to procure a home for her on any part of the globe, she would not hear of leaving him. He was totally unworthy of such strong, passionate love as she lavished upon him, but he did all he could under the circumstances to make her happy. He liked her, she was such a strong-

loving, brave-hearted girl but he did not, could not love her. It seemed as if all love had died out of his heart until the birth of his little daughter, and then some of the old slumbering affections awoke and centered in her.

"After her birth, his better nature, or what remained of it, seemed to awake, and he grew tired and sick of the evil life he led. He had glutted his vengeance sufficiently already: and she was continually urging him to give it up; and now that time had calmed his feelings concerning the marriage of Lady Maude, he wished to return to England and seek out his other child! Such was his continual resolve, but still nearly two years elapsed before he carried it into effect. At the end of that time he gave up his command of the 'Diable Rouge' to the chief mate, and with his wife and little dark-eyed daughter Rita, set out for England. No one knew him there; time and a tropical sun had changed him wonderfully, so he was free to pursue his investigations unmolested. He made every inquiry about his mother and son; but, of course, they were in vain, since long before, they had left for this place.

"But Fate, as if not tired of showering blows upon him, had still another in reserve for him. His little daughter Rita was lost one day in the great wilderness of London, and he never saw or heard of her after."

Captain Reginald paused for a moment and averted his face, while Ray continued to listen with breathless interest.

"His wife nearly went crazy," continued Captain Reginald at last, lifting his head and speaking very rapidly; "she was crazy for a time, and he grew desperate. He did not rejoin the pirates his very soul loathed them but he became a reckless man. He roamed the world over, smuggled, ran into danger, exposed himself to death every day and lived through all. His wife accompanied him in every danger; she never left his side during all these long, long, sorrowful years. Fate, Providence a superior power of some sort drove him to this coast; he found this cave, made it one of his rendezvous, and often came here, without dreaming that his mother and son were within a stone's throw of him. Truly, as I said, this world is full of paper walls, when mother, and father, and son dwell so near, and never until now met."

He paused and came over to Ray. He started to his feet and confronted the strange narrator with wonder-wide eyes.

"Restored now!" he said, wildly. "And have they met at last?"

"They have," replied the outlaw, with a strange, sad smile.

"My father! my father! where is he?" cried Ray, half delirious with all these revelations.

"He stands beside you! I am your father!" was the thrilling answer.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE ATTACK

“Then more fierce
The conflict grew: the din of arms; the yell
Of savage rage; the shriek of agony;
The groans of death, commingled with one sound
Of undistinguished horrors.”

Southey.

Silent, motionless, speechless, with surprise and many contending emotions, Ray stood gazing on his new-found father, like one suddenly stricken dumb. And with one hand resting on the young man's shoulders, the outlaw stood before him, looking in his pale, wild, excited face, with a strange, sad smile.

“My father!” repeated Ray, like one in a dream.

“Yes, even so; you have little cause, I fear, to be proud of the relationship. In the branded outlaw, smuggler, and pirate, Captain Reginald, you behold him who was once known as the Count Germaine, the husband of the beautiful, high-born Lady Maude Percy, and your father. Strange, strange, that we should meet thus.”

For some moments Ray paced up and down the floor rapidly and excitedly, with a face from which every trace of color had fled. His father stood watching him, one arm leaning on a sort of mantel, with a look half proud, half sad, half bitter, commingled on his still fine face.

“I see you are not disposed to acknowledge the relationship between us, sir,” he said, almost haughtily. “Well, I own you are not to blame for that. Let us part as we met first, as strangers; you go your way and I will continue mine! The world need never know that you are aught to the outlawed rover-chief. You are free, sir; free to go, and to take Miss Lawless with you, if you choose. I did wish to see my poor old mother before I left, but, perhaps, it is better as it is. I will leave this part of the world altogether, and return no more; the son of Maude Percy, the one love of my crime-darkened life, will never be compromised by me.”

There was something unspeakably sad in the proud, cold way this was said, compared with the deep melancholy, the bitter remorse in his dark eyes. There were tears that did honor to his manly heart in Ray's eyes, as he came over and held out his hand.

“My father, you wrong me,” he said, earnestly; “it was from no such unworthy feeling I hesitated to reply. These revelations came so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that for the time being I was stunned, and unable to comprehend all clearly. Outlaw or not, you are my father still; and as such, we will leave the world and its scorn together. If your crimes have been great, so have your wrongs; and let him who is without sin cast the first stone.”

The hands of father and son met in a strong, earnest clasp; but the outlaw's face was averted, and his strong chest rose and fell like the waves of a tempest-tossed sea.

At this moment the curtain was pushed aside, and the Frenchwoman Marguerite, stood before them.

"Well, Marguerite?" said the outlaw, looking up.

"Did you expect any of the men to return to-night?" she asked, looking with the same glance of sharp suspicion from one to the other.

"No. Why?"

"Some of them are without; they have given the signal."

"Oh, well, tell Bart to await them. I did not expect them, but something may have brought them back. Admit them at once."

The woman turned and left the room, and the outlaw, looking at Ray, said, with a sad smile:

"Poor Marguerite! she has been faithful through all, clinging to me with a love of which I am utterly unworthy. Poor Marguerite! she was deserving of a better fate."

"I suppose she has now quite recovered from the loss of her child," said Ray.

"Never! she has never been the same since. Dear Rita! sweet little angel! Oh! Raymond, I loved that child as"

The sentence was interrupted in a blood-chilling manner enough.

From the distant entrance of the cave came a wild shout of alarm, then an exulting cheer, lost in the sharp report of firearms and the trampling of many feet.

"Ha! what means this?" exclaimed the outlaw, as he dashed the curtain aside, and, closely followed by Ray, stood in the outer apartment.

The men were already on their feet, gazing in alarm in each other's faces, and involuntarily grasping their weapons. In the midst of them stood Pet and the Frenchwoman, listening in surprise and vague alarm.

Still the noise continued. Shouts, cheers, the trampling of feet, and the report of firearms, all commingling together. At the same instant Black Bart and two others rushed in, all covered with blood, and shouting:

"Betrayed! betrayed! that devil's whelp, Rozzel Garnet, has betrayed us, and the revenue officers are upon us red hot. Here they come with that cursed white-livered dog among them," yelled Black Bart, as he rushed in.

"Come with me, this is no place for us," said the woman Marguerite, as she seized Pet by the arm, and dragged her into the inner apartment.

In rushed the officers of the law, some twenty in all, three times the number of the smugglers; and their leader, in a loud, authoritative voice, commanded them to lay down their arms and surrender in the name of the law.

"Go to the devil!" was Black Bart's civil reply, as he took deliberate aim, and sent a bullet whistling through the heart of the unfortunate man.

A shout of rage arose from the officers at the fall of their leader, and they rushed precipitately upon the outlaws. But their welcome was a warm one; for the pirates, well-

knowing what would be their fate if captured alive, fought like demons, and soon the uproar in the vaults grew fearful.

“On, my brave fellows, on!” shouted Captain Reginald; “death here, if we must die, sooner than on the gallows. Ha! there goes Rozzel Garnet, the cursed infernal villain. He at least shall not escape.”

He raised his pistol, a sharp report followed, and a shriek of mortal agony; Rozzel Garnet bounded up in the air, and then fell heavily, shot through the brain.

The conflict now waxed fast and furious; but desperate as the smugglers were, they could not long hold out against three times their number, men better armed and prepared than themselves. The revenue officers closed on them; and in an incredibly short space of time three of the smugglers were securely bound, while three more lay stark and dead on the bloodstained, slippery floor of the cave.

Three times during the conflict had the arm of Ray Germaine interposed to save his father’s life, as he fought with the desperation of madness. But his single arm was unavailing to turn the fortune of war, and he saw his men falling helpless on every side of him. Still, he fought on with such desperate fierceness, that the revenue officers at last closed on him and bore him bleeding and wounded to the ground.

The conflict was ended, the revenue officers were victorious; but the victory was dearly bought, for more than half their number lay wounded or dead on the floor. They paused now, drew a long breath, and wiped the perspiration off their heated and inflamed faces. Wounded and bleeding, the outlaw-chief lay on the ground. Half delirious with conflicting feelings, Ray knelt beside him, and strove to staunch the flowing blood.

“It is useless,” he said, with a faint smile; “I have received my death-wound. Call Marguerite; I would see her before I die, and tell my mother, my poor mother would to God I could see her, too, once more,” he said, while a look of bitter sorrow and remorse passed over his pale face.

“You shall not die here!” exclaimed Ray, impetuously, starting up; “and you shall see her, in spite of them all. Mr. Chesny,” he added, turning to the present leader of the revenue officers, “will you permit some of your men to bear Captain Reginald up to Old Barrens Cottage immediately?”

The gentleman addressed, who knew Ray intimately, turned round in surprise. In the heat of the conflict he had not perceived him, and now he looked his astonishment at the unexpected rencontre.

“You here, Mr. Germaine!” he exclaimed. “Why, how comes this?”

“I was brought here a prisoner never mind that,” said Ray, impatiently; “will you permit me to have this wounded man removed?”

“Impossible, my dear fellow. He is the notorious leader of this villainous gangan outlaw with a price on his head. I am responsible for his safe delivery into the hands of justice.”

“And those hands he will never reach! Do you not see he is dying?” said Ray, passionately. “Look at him, Chesny, do you think you could bring him to Judestown in that state? Do you think he would ever reach it alive?”

“Mr. Germaine, I should like to oblige you”

“Do it, then. Let me take him to the cottage, and I will be responsible for his not escaping. Nonsense, Chesny! You see it is impossible for him to be taken further. You must have him taken there. Sure some of you may guard the house if you fear his escaping.”

“Be it so, then. Come, boys, construct something to carry this wounded man to Old Barrens Cottage on. Hallo! Miss Lawless, by all that’s glorious!” exclaimed the officers as Pet, with Marguerite, appeared from the inner room.

“How do you do, Mr. Chesny? Oh, what a dreadful night this has been!” said Pet, with a shudder. “Good Heavens! is Captain Reginald dead?” she exclaimed, in consternation.

“No; wounded only; he is to be conveyed to Old Barrens Cottage. How in the world did you get here, Miss Pet?”

“Oh, they carried me off. Rozzel Garnet did.”

“Well, you are the last he will carry off, I fancy. Here he lies!” said the man, touching the stark, ghastly form slightly with his foot.

“Dead!” said Pet, turning pale.

“Yes; the smuggler-chief there sent a bullet through him the first thing; and served him right, too, for peaching as he did, the mean cuss! Hurry up, boys! Oh! you’ve got through, I see. Lift him on it, nowgently, gently, there; you have stopped the blood, I see, Germaine; that’s right. Ha! whom have we here?” he exclaimed, as his eyes fell on the woman Marguerite, who, white and cold as he by whose side she knelt, held the head of the wounded chief on her breast, and gently wiped the cold sweat off his face. “Who is the woman?”

“His wife,” said Ray, in a low tone. “Let her accompany him. Miss Lawless, will you accept my escort from this den of horrors?”

“Oh, Ray! what a night this has been! And oh, I am so sorry Captain Reginald is wounded. Do you know, I liked him real well!”

Ray made no reply. In silence he drew Pet’s arm through his, and she looking at him was almost startled to see, his face so stern, so set, so fearfully white.

The men bearing the wounded form of Captain Reginald had already started from the cave. Marguerite, who had uttered but one passionate exclamation, followed, still and silent, and then came Ray and Pet, with a few of the revenue officers bringing up the rear. The melancholy procession passed from the gloomy cave, now indeed a cave of horrors, with its bloody and unburied dead; and Pet drew a long, deep breath of intense relief and thankfulness as she stood once more in the open air.

“Let me run on first and tell Erminie,” said Pet. “It may startle her if she is not forewarned; and then, if you like, I will ride to Judestown for the doctor. There can be no danger now.”

Ray, who would not leave his father, consented; and Pet darted off over the slippery shingle and up the rocks like a young mountain deer. The men proceeded slowly with their burden, who lay with his white face upturned in the sad, solemn starlight; and who

may tell the bitter, bitter, remorseful thoughts of the dark, sorrowful past, swelling in his proud heart there. Ray and Marguerite, one on each side, were mute, too. He, with his eyes alternately fixed on the ground, and on the wounded man's face, trying to realize the astounding revelations of the night; she looking straight before her into the darkness, with her customary look of fierce, sullen despair, looking what she was a wretched, broken-hearted woman.

There were lights and a subdued bustle in the cottage³⁶⁷ when they reached it. Erminie, white and trembling, met them at the door. Pet had told her all so breathlessly, and then had mounted Ray's horse and darted off for Judestown so quickly, that Erminie even yet only half comprehended what had taken place.

There was no time now for explanation, however. The wounded man was laid on the large, soft lounge in the parlor; and then Chesny, leaving one of his men as guard, more for form's sake than anything else, took his departure.

"Where is my grandmother, Erminie?" asked Ray, whose white, stern face, had terrified her from the first.

"In bed."

"Then go up and waken her."

"Waken her at this hour! Why, Ray!"

"Yes; you must, I tell you. Go at once."

Ray's fiercely-impatient manner and strange excitement terrified Erminie more and more; but still she ventured to lift up her voice in feeble expostulation.

"What good will it do to arouse her? She can be of no service here."

"Erminie, I tell you, you must!" passionately exclaimed Ray; "else I will go myself. Of no service here! Yonder dying man is her son her long-lost son supposed to have been drowned. Will you go, now?"

One moment's astounded pause, and then Erminie flew up-stairs, and entered the aged gipsy's room.

She was lying asleep, but she never slept soundly, and she opened her eyes and looked up as Erminie entered.

"Well, what is the matter?" she said, curtly.

"Oh, grandmother! you must get up!" cried Erminie, in strong agitation. "There is a man down-stairs wishes to see you."

"A man wishing to see me? What do you mean?" asked the gipsy, knitting her dark brows.

"Oh, grandmother! there is news of your son."

"My son! are you going mad, girl?" cried Ketura, getting up on her elbows unassisted, for the first time in years; and glaring upon her with her hollow, lurid eyes.

"Oh, grandmother! grandmother! we were deceived you were deceived Ray says he was not drowned."

"Not drowned!" She passed her hand over her face with a bewildered look.

"No; it was a false report. He lives!"

With a sharp, wild cry strange, eerie cry, breaking the dead silence of the night, the woman Ketura strove to rise. The effort was a failure. She fell back, while every feature was distorted with wildest agony.

"Girl! girl! what have you said?" she cried out. "Did you say my sonmy Reginaldlives?"

"He does! he lives! He is here to see you once more before he dies," said Ray, entering abruptly. "Hasten, Erminie! there is no time to lose."

He quitted the room as abruptly as he had entered it, and Erminie approached the bed to assist Ketura to dress. The gipsy lay like one stunned, her wild, hollow eyes rolling vacantly, her hands so tightly clenched that the nails sunk into the skin. It was evident she could not yet fully realize or comprehend what she had heard; the words had stunned her, numbing all sense and feeling.

Erminie lost no time in talking. Swiftly she proceeded to array the gipsy in a large, wadded gown, something like a gentleman's robe de chambre, of dark, soft woolen stuff. Ketura quietly submitted, breathing hard and fast, and glaring with her wild, unearthly eyes round the room, trying still to realize what she had heardthat her son still lived. This done, Erminie ran down-stairs and apprised Ray.

"Now, how is she to be taken down-stairs?" she asked. "Remember, she has not left her room for years."

Ray was walking rapidly up and down the room, but paused when the low, sweet voice of Erminie fell on his ear. The Frenchwoman, Marguerite, who was kneeling beside her husband, gazing fixedly upon him, looked up for an instant, and then resumed her unwavering gaze as before.

"I will place her in her chair and carry her down," said Ray, as he took the staircase almost at a bound.

There was little difficulty in doing this; for the gaunt, powerful frame of the once majestic gipsy queen, wasted and worn by illness and old age, was light and easily lifted, now. Ray took her in his strong arms and placed her gently in her large elbow-chair, and then proceeded to convey her below.

She laid her hand on his arm, and looked up in his face with a piteous look.

"Oh, Ray! what have you told me? Is Reginald living still?"

It was so strange and so sad to hear herthat haughty, fierce, passionate womanspeak in a tone like that, quick tears rushed to the gentle eyes of Erminie.

"Yes, he is livinghe is down-stairs; but he has only come here to die!" answered Ray, hurriedly.

"Oh, Reginald! Reginald! Oh, my son! thank God for this!" she passionately cried out.

For many and many a year that sacred name had never crossed her lips. It sent a thrill, now, through the heart of Ray, as he bore her into the room where the wounded man lay.

Who shall describe that meeting? Long, long years of darkest crime and wildest woe had intervened since that lowering, lamentable day on which they had parted last. Years full of change, and sorrow, and sin, and remorseyears that had changed the powerful,

passionate, majestic gipsy queen into the helpless, powerless paralytic she was now years that had changed the handsome, high-spirited, gallant youth into the bronzed, hardened, guilty man lying there dying, passing slowly out into the dread unknown. Yet, despite time, and change, and years, they knew each other at the first glance.

"Mother," said the smuggler, with a faint, strange smile.

"Oh, my son! my son! Oh, my Reginald! my only son!" was her passionate cry. "Has the great sea given up its dead, that I see you again?"

"You with all the world were deceived, mother. When I am gone, you will learn all. Mother, I have only come here to die."

Her feeble arms were clasped around him; she did not seem to heed his words, as her devouring eyes were riveted on his face. He lay breathing quickly and laboriously, his face full of bitter sadness as he saw the wreck of what had once been his mother. The woman Marguerite had drawn back, and stood gazing on Ketura with a sort of still amaze. Ray was leaning against the mantel, his elbow resting on it, and his face shaded by his dark, falling hair; and Erminie, crouched on a low seat, white and trembling, sat watching all. So they remained for a long time, the dull, heavy ticking of the clock and a death watch on the wall alone breaking the dreamy silence. It was an eerie scene and an eerie hour, and a feeling of strange awe made Erminie hold her very breath, wondering how this strange, unnatural silence was to end.

The quick, sharp gallop of horses' feet broke it, at last; and the next instant, Pet, flushed and excited, burst in, followed by the doctor and by Ranty. All paused in the door-way, and stood regarding with silent wonder, the scene before them.

Ray lifted his head, and going over, touched Ketura on the arm, saying, in a low voice:

"Leave him for a moment; here is the doctor come to examine his wounds."

Her weak arms were easily unclasped, and she permitted herself to be borne away. Of all the strange things that had occurred that night none seemed stranger to Ray than this sudden and wonderful quietude that had come over his fierce, passionate grandmother.

The doctor approached his patient to examine his wounds, and Pet, going over, began conversing in a low tone with Erminie, telling her how she had encountered Ranty. Ray stood watching the doctor, with interest and anxiety; and as, after a prolonged examination, he arose, he approached him and said, hurriedly:

"Well, doctor?"

The doctor shook his head.

"He may linger two, three days, perhaps, but certainly not longer. Nothing can save him."

Ray's very breath seemed to stop as he listened, till it became painful for those around to listen for its return. The wounded man himself looked up and beckoned Ray to approach.

"I knew I was done for," he said, with a feeble smile. "I was surgeon enough to know it was a mortal wound. How long does he say I may live?"

"Two or three days," said Ray, in a choking voice.

"So long?" said the smuggler, a dark shade passing over his face. "I did not think to cumber the earth such a length of time. How does she bear it?" pointing to his mother.

"She has not heard it yet; she seems to have fallen into a kind of unnatural apathy. The shock has been too much for her."

"Poor mother!" he said, in that same tone of bitter remorse Ray had heard him use before; "her worst crime was loving me too well. Bring her here; I have something to say to her which may as well be said now."

Ray carried over the almost motionless form of the aged gipsy. The stricken lioness was a pitiable sight in her aged helplessness.

"Mother," said the smuggler, taking the withered, blackened hand in his, and looking sadly in the vacant face, that seemed striving to comprehend what had stunned her and bewildered her so strangely.

His voice recalled her again, and she turned her hollow eyes upon him. Awful eyes they werelike red-hot coals in a bleached skull.

"Mother, listen to me. I have but a short time to live, and I cannot die till I learn if you have kept your vow of vengeance, made long ago against Lord De Courcy."

"I have! I have!" she exclaimed, rousing to something like her old fierceness. "Oh, Reginald! you have been avenged. I have wrung drops of blood from their hearts, even as they wrung them from mine. Yes, yes! I have avenged you! They, too, know what it is to lose a child!"

"Mother! mother! what have you done?"

"I stole their child! their infant daughter the heiress of all the De Courcys, the last of her line! Yes, I stole her!" She fairly shrieked now, with blazing eyes. "I vowed to bring her up in sin and pollution, and I would have done so, too, if I had not been stricken with a living death. Oh, Reginald! your mother avenged you! A child for a child! They banished you, and I stole their heir!"

"Oh, mother! mother! what is this you have donewhere is that child now?"

"Yonder!" cried the gipsy, with a sort of fierce, passionate cry, pointing one shaking finger toward the terrified Erminie; "there she stands; Erminie Seyton, the heiress of the Earl and Countess De Courcy. The daughter of an earl has toiled like a menial for your mother, Reginald, all her life. There she stands the lost daughter and heiress of Lord De Courcy!"

An awful silence fell for a moment on all, broken first by the impetuous Ranty Lawless.

"Lord and Lady De Courcy! why, they are here in American Baltimore, now. Good heavens! can our Erminie be anything to them? Oh, I knew she was; I saw the likeness the very first moment we met."

"Who says Lord and Lady De Courcy are here?" cried the smuggler, half-rising himself in his excitement.

"I do!" said Ranty, stepping forward; "they came out in our ship, and I was with them as far as Washington city. Last night, I learned that they had arrived at Baltimore, where a friend of Lady De Courcy's, an Englishman, is residing."

All he had heard, all that had passed before, nothing had affected him like that. His chest rose and fell with his long, hard, labored breathing and his face, white before, was livid now as that of the dead.

"So near! so near! Can it be that I will see her once more? And her child here, too, where is she? I must see her!"

Ray, who had listened like one transfixed to his grandmother's revelations, made a motion to Erminie to approach. Unable to comprehend or realize what she heard, she came over and sunk down on her knees beside him.

He took her hand in his, and pushed back the pale golden hair off her brow, and gazed long and earnestly in her pale but wondrous lovely young face.

"Her father's eyes and hair, and features; her mother's form and expression; the noble brow and regal bearing of her father's race spiritualized and softened. Yes, a true De Courcy, and yet like her mother, too. Ray come here."

He went over and took his place by Erminie.

"Do you know she is your sister, your mother's child?" asked the wounded man.

"I know it now; I did not before," was the awe-struck answer.

"You have heard she is in Baltimore?"

"I have."

"Then go there, immediately; ride as you never before in your life, and tell them all. Bring her here; I would see her again before I die."

Ray started to his feet.

"Tell her who you are, yourself her son; it will be better so. When they learn their long-lost daughter is here they will need no incentive to have them haste. One act of justice must be rendered before I die."

"Let me accompany you," said Ranty, as Ray started from the house. "I know exactly where to find them. Saints and angels! where will the revelations of this night end?"

There was no reply from Ray; he could make none; his brains were whirling as if mad. He sprung on his horse; Ranty followed, and in another instant they were flying on like the wind toward Judestown.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

LADY MAUDE

“With wild surprise
As if to marble struck, devoid of sense,
A moment motionless she stood.”
Thomson.

In an elegantly-furnished room, in a most elegant private mansion, a lady, still young and exceedingly beautiful, sat with her head leaning on her hand, her eyes fixed thoughtfully and somewhat sadly on the floor. A little paler the noble brow, and a little graver and sweeter the lovely face, and a little more passive and less proud the soft, dark eyes; but in all else Maude, Countess De Courcy, was unchanged. The rich, black hair, still fell in fleecy, silken ringlets round the sweet, moonlit face; the tender smile was as bright and beautiful, and the graceful form as superb and faultless as ever. There was a dreamy, far-off look in her dark, beautiful eyes, as she watched the setting sun look that seemed to say her thoughts were wandering in the far-off regions of the shadowy past.

The lady was not alone. Half-buried in the downy depths of a velvet-cushioned lounge reclined a proud, haughty, somewhat supercilious-looking young lady, most magnificently dressed. She was handsome, too, very handsome despite her tossy, consequential air; but Lady Rita, only daughter and heiress of Lord De Courcy, might be pardoned for feeling herself somebody above the common. Her form was slight and girlish, but perfect in all its proportions, and displayed to the best advantage by her elegant robe; her complexion was dark as a Spaniard's, but the large, black eyes and shining black hair, of purplish luster, were magnificent. Diamond pendants flashed and glittered in her small ears, glaring through the shadowy masses of rich, jetty hair, whenever she moved, like sparks of fire. In one hand she held a richly-inlaid fan, and with the other she languidly patted a beautiful little Blenheim spaniel that crouched at her feet and watched her with his soft, tender, brown eyes.

“Mamma,” said the young lady, looking up after a pause.

The countess gave a slight start, like one suddenly awakened from a reverie, drew a deep breath, and turned round.

“Well, my dear,” she said.

“What was that papa and Mr. Leicester were saying this morning about smugglers, or outlaws, or some other sort of horrors that were near here?”

“Oh, Mr. Leicester was only telling your papa that there were some of these people hidden down in a country town, but a considerable distance from this. It seems they forcibly abducted a young lady not long since; quite a celebrated beauty, too, and most respectable.”

“Dear me! what a dreadful place this must be, where such things are permitted,” said the young lady, shrugging her shoulders; “you don’t think there is any danger of their attacking us, mamma?”

“No, I think not,” said Lady Maude, smiling; “you need not alarm yourself, my dear; those desperate people are a long way off, and are probably arrested before this. You need not alarm yourself in the least.”

There was a tap at the door at this moment, and the next a servant entered to announce: “Gentlemen down-stairs wishing to see Lady De Courcy.”

“Did they send up their names?” said the lady.

“No, my lady. One of them said he wanted to see you³⁷⁵ on most important business, but he did not send his name.”

“On important business? Who can it be?” said Lady Maude, somewhat surprised. “Very well, I will be down directly.”

Ten minutes after the drawing-room door opened, two gentlemen, both young, arose and returned her bow.

But why, after the first glance, does every trace of color fly from the face of Lady De Courcy? Why do her eyes dilate and dilate as they rest on the dark, handsome face of one of her visitors? Why does she reel as if struck a blow, and grasp a chair near for support. And why, standing there, and holding it tightly, does her eyes still remain riveted to his face, while her breath comes quick and hard?

Reader, she sees standing before her the living embodiment of her early girlhood whom she thinks buried far under the wild sea!

“Lady De Courcy, I believe?” said the young gentleman, his own face somewhat agitated. His voice, too!

Lady Maude, feeling as though she should faint, sunk into a chair, and forced herself to say:

“Yes, sir. And yours”

She paused.

“Is Raymond Germaine.”

Germaine, too his name! What feeling was it that set her heart beating so wildly as she gazed on that dark, handsome face, and manly form.

He seemed moved, too, but in a less degree than the lady.

There was no time to lose, and he began, hurriedly:

“Madam, excuse my seeming presumption, but may I beg to ask: Were you not married before before you became the wife of the present Earl De Courcy?”

The room seemed swimming around her. Had the sea given up its dead, that Reginald Germaine should thus stand before her? From her white, trembling lips, there dropped an almost inaudible.

“Yes!”

“And you had a child a son by that marriage?” went on Ray, who felt circumlocution, under the present circumstances, would be useless.

Another trembling "Yes!" from the pallid lips.

"You were told he died?"

She bent her head, silent and speechless.

"Madam Lady De Courcy they deceived you. That child did not die!"

White and tottering, she arose and stood on her feet.

"He did not die. Reginald Germaine told you so for his own ends. That child lived!"

Her lips parted, but no sound came forth; her eyes, wild now, were riveted to the face of the speaker.

"The child lived, grew up, was brought to America, and lives still."

"Oh, saints in heaven! What do I hear? My son my child lives still! Heaven of heavens!

You wear the face and form of Reginald Germaine can it be that you"

"Even so, madam, Countess De Courcy, I am his son and yours!"

Was it his bold, open face, or her mother's heart, that told Lady Maude he spoke the truth? With a mighty cry, she held out her arms, and the next moment he was clasped in a wild embrace.

The other young gentleman seemed suddenly to have found some very absorbing prospect out of the window that completely enchained his attention, and rendered the frequent use of his handkerchief necessary. He did not turn round for nearly fifteen minutes, and then the new-found mother and son were sitting together on the sofa, with their hands clasped, talking in a low tone, while her eyes never wandered from his face.

He was telling her the story of his father, of his escape, of his subsequent life, of their meeting, and of his confession and dying request.

Lady Maude's face, as she listened, grew so white and fixed and rigid that you might have thought it marble, save for the horror unspeakable, the terrible look burning in the great, black eyes. No word fell from her lips; her very heart seemed congealing, petrifying; she sat like one transformed to stone.

"And now, my dearest mother," said Ray, "I have another revelation to make to you one that, I hope, will in some measure atone for the necessary pain the one I have just been making has caused you."

She did not speak; she sat as cold and white as marble.

"You had another child a daughter?" he began, hesitatingly.

"I had; she is lost!" said Lady Maude, in a tone so altered that even Ranty started.

"Did she die?" Ray asked, curiously.

"I do not know; she was stolen, I think."

"Yes; she was stolen. My grandmother, Ketura, whom I have told you of she stole her, and brought her here at the same time she brought me."

There was a sort of gasp, and Lady Maude half-started to her feet.

"Oh, my God! Tell me tell me is she"

"She is alive and well, and knows all."

"Thank God oh, thank God for this!" she cried, as she sunk down and hid her face in her hands.

There was a long silence. Then Lady Maude, starting to her feet, cried out, passionately: "Where is she? where is she? Take me to her! My precious Erminie! my long-lost darling! Oh, Raymond, take me to Erminie!"

"Will you go now? Ought not Lord De Courcy" began Ray, hesitatingly, when she interrupted him with:

"Oh, yes, yes! He must hear all, and come with us, too. Excuse me one moment. I think he must have come."

She passed from the room, but oh, with a face so different from that she wore when entering! Then she had fancied herself childless, and now two had been given her, as if from the dead. And Reginald Germaine, too, he whom she thought lost at sea was living yet, and she was to see him once more. She trembled so, as she thought of him, that she almost sunk down as she walked.

The two in the parlor saw a tall, distinguished-looking man pass in through the front-door, and the next moment a quick, decided footstep in the hall, and then a clear, pleasant voice, saying:

"Got back, you see, Maude. Why, what's the matter?"

Her reply was too low to be heard, but both passed upstairs together.

"Lord De Courcy," said Ranty, listening.

"I thought you said her ladyship knew you?" said Ray. "She did not seem to do so while here."

"All your fault," said Ranty. "You didn't give her time to bless herself before you opened your broadside of knock-down facts; and after hearing all the astounding and unexpected things you had to tell her, of course it couldn't be expected she could think of a common, every-day mortal like me. Heigho! And so Erminie is a great lady now? I suppose I ought to be glad, Ray, but, if you'll believe it, upon my word and honor, I'm not. Of course, she'll have hundreds of suitors, now; and even if she loved me which I don't suppose she did that high and mighty seignior, her father, wouldn't let her have anything to do with a poor sailor. Ray, I tell you what, ever since I heard it I have been wishing, in the most diabolical manner, that it might turn out to be a false report. It may not sound friendly nor Christian-like to wish it, Ray, but I do wish it I wish she had not a red cent in the world. I might have had some chance, then."

Ray, looking earnestly and thoughtfully at the flowers in the carpet, heard scarcely a word of this address. Ranty watched him for a short time, as if waiting for an answer; and then leaning back in his chair, began whistling softly, as if keeping up an accompaniment to his thoughts.

The moments passed on. Half an hour elapsed, then an hour, and it seemed to the impatient Ray. In his restlessness, he paced rapidly up and down, with knit brows, casting quick, restless glances at the door.

It opened at last, and Lady Maude, dressed as if for a journey, entered, leaning on her husband's arm. Both were very pale; and Lady Maude's eyes looked as if she had been

weeping. But she was more composed and natural-looking than when she had left the room.

Ray stopped in his walk, and met the eyes of Lord De Courcy.

"Mr. Germaine," he said, holding out his hand, "for your mother's sake, you must look upon me as a father!"

Ray bent over the hand he extended with a look of deep gratitude, such as no words could express.

"Lady Maude has told me all," continued his lordship. "And at the request of the unhappy man whom you say is dying, we will start with you immediately."

As Ray bowed, Ranty arose, and the earl caught sight of him.

"Mr. Lawless," he exclaimed, in pleased surprise; "I did not expect to meet you here. My dear, you remember the gallant preserver of Rita's life?"

Ranty actually blushed at the epithet, coming as it did from the father of Erminie.

"Would you wish to see Lady Rita? She is up-stairs."

"Thank you, my lord. Some other time I will have that pleasure," answered Ranty. "At present, we have no time to spare; every minute is precious."

Without further parley, the whole party left the house. A carriage and fast horses were in waiting; and a few moments after they were on their way.

During the journey, there was a chance to explain everything more fully than had yet been done, and Ray entered willingly into all particulars.

Lord and Lady De Courcy seemed never tired of asking questions concerning Erminie; and Ray expatiated on her goodness and beauty in a way to satisfy even the most exacting.

"Being so beautiful, of course she might have had many suitors?" said Lady Maude, somewhat anxiously.

"She might have had, my dear mother." She seemed so strongly attached to him already that it became quite natural to Ray to call her mother. "But she would listen to none of them."

"Thank Heaven for that!" said Lady Maude, drawing a deep breath of relief. "Then her affections are still her own?"

"On that point I am not informed. Perhaps," said Ray, glancing at Ranty with a wicked look in his dark eyes, "Mr. Lawless can throw a little light on the subject. He and Erminie are very confidential friends!"

Poor Ranty reddened to the very roots of his hair under the imputation, and the look that Lord and Lady De Courcy gave him.

"Never mind, my dear boy," said Lord De Courcy, kindly, as he saw his confusion.

"Erminie herself shall tell us all about it when we see her."

The journey was a very sad and silent one, despite all. The thought of him who lay dying checked their joy at the approaching reunion; and the fear that he might be dead hung like a pall over the heart of Ray.

On arriving at Judestown, they procured a conveyance from Mr. Gudge, and started at a rapid pace for the Old Barrens Cottage.

It was nearly dark when they reached it, and all around was ominously silent and still. Ray's heart sunk as he pushed open the door and entered.

The first person he encountered was Pet Lawless, who uttered an exclamation of joy as she beheld him.

"Oh, Petronilla! is he alive yet?" he asked.

"Just alive, and no more. The doctor says he has only a few hours to live."

"Thank Heaven that we find him alive at all," said Ray.

Then motioning the others to follow, he passed into the sitting-room.

It was tenanted only by the dying man and his wife, Marguerite. She crouched beside him just as Ray had seen her last, just as if she had never risen a second since.

The earl and countess followed, Ranty coming last. Lady Maude trembled like an aspen, and clung to her husband's arm for support.

"Father!" said Ray, going over, and bending down.

He opened his eyes and looked up, vacantly at first, but with brighter light when he saw who it was.

"Back at last!" he exclaimed. "And have you seen her?"

"She is here beside you. Come, my dearest mother!"

He supported the trembling form of Lady Maude to the couch, and she sunk down beside it on her knees, and hid her face in her hands.

A light seemed to flash into the wan face, lighting up the sunken eyes of the dying man. He half-raised his hand, as if to take hers, and then it fell heavily on the quilt.

"Maude! Maude!" he cried out, "can you forgive me before I die?"

She looked up, lifted her pale, beautiful face to his, laid her hand on his pallid brow, and softly and sweetly murmured:

"Yes, as I hope to be forgiven. May God forgive you, Reginald, as I do."

His strong chest heaved, rose and fell, as if the spirit within were trying to burst its bonds before the time.

"You have heard all, Maude?"

"Yes; all."

"And you forgive me the great wrong I did you, Maude?"

"Freely and fully, from my heart and soul."

"And you will acknowledge our son when I am gone? Oh, Maude! I loved you through all. I was unworthy of you; but I loved you as none other loved before. Maude, where is he?"

"Who? Reginald?"

"Your Lord De Courcy. Is he here?"

"Yes. My dear old friend, I am sorry for this," said the earl, stepping forward.

The dying rover held out his hand, and Lord De Courcy took it in his strong clasp.

"I am glad you have come! I am glad you are her protector through life. Do you remember our last parting, Lord Ernest?"

"That night? Yes."

"Ah! that night! that night! What a different man I might have lived and died but for that dark, sorrowful night! What trouble and sorrow that night caused you, too! It turned my poor mother's brain, Lord Ernest; and she stole your child!"

"I know it."

"Do you not want to see her! have you seen her?"

"Not yet. I will see her soon."

"Where is my daughter, Raymond?" asked Lady Maude, looking wistfully round.

"Up-stairs with her grandmother, madam," said Pet, respectfully. "She does not know you are here. Shall I go and tell her."

"Not just yet," said Lord De Courcy. "My dearest love, subdue your impatience for a few moments—remember, you are in the presence of the dying. You have waited for her all these years—you can afford to wait a few moments longer now."

"How is my grandmother?" asked Ray, in a low tone, of Pet.

"The same as you saw her last—in a sort of dull stupor³⁸² all the time; neither sees, hears, nor feels, apparently. They brought her upstairs this morning, and Erminie has been with her since."

"How does Erminie bear the news of her new-found parents?"

"Very quietly—with a sort of still, deep joy not to be expressed in words. She says she always knew that sweet, lovely lady with the soft, beautiful eyes was something to her, used to come to her in dreams, or something odd, ain't it? And she's your mother, too, Ray! I declare, it's all the strangest and most romantic thing I ever heard of!"

"We, too, have had our troubles," said the dying man, making a faint motion toward Marguerite. "Perhaps it was a just retribution of heaven for what you were made to suffer. We, too lost a child; had she lived, even I might have been a different man to-day. She was lost, and all that was originally good in my nature went with her. My poor little Rita!"

"What did you say? Rita!" exclaimed Maude, as she and her husband gave a simultaneous start.

"Yes. Marguerite was her name; Rita we always called her—why?" he asked, in surprise.

"She was lost, did you say? How? did she die?" breathlessly demanded Lady Maude.

"No; she was carried off, perhaps by gipsies—she was kidnapped."

"How old was she at the time?"

"About two years old—why?" for the first time spoke the woman Marguerite, starting up.

"Was she dark, with black hair and eyes."

"Yes, yes, yes! Oh, Mon Dieu! why?"

"Did she wear a cross upon her neck bearing the initials 'M. I. L.?' " wildly broke in Marguerite. "A little gold cross with these letters, which was mine when I was a girl, and

stood for Marguerite Isabella Landry, my maiden name, was round her neck. Oh, madam! in heaven's name, do you know anything of my child?"

"I do! I do! I found her, I brought her up as my own and she lives with me now. Just Heaven! how mysterious are thy ways!" exclaimed the awe-struck Lady Maude.

There was a wild cry, and the woman, Marguerite, fell fainting on the floor.

Ray bore her away in his arms, and Pet hastened out to attend her. At the same moment a change came over the face of the gipsy's son a dark shadow from an invisible winged herald of coming death.

Both held their breath. Great throes shook the strong form before them, and the deathdew stood in great drops on his brow. Lady Maude wiped them off, pale with awe.

The mighty death agony ceased at last and there came a great calm. He opened his eyes and fixed them, with a look of unspeakable love, on the face bending over him.

"Maude," he whispered, in a voice so low that it was scarcely audible, "say once more you forgive me."

She took his cold hand in both hers, and bending down, touched her lips to his pale brow, while her tears fell fast on his face.

The hand she held grew stiff in her clasp; she lifted up her head and her heart for an instant, almost ceased to beat. Reginald Germaine, the wronged, the guilty, was dead!

"May God have mercy on his soul!" fervently exclaimed Lady Maude.

"Amen," sadly and solemnly responded her husband.

Both arose. At the same moment the door opened and Ray appeared, holding the pale and agitated Erminie by the hand.

"Your father and mother, Erminie," he briefly said, as he again went out and closed the door.

And in the dread, chilling presence of the dead, the long-divided parents and child were reunited at last!

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE DAWN OF A BRIGHTER DAY

“Thoughts that frown upon our mirth
Will smile upon our sorrow;
And many dark fears of to-day
May be bright hopes to-morrow.”

Pinckney.

That same night, within that same hour, when her son lay cold and stark in the room below, the fierce, turbulent spirit of the gipsy queen passed away.

Death above, and death below the cold, dread, invisible presence pervading the whole house with a chilling awe. Voices were hushed to lowest whispers, footfalls were muffled; the deep, fervent joy of the reunited held in check by its dread majesty.

There was a subdued luster through the house when morning broke. Pet and Erminie, very pale and very silent, had arrayed mother and son for the grave; and now, side by side, they lay, white and still, and rigid, in the pale, leaden dawn of the morning that dawned for them in vain. Stern, and still, and silent, Ray sat by the bedside, gazing in tearless grief on the lifeless forms before him. Near him sat Lord De Courcy, with a look of deep sadness, which not even the joy of meeting Erminie could totally efface from his fine features. Kneeling beside her dead husband, with her face hidden in her hands, was the woman Marguerite, swaying backward and forward in voiceless grief. Her first cry had been to be restored to her child, but Lady Maude had soothed her and prevailed upon her to wait until they could all return to the city together. Worn out and fatigued by her rapid journey, Lady Maude lay asleep in Erminie's little bed; and Erminie, sitting beside her with her arms clasped round her neck, her beautiful head, with its wreath³⁸⁵ of golden hair lying on her breast, was asleep too. Ranty Lawless had ridden off to Judestown to prepare for the funeral, good-naturedly taking upon himself all the trouble in order to spare Ray. And lastly Petronilla, looking as still and serious as though a laugh had never dimpled her cherry lips, moved on tip-toe about the house, dressing everything in white, arranging flowers in vases, and imparting a softened beauty to the grim reality of death.

Early in the day the news spread abroad, and sympathizing neighbors began to drop in with offers of aid and assistance. Among them came the admiral, looking unspeakably doleful and lugubrious; and when Pet, in as few words as possible, related what had happened, the dear, crusty, soft-hearted old beau was so affected that he was obliged to rush from the house and wipe his stormy old eyes, unseen, under the lee of Ringbone, which gaunt quadruped regarded him with displeased surprise. Then came Mr. Toosypegs and Miss Priscilla, whose sharp, cankerous face had grown ten degrees more unyieldingly sour and acid with every passing year. Poor Mr. Toosypegs was so sincerely

grieved at the death of "Mrs. Ketura," that he took out his bandanna and relieved his mind, then and there, by a good hearty cry.

It was all like a dream to Erminie, a dream of mingled sorrow and joy. Her tears fell fast for her whom, deeply as she had wronged her, sternly as she had ever treated her, she still loved; but they fell on a mother's breast, and a father's hand rested on her bowed head. She could scarcely realize or believe all that had happened; and she watched the people come and go, and saw the lifeless forms closed from view beneath the coffin-lid, and saw the funeral-procession pass from the house, and felt the chilling sense of desolation that a funeral always brings. Then this, too, passed; and she saw the people disperse and go to their homes, and the white shrouding removed from the rooms, and the bright summer sunshine came warmly in, and then all began to be real a glad, joyous reality at last.

"And now, what next?" said Ray, as they all gathered together in the little parlor of the cottage when all was over.

"We must all return to the city, next," said Lord De Courcy, "to Rita. You, of course, my dear boy, are one of the family, now."

"I thank you, my lord, but I have marked out my future course for myself. I have a name and a fortune yet to win."

"My dearest Ray, you would not leave me," said Lady Maude, reproachfully, laying her hand on his arm.

He touched his lips to the small, white hand, and said: "I cannot be a dependent on any one's bounty, not even yours, my dear mother. You would not have me fold my arms ignobly and become a worthless drone in the busy hive of this world. My path is already clear an uphill one it may be but the goal I aim at will be reached at last."

His eyes rested half-unconsciously on Pet, who was gazing very intently out of the window while he spoke. Lord De Courcy saw the direction of his glance, and smiled slightly to himself.

"But you, at least, will not think of leaving us so soon," pleaded Lady Maude; "consider how short a time since we have met, and how long we have been parted. Indeed, I will not hear of parting with you yet."

"Oh, pray, Ray, don't go," said Erminie, gently; "what could we all ever do without you? Do stay, like a dear, good boy."

"You must have a heart of flint if you can resist all these pleadings," said Lord De Courcy, drawing Erminie fondly toward him. "Come, Miss Lawless, will you not aid my little girl, here, in persuading this ungrateful scapegrace of ours from running away?"

"Oh, there is no use in me asking anybody to do anything," said Pet, coloring slightly, yet looking saucy still, "because they never do it; if Minniebeg pardon, Lady Erminie, can't persuade him, then there is no use in my trying."

"Now, Pet," said Erminie, reproachfully, and blushing at her new-found title.

"Come, my dear boy, consent to stay with us for some weeks, at least," said Lady Maude, looking up, coaxingly, in his handsome face.

"Your ladyship's will is my law," said Ray, a smile breaking through the grave sadness of his face.

"That is right! when are we to start, my lord?"

"Early to-morrow, if you like. Mrs. Germaine," he said, glancing at Marguerite, "I know is impatient to embrace her daughter."

"I wish you were coming, too, Pet," said Erminie, going over and putting her arm around Pet's small waist.

"And why can she not?" said Lady Maude, looking kindly down in Pet's changing face; "we will be delighted to have her with us. Do come, my dear."

"I thank your ladyship, but I cannot."

"Now, Pet, why? You can come if you like," said Erminie.

"Indeed I can't, Erminie. I must stay and console uncle Harry for your loss. The man-of-war on the mantel-piece will be quite inadequate to the task, and there he will be in sackcloth and ashes, rending his garments and tearing his hair"

"His wig, you mean," broke in Ranty.

"Ranty, be still. I should like to oblige you, Lady Erminie, but you perceive I can't. It is one of the cardinal virtues consoling the afflicted, and I am trying to cultivate all the virtues preparatory to taking the black veil one of these days, and becoming a nun."

"Not if I can help it," said Ray, coming over.

"Well, but you can't help it, you know," said Pet, turning red, but flashing defiance in a way that made Lady Maude smile, and reminded Erminie of the Pet of other days; "and now I really must go before it gets any later. Erminie, I'll come over early to-morrow and see you off, so I will not bid you good-by now. Ranty"

"Oh, never mind Ranty," interposed Ray; "let me be your escort home for once, Pet. Come, do not refuse me now. I have a great many things to say to you."

Pet colored vividly, but she did not refuse, and nodding a good-by to the rest, they left the cottage together.

"Can we not prevail upon you at least to accompany us back to the city?" said Lord De Courcy to Ranty, when they were gone.

Ranty hesitated, and glanced at Erminie, who blushed, of course.

"Come, say yes, Mr. Lawless," said Lord De Courcy, laying his hand on Ranty's shoulder, in his kind, cordial manner. "Erminie must not part with all her old friends at once."

"Besides, you have not seen Rita, you know, Mr. Lawless," added Lady Maude, with her own peculiar winning smile; "and she will be exceedingly glad to meet you once more. You really must come now."

Still Ranty hesitated, and looked unspeakable things at Erminie.

"I see how it is," said the earl. "Mr. Lawless won't consent unless Erminie seconds the invitation. Come, my love, tell him he must come."

"It will be very glad to have Ranty with us," said Erminie, blushing most becomingly.

"Very well, that settles the matter, I hope, my young friend."

“My lord, I shall only be too happy to accept your kind invitation!” exclaimed Ranty, all in a glow of delight. “Nothing could give me more pleasure than to meet Lady Rita again.”

So it was arranged they should start the following morning. Pet rode over to see Erminie off, and tears stood in the dancing eyes of the elf as she bade her good-by. As for Erminie, she wept audibly as the carriage rolled away, and the home of her childhood was left far behind. She strained her eyes to catch a last glimpse of the pretty little vine-embowered cottage on the lonely bank, and watched the blinding top of the White Squall fading away in the distance as if it had been the face of an old friend. Then came Dismal Hollow, and at the verge of the wood they encountered Toosypegs, on horseback, waiting to bid Erminie farewell.

“Oh, Mr. Toosypegs, I’m so glad to see you,” said Erminie, putting her little snow-flake of a hand out of the window to greet him. “How do you do, and how is Miss Priscilla?”

“Thanky, Miss Minnie,” said Mr. Toosypegs, in a dejected tone. “I ain’t well at all. I’m very much obliged to you, and aunt Priscillerwell, the old gander broke his leg this morning, and she ain’twell, she ain’t in as good spirits as she might be. Miss Minnie, you ain’t going to be long away, are you?”

“That does not depend on me now, Mr. Toosypegs,” said Erminie, smiling. “You know I have got a father and mother to take care of me now.”

“Yes, I know,” said Mr. Toosypegs, mournfully; “it’s going to be horrid lonesome when you are gone; I know it is. I wish I had never been born! I declare to goodness I do! People may say what they like, but I don’t see where’s the good of it,” said Mr. Toosypegs, with a subdued howl.

“Come, Horlander! take things easy,” suggested Ranty, poking his head out through the opposite window. “Care killed a cat.”

“It’s all very well to say, ‘take things easy,’ Master Ranty,” said Mr. Toosypegs, wiping his eyes with the cuff of his coat-sleeve; “but if you were in my place in love I mean going to part with Miss Minnie, and never see her again, I don’t see how you could take it easy either. I dare say you mean real well in telling me so, Master Ranty, but I can’t do it at all. Good-by, Miss Minnie,” said poor Mr. Toosypegs, sobbing outright. “I don’t expect ever to see you again in this world my feelings are in that state that I will soon be a melancholy corpse. I know very well I will.”

“Oh, Mr. Toosypegs, I hope not; you only think so. Give my love to Miss Priscilla, and tell her I’ll send her a new shawl from Baltimore. Good-by.” And with a smile, Erminie fell back, and the carriage drove on, unhappy O. C. Toosypegs wiping his eyes, and snuffling, in the middle of the road.

Nothing of any importance occurred during the remainder of the journey. The whole party arrived safely in the city, and were domesticated with the friend in whose house the earl and countess were staying.

The duty of informing Rita of her new-found parentage devolved upon Lady Maude. In the gentlest and kindest manner possible, she performed her task; and great was the

astonishment and greater the mortification of the supercilious little lady on learning who she really was. "Some natural tears she shed;" but when the countess informed her she was still to reside with them as before, and not being completely selfish after all, she consented at last to wipe them, and met her mother with quite a decent show of affection. Poor Marguerite! she clasped the little gilded, glittering butterfly to her breast, and wept over her with a passionate³⁹⁰ love that touched every heart. There was a perceptible coldness and jealousy in the dainty little lady's greeting of Erminie, whom she looked upon as a rival and natural enemy; but the gentleness and sweetness of the new-found heiress were not to be resisted; and before they all separated for the night Lady Rita made up her mind that matters were, after all, by no means so bad as she had at first supposed.

Ray passed a week with the family in Baltimore, and then returned to Judestown on business, he said, but as more than one of the party shrewdly guessed, to see Pet. He found her worthy father at home, and unbounded was the astonishment of that most upright gentleman upon learning all that had transpired during his absence. Inwardly he rejoiced at the annihilation of the gang of smugglers, and fervently thanked his stars that his own connection with them had not been discovered.

But another surprise was in store for him when Ray appeared before him and formally solicited the hand of his daughter. Ray Germaine, the gipsy's grandson, and Ray Germaine, Lady De Courcy's son, were two very different personages; and his worship, the judge, was graciously pleased to give a prompt assent. The first would have been, in no very choice terms, shown the door; the latter was taken by the hand and cordially told, after the manner of fathers in the play, to "take her and be happy," which Pet assured him he would find some difficulty in being, once she was his wife.

And so our Pet was engaged at last; and Ray returned to Baltimore to inform his friends of his success and make arrangements for their marriage, which the judge, who thought it would be something added to his already overwhelming dignity to be father-in-law of the son of a peeress, desired might take place as soon as possible.

Erminie clapped her hands with delight when she heard of it, and Lady Maude, whose heart the wild elf had taken by storm, expressed her heartfelt pleasure.

"And you must return with us to England as soon as you are married," said Lord De Courcy, to the bridegroom-elect.

"And we will all live together. Oh, it will be so nice to be near Pet!" said Erminie delightedly.

Ray laughed and shook his head.

"We may accompany you to England, as both Pet and I desire to visit it, but our future home must be here."

"Why not in England as well as here?" asked his lordship.

"Oh, well, for many reasons. One is, Petronilla would never consent; another is that I am too much attached to this land of my adoption to wish to leave it for any other; and

thirdly and lastly, I have already attained some slight degree of fame in my profession here, and I do not wish to lose it now by going to another land.”

“But, my dearest boy, I do not like the idea of being so far separated from you,” said Lady Maude, anxiously.

“Oh, to cross the Atlantic is a mere pleasure-trip now, my dear mother,” laughed Ray; “so we will meet at intervals, after all. As I intend to be a great man one of these days”

“You can be that, easily, by growing fat,” interrupted Ranty. “You can’t be reached now with anything less than a ten-foot pole; and if you only grow stout with years, I’ll back you against any man in the community for greatness. You’ll make Daniel Lambert himself look to his laurels.”

“By the way, Erminie, I have a message for you from your old admirer, Mr. Toosypegs,” said Ray. “He says he can’t bear the idea of letting you go without seeing you again: so he is coming here, and the admiral with him.”

“Miss Priscilla ought to come, too, and make the party complete,” said Ranty. “I wonder she is so imprudent as to let that innocent youth journey so far alone. There is no telling what may happen to him in a depraved place like this.”

“I am sure I shall be glad to see Mr. Toosypegs again, and the dear old admiral. Oh, I do love him,” exclaimed Erminie.

“I wish I could get you to say that about his nephew,” said Ranty, with an appealing look. Lord De Courcy smiled encouragingly on the youth as, together with Lady Maude, he left the room.

CHAPTER XL

CHIEFLY MATRIMONIAL

“There is a love which, born
In early days, lives on through silent years.”

“Love is life’s end.”

Spenser.

ErminieLady Erminie nowsat in an elegantly-furnished library, pulling a costly bouquet wantonly to pieces, and looking excessively lovely in her dress of pale-blue silk and white lace.

Pacing up and down the room, as if for a wager, was Master Ranty Lawless, with a look as nearly approaching the intensely gloomy as was possible for his handsome, happy face to wear.

“Why, Ranty, what in the world is the matter with you this morning?” said Erminie, at last, opening her sweet blue eyes very wide in innocent wonder.

“Lady Erminie, I’m going away, this very morning; and what’s more, I’m never going to come back! I’ll be swung to the yard-arm if I do!” was the unexpected answer, delivered with a savage, jerking abruptness that made Erminie drop her flowers and half rise from her seat in consternation.

“Why, Rantywhy, Ranty! How can you talk so? What has happened? What is the matter? Are you going crazy?”

“What’s happened? Everything’s happened, everything’s the matter, and I am going crazy, if it’s any consolation to you to learn it. Yes, you may look surprised, Lady Erminie Germaine, or De Courcy, or whatever your name may be, but you are the cause of it all; and you know it too, for all you sit up there looking as innocent and unconscious as it is possible for any young woman to look. Never mind though; I don’t care! Just go on, Lady Erminie! You’ll³⁹³ find what a nice young man you’ve lost, when it’s too late!” said Ranty, striding up and down, and looking ferociously at poor Erminie.

“Oh, Ranty! how can you go on so? What have I done?” said Erminie, twisting her fingers, and looking up with shining, tearful eyes, looking so pretty and innocent in her distress that Ranty’s better angel prompted him to go over and caress away her tears on the spot.

But Ranty was angry and didn’t do anything of the kind. On the contrary, he grew twice as fierce as before, and strode up and down twice as rapidly, bursting out with:

“What have you done? There’s a question! What haven’t you done, I want to know? You knew very well I loved you, and paid attention to you since you were the size of a well-grown doughnut, and when you hadn’t a cent to bless yourself with. You know I did, Lady Erminie, and you needn’t deny it. Well, your father and mother turn up, and you find yourself a fine lady, and after that you grow stiff and dignified, and keep me at a

distance, as Paddy did the moon, and flirt with every bescented, behair-oiled jackanapes that squirms, and bows, and simpers, and makes fools of themselves, and talk with all sorts of soft nonsense to you! You know you do, Lady Erminie, and I repeat it, you needn't deny it! Here was last night, at that concert, soiree, or tea-party, or whatever it was, didn't you let that contemptible fool, the Honorable Augustus Ahringfeldt, make the strongest sort of love to you the whole blessed evening. Honorable, indeed! A pretty honorable, he is, all hair and conceit, like a scented orang-outang!" sneered Ranty, elevating his Roman nose to the loftiest angle of scorn.

"Indeedindeed, Ranty, I couldn't help it! He talked to me, and I had to answer him, and you never came near me all the time," said Erminie with tears of distress in her gentle blue eyes.

"No; the thumb-screws of the Holy Office wouldn't have got a word out of me!" said Ranty, fiercely. "Do you think I was going to thrust myself forward where I wasn't wanted? No, Lady Erminie De Courcy; though you may be above me in rank and wealth, I can have as much pride as you can yet; and if you think fit to cut my acquaintance, you are perfectly welcome to do it. I am going away this afternoon, and I am not likely to trouble you any more; but first I'll punch the head of that sweet seraph, the Honorable Augustushanged if I don't! Lady Erminie, good-by! I'm off for a voyage to Constantinople; and if you hear that the sultan has had me bow-strung, or bastinadoed, or pitched into the Bosphorus, or that I have committed suicide, or anything, I hope you'll drop a tear to the memory of the little boy in roundabout-jackets who used to go sailing and making love with you at old Judestown."

Here Ranty dropped his voice to the deeply-pathetic, and held out his hand mournfully to Erminie. But that young lady's hands were up before her face, and she seemed in a fair way to comply with his request to drop a tear to his memory; for she was sobbing away convulsively.

"There, now! I've went and set you a-crying!" exclaimed Ranty, in a tone, or rather howl, of mingled remorse and distraction. "That's always the way I go and put my foot in whatever I go to do! I am a brute! a crocodile! a sea-serpent! a monster! an unmitigated bear! and I deserve a sound flogging for speaking to you as I did. Erminie! dear Erminie! dearest Erminie! forgive me, like a good girl. It was all owing to that hairy-faced fool, AhringfeldtI swear it was! I was jealous of him! madly jealous! the effeminate little cream-candy puppy! Dear Erminie, forgive me! Dearest Erminie, look up and say I am forgiven, or I will go to the nearest apothecary's, and put an end to my miserable existence with a gallon or two of Prussic acid. Dear, dearest, darling Erminie! only say you forgive me!" pleaded Ranty, kneeling before her, and gently withdrawing her hands from before her.

Erminie looked up imploringly through her tears.

"Oh, Ranty! how can you say such dreadful things? Oh, you frighten me to death! Promise me you will not kill yourself; it is so wicked, you know!"

“Beside being disagreeable to be sat on by a coroner and a dozen asses of jurymen. Well, I won’t, if you will promise me one thing.”

“Oh, Ranty! I will promise anything if you will not do it.”

“Will you, though? Oh, Erminie! you’re a nice young³⁹⁵ woman! Well, I want you to be my dear, little blue-eyed wife. Now, then, say yes.”

But Erminie, with a bright blush and a little surprised scream, threw up her hands and covered her face.

“Now, Erminie, that’s no answer at all,” said Ranty, taking down the hands. “You don’t know what a capital husband I’ll make. You can’t begin to have the remotest idea of it, you know. Come, Erminie, say yesthere’s a good girl.”

“Oh, Ranty!”

“Yes, I know; girls always look flustered in cases like this; but, somehow, they manage to say yes, after all. Now, Erminie, if you don’t say yes, I’ll go right straight off for the Prussic acidmind that!”

“Well, yes, then,” said Erminie, blushing, and laughing, and hiding her face on his shoulder.

“Gloria in excelsis! alleluia! hurrah! Oh, Erminie! my own little darling! you have made me the happiest man from here to the antipodes. Oh, Erminie! I knew you would, all along! I always thought you had too much good sense to reject me for a puppy like the Honorable Augustus!” exclaimed Ranty, in a rapture. “Oh, Erminie! I’ll give you leave to cowhide me within an inch of my life if I ever give you a cross look or word again! Oh, Erminie”

The sudden opening of the library-door cut short his interminable string of interjections in which Ranty would have indulged, and the next moment, Lord De Courcy stood looking with grave surprise on the two lovers.

“Ah! beg your pardon,” he said, blandly, as Ranty sprung to his feet. “I was not aware there was any one here. Excuse me for interrupting you.” And with a bow and an almost imperceptible smile, he was turning away, when Ranty stepped forward, and said:

“Hold on, my lord. There’s a little matter to be arranged here, which may as well be done now as any other time. I love your daughter and have told her so, and your daughter loves me, and has told me so; and all we want is your lordship’s consent to our union. I may not be quite her equal in wealth, and rank, and all that sort of thing, in your eyes; but as a free-born American citizen, and an independent ‘sovereign’ in my own right, and possessing a strong³⁹⁶ arm, a stout heart, and a clear conscience, I feel myself as good as the best lord, duke, or Sir Harry in all Great Britain; and so, my lord, if you will give me your daughter, I will try to prove myself worthy of the gift.”

This plain, straight-forward speech, delivered with head erect, shoulders thrown back, and Master Ranty drawn up to the full extent of his six feet odd inches, evidently did not displease the earl. He turned to Erminie, whose blushing face was hid again, and said, with a smile:

“And what says my little girl? Has she authorized her old friend to say all this?”

"Yes, father," whispered Erminie, throwing her arms around his neck.

"Well, then, I suppose I shall have to consent," said the earl, rising. "Right, my boy," he said, slapping Ranty heartily on the shoulder; "you are as good as any man living, and I like your bold, independent spirit. And now, as I am de trop here, I shall go and tell her ladyship that she is about to lose her new-found daughter again," said the earl, as he left the room.

And for the next hour, Ranty and Erminie were just as perfectly happy as it is possible for any two denizens of this rather unhappy world to be.

It was arranged that the marriage of Ranty and Erminie should take place on the same day as that of Ray and Pet, and that the whole party should sail for England together.

And three days after, came our whole party from Judestown in a body, consisting of the judge, pompous and important, but inwardly wincing a little at the thought of meeting Erminie; Ray, handsome, and happy, and quite unlike his usual haughty self; Pet, bright, defiant, saucy, and sparkling as ever; the admiral, in a high state of beatitude and a new frock-coat with eye-dazzling brass buttons; Mr. Toosypegs, arrayed in a complete new suit to do honor to the occasion, and looking mildly melancholy; and last, but by no means least, Miss Priscilla, as stiff, grim, sour, rigid and upright as a church steeple.

Erminie flew down to meet them, and rushed into the arms of Pet, who favored her with a crushing hug; and then she kissed Miss Priscilla, who gingerly presented her wrinkled cheek for that operation; and then she shook hands with³⁹⁷ Mr. Toosypegs, who repressed a groan of despair as she did so; and then she finished her greetings by throwing her arms around the admiral's neck and kissing him too.

"Stand from under!" roared the admiral, with a tremendous burst of laughter. "So you're going to get spliced to Ranty, Snowflake? Ho, ho, ho! Who'd 'a' thought it? Lord! how pretty you are, anyway! And how's your father and that nice-looking woman, your mother? I hope she's pretty jolly," said the admiral, politely.

Erminie laughed, and replied that she was as jolly as could be expected.

"And so you're going to England, Miss Minnie, and never going to come back?" said Mr. Toosypegs, mournfully. "I'm real sorry I'm dreadfully sorry, Miss Minnie. I do assure you I am. It's awfully lonesome now, at the cottage. I can't bear to go near it at all, it recalls the past so much. Miss Minnie, I don't know what I shall ever do when you're gone at all I just don't!"

"Horlando, hold your tongue!" snarled Miss Priscilla. And her dutiful nephew shut up like a jack-knife. "You're foreverlastin' a-talkin'; and a-talkin' nonsense at that. Miss Minnie, I want to take hoff my things which is hinconvenient to wear in the 'ouse, besides wanting to be folded up and put away, to keep them from sp'lin'."

Erminie smilingly rung the bell, and ordered the servant to show Miss Priscilla to her room; and, at the same moment, Lady Rita, impelled perhaps by curiosity, as much as anything else, to see those "rustics," as she called them, swept majestically in, glittering in silk, and lace, and jewels, until she fairly dazzled the eyes.

Erminie rose, and presented her as her “sister, Lady Rita.” Her little ladyship curled her fastidious lip slightly, made a profoundly formal courtesy, and gracefully and superciliously sunk into the downy depths on a lounge, and thought inwardly what an “absurd set of the lowest people mamma was gathering about her!”

But from the moment Mr. Toosypegs set eyes on the bright little meteor, he was done for! Pet was forgotten; so was Erminie. Both, in his eyes, were eclipsed by this golden-winged, rainbow-tinted, little, sparkling vision. Poor³⁹⁸ Mr. Toosypegs, for the third time, was deeply and hopelessly in love!

Three days after, the double-marriage took place, privately, by the desire of all parties. None but the friends of the brides were present; and immediately after the ceremony the farewells were spoken, and the bridal cortege drove down to the steamer that was to convey them to the Old World.

Straining their eyes to catch a last glance of the shore they were leaving, our bridal-party stood on the steamer’s deck, Erminie leaning on her husband’s arm, and Pet leaning on hers, both with eyes full of tears. Near them stood Lady Maude and Lord De Courcy, both thinking of him who slept, “after life’s fitful fever,” in his lonely hillside grave. There, too, was Marguerite, calmer and less despairing-looking now, though her wild, dark eyes were deeply mournful still. By her side was her dainty, tossy, brightly-dressed little daughter, inwardly thanking her stars to get home once more. And thus they all stand before you now, dear reader, receding far down in the blue horizon. One more glimpse, and you will see them no more.

At the White Squall still lives Admiral Harry Havenful, who sits in his parlor, gazing on the pink-and-straw-colored man-of-war, and smokes his pipe placidly, as he walks down the serene pathway leading to old age. On fine days Mr. Toosypegs always comes to see him, and there dilates for hours on the manifold beauties and attractions of Lady Rita, to whom he intends to be faithful as long as he lives. Mr. Toosypegs never will get married. He says he intends consecrating his life to the memory of the sparkling little comet that once flashed across his sky, and then disappeared forever. Mr. O. C. Toosypegs’ anguish and despair have subsided now to a calm, serene melancholy, seldom relieved by a smile, but by no means distressing to witness. He and the admiral continue to do good in their own simple, unobtrusive way, and find their chief delight in reading the letters they sometimes receive from Erminie and Pet. Judge Lawless lives in solitary grandeur at Heath Hill, the “Grand Seigneur” of Judestown still. Miss Priscilla resides in gloomy state at Dismal Hollow, and continues to murder the king’s English and scold Orlando severely every day, which castigations he bears with evident meekness. Reader, to our³⁹⁹ friends in Judestown, you have bidden an eternal farewell. Ray Germaine has risen to rank and wealth in his profession, and his handsome wife is the leader of the ton in the city where she resides, and excites in turn the wonder and admiration and envy of every one who knows her. Marriage has subdued her wildness a little, but not eradicated it; and our Pet is the happiest little lady in existence. There is a

miniature Pet there, tooa saucy little limb already, who promises to be a second edition of wild Pet Lawless, in deeds as well as in looks.

Lady Erminie and Mr. Lawless reside in England, for the Countess De Courcy will not part with her daughter.

Little Lady Rita has married a Spanish grandeea Don John somebody, and gone to live in her own "castle in Spain." Marguerite has accompanied her to that sunny land.

The Earl and Countess De Courcy, loved and honored, pass happily through life together. Their latter days promise to be as bright with sunshine as their early ones were dark and troubled. Reader, to all these, too, and I fear not unreluctantly, you must bid farewell.

Freeditorial 