

CHAPTER XVI.

Nae doubt but ye may get a sight,
Great cause ye hae ta fear it,
For mony a ane has gotten a fright,
And lived and died deleerit
On sic a night.—BURNS.

“DAT’s baith a lang, an’ a winderful tale,” said Bawby, as Maikie closed his book and resumed his seat ; “ bit I’m tinkin’ some o’ da lasses ’ll be wearyin’ noo ta get der fortins cassen,^{fortu} an’ sae we’ll better hae dis ower afore da boys begins wi’ castin’ der stocks.”

“Noo, Bawby, I hoop ye’re no gaen ta dü ony fearsome thing,” cried Girzie o’ Glufftoon ; “ it aye maks me feared ta hear about tellin’ fortins. Sin dat time dat some lasses got sic an awful fricht. It wis upon a Halloween dey hed dipped der sark sleeves in a burn, whaur tree lairds’ land met, an’ den dey tüik dem hame wi’ dem an hang dem upo’ backs o’ tree shares afore da fire, an’ den hoided demsells awa at da ooter end o’ da hoose, ta see da lads dey wir ta be married til ; fir as ye ken, da foregeng o’ every lass’s lad wis expected ta come an’ turn his sweetheart’s sark dat wis upo’ da back o’ da share.

“Weel, first comes in ae bonnie lad, an’ he turns a sark ; bit den comes in anidder bonnie lad ; an’ he turns da second sark, bit instead o’ a third bonnie lad dere cam tumlin’ in da door—O it maks me quaak ta speak o’ it ! a black coffin, an’ it tumled an’ tumled till it cam ta da share whare da sark wisna turned, whin it stüed a peerie while on its end, an’ den tumled an’ tumled awa oot da door agen da sam wy it cam in. T’wa o’ da lasses fell a soond, an’ da idder ane screeched dat wy dat da folk o’ da hoose jimped oot o’ der beds, fir dey wir a’ gaen ta bed, an’ ran ta da lass an’ held her, fir shü hed

gaen i' da fits ; sae in a while dey a' tree cam ta demsells, bit twa o' dem wis no da better o' it a' der days, an da third anc dat hed her sark upo' da share, whaur da coffin güid til, wis in her grave afore da neist Halloween cam roond."

"O Girzzie !" exclaimed Bawby, "du's aye tinkin' about some fearsome thing ; bit we're no gaen ta ^{du} ony thing dat wy ; we're just gaen ta set straes i' da ase, an' drap da white o' a egg in a gless o' water ; an' whin da lasses comes hame, dey can fling der clews doon da kill head, an say, "Wha haads i' my clew end.' Bit, bairns, dere's a gaist," continued Bawby, ^{go} pointing to a half consumed brand standing upright on the hearth, "wha can dis be, I winder? O, I'll wager you it's Auld Sibbie Rendal ; weel I keen sorra bit o' her I'm wantin' ta see. Lord bliss dee, Eppie, as du's neist da door, an' gie her a dip i' da water dat's i' da tub yonder upo' da flüir."

"Yae, dat sall I," said Eppie Jarmson, as she rose and took the representative of the unwelcome Sibbie in the tongs and dipped it in the tub of water, so that the original might get a thorough drenching of rain when she set out on her visit to Bawby o' Briggstanes.

"Noo, bairns, wha will we try first," continued Bawby, as she took a straw from the floor and nipped in two pieces about an inch and a half in length, one being plain, the other having a knot on it. "Dis is Sandy Flaws," she whispered in Johnnie o' Greentaft's ear, as she stuck the piece with the knot on it in the hot embers ; "an dis is Leezie Lowrie," she whispered again, as she stuck the plain straw beside it. The effect of the heat on the lower ends of the straw was to give them a wavering motion, first parting and then coming close together again, and at last resting against each other ; this was caused by the lower ends of the straw being burned through, when no further motion took place. As soon as the two straws thus closed, loud laughter and clapping of hands broke from the whole circle of lads and lasses around the fire.

“Ay, Bawby !” exclaimed Sandy Flaws, “dat pair is a’ richt; dat’s just da wy you dü your wark, Bawby, if dey quarrel ye ken hoo ta get dem tagedder agen.”

“Yea! yea!” cried Bawby, “du’s richt, my bairn. Bawby o’ Briggstanes niver leaves her wark half düne; ony twa shü pits tagedder needna be feared, peace an’ plenty will be der lot, as da sang sings, an’ a’ dat’s gude watch ower dem; bit du niver kens,” she continued, “dis pair wis just dy ain sell an’ some bodie no far awa, sae du sees hoo it’s gaen ta be.”

“O mony tanks ta you,” said Sandy; “I hoop ye’ll be richt, an’ den ye sall get da bride’s piece, an’ nane better wirt it, I’m shüre.”

“Ay, Lord bless dee,” exclaimed Bawby; “bit, bairns,” she continued, “wha sall we try neist? O I ken, bit I’ll no tell ony body dis time,” she added, as she bent down to place a straw with the knot on it in the embers; but just as she got this representative of a love-sick swain, only known to herself, placed in the proper position, down came from the lum a heavy kail¹ stock, which, guided by the laws of gravitation, landed right on the middle of Bawby’s black binder.

“O my Lord! I’m soved,”² she exclaimed, as she settled back in a fainting fit.

“Hes ony o’ you a scent bottle?” cried Johnnie o’ Greentaft, as he lifted Bawby gently up into her chair.

“Aye, here’s ane,” cried Girzzie Güllet, as she held the restorative to Bawby’s nose; “an’ sprinkle dis watter on her broos,” cried Willie Biggiltie, as he held a “tinnie” of the liquid to Johnnie o’ Greentaft, who acted as medical attendant.

“Rin fort, boys,” cried Johnnie, “an gie dat vagabonds a trashin’ if ye can catch ony o’ dem.”

Bawby, though seriously stunned, still retained the faculty of hearing, and this declaration of war against the stock casters made her gently open up her eyes, when, seeing a very large

¹ A whole cabbage.

² Stunned,

heap of the produce of the kail-yard lying around the fire, she gradually revived, and faintly whispered, "O püir bairns, let dem be, bairns will be bairns, an dey wirna ta ken dat da runt wis ta strick me, ye ken. Yea, I'm a peerie corn better noo, she added, as she settled herself back in her chair, and adjusted her widow's cap, the beauty and symmetry of which had been seriously marred by the *cabbaging* process through which it had passed. "Noo, bairns," she continued, "I'm just pittin' you a' about, sae gadder ye up da twa or tree peags o' kail, an' lay dem üdbe¹ aside da lambs, an' set up da fire agen, fir ye're no gaen to loss your fun, idder fir me or da boys."

"Weel, Bawby," said Annie Leslie, "I truly tink ye're no able fir muckle mair dis nicht, an' ye ken we can dü naithen without you; besides Geordie here wis oot a' perrie meenit sin syne, an' he says da wind is takin' up at da south-east wi' da awful gloweret lack sky; sae I'm feared it's gaen ta be a ill nicht, an' sae I tink we'll a' just mak fir hame afore it comes on warse, an' some o' 'is has far ta geng, ye ken; an' da rods is dark noo whin dere's nae mün-licht."

"Weel, weel, my bairn," said Bawby, "if da wadder is gaen ta tak up I'll no bid you bide langer da nicht, as weel as mebbe da boys is no düne wi' das tocks yet; sae we widna hae muckle mair paece. Lord bliss a' your happy faces, fir comin' ta see me da nicht, an' I hoop ye'll no be lang in being back agen; bit a' ye dat needs a brand 'll hae ta wait a peerie start fir it taks, ye ken."

When Bawby had finished her remarks, considerable bustle ensued amongst the lads and lasses, some lighting lanterns, others seeking on the floor for missing clogs, and getting them adjusted to the feet to which they belonged; and those not provided with lanterns seeking in the peat cro² for the proper length and quality of mossy peats suitable for

¹ The outer end of the house.

² Corner where peats are kept.

torches. Those provided with lanterns then took their departure, while the torch-bearers had to wait until their peats had become sufficiently ignited to form a very effective flambeau when fanned by a strong breeze. When the last of Bawby's visitors had departed, she shut the door, and settled herself down in her comfortable stræen chair, to wait further blessings being showered upon her from that horn of plenty commonly called the lum. In this anticipation she was not disappointed, for several of the lads who had just left, immediately returned to Brigstanes with as large a load of Halloween vegetable offerings as they could carry, and which was safely deposited through the smoke aperture of Bawby's cottage, until a very neat little stack of provender accumulated at the side of the "peat cro." Next day Bawby, with careful hand, planted these in a crub which stood near the cottage, in order to keep them fresh until required, either for provender or domestic use.

CHAPTER XVII.

A life on the ocean wave,
A home on the rolling deep.

IN the last chapter we left Bawby of Brigstanes rejoicing over her bountiful kail harvest ; and this she did notwithstanding the shock which her cranium had sustained by the first descent of the green manna, as already recorded ; and we must now introduce the reader to an individual with whom he has had already some slight acquaintance, and who plays no unimportant part in the curious chapter of the incidents of our story. This individual is no less a personage than the hermit's old rival, Jack Smith of Mirends. Jack was an orphan, and lived with an uncle on the mother's side, but from his earliest years he was a wild, daring lad, fond of performing desperate and fool-hardy feats, one of which may be recorded.

In the neighbourhood of the village where he was brought up was a cliff several hundred feet in height, and quite perpendicular. The strata of the rock were marked off in layers of great depth by horizontal fissures running in parallel lines across its face, and giving it the appearance of some great wall constructed by Titanic hands. In the cliff the gull, kittywake, and shag bred in vast numbers ; its inaccessibility guarding them from the intrusion of man, and its deep fissures forming a safe and convenient resting-place for hatching their young.

Upon this impregnable fortress of the feathered tribe Jack had often cast a longing look, but to reach one of its fissures and carry off the coveted booty of eggs or half-fledged young, would have required as great powers of flight as those possessed by the feathered owners themselves. But though he had not

wings, he found a substitute in a pony's tether, which he one quiet evening possessed himself of, and, proceeding to the top of the cliff, drove the stake firmly into the turf near the edge of the precipice, and putting the running noose at the other end of the rope round his waist, cautiously began the perilous descent. Clinging to the face of the rock by fixing his toes and fingers in its narrow crevices, he had nearly reached a gull's nest when his foot slipped, and he fell head downwards. Providentially, the rope stood the sudden strain put upon it, and the stake kept its hold in the earth, but Jack hung suspended in mid-air head downwards, with the rope drawn so tight around his waist as to cause him the greatest agony. Away from the sight of every human eye, and from the hearing of every human ear, there he hung for many hours, until at last a young woman, happening to pass along the road which skirted the cliffs, was startled and surprised to hear cries for help proceed from one of the creeks ; but being unable to see the face of the rock from the spot where she stood, she ran to the other side of the "gio," and there saw on the opposite side what in the distance appeared like a spider suspended by a single thread of his web. Hastening to the spot, she, with marvellous courage, and such as an islander was alone capable of, seized hold of the rope, and standing on the verge of the precipice pulled him up by sheer force, and when safely brought to bank, she exhibited what might be considered a suitable expression to her feelings by giving him the rope's end round his ears ; but so little impression did this adventure make upon our young cragsman that he returned to the same spot the following week, and, with a stronger rope and more caution, effectually harried the nest which was the cause of his first mishap.¹ To such reckless daring he added a certain cruelty of disposition, evinced by his love of dog and cock fighting, hanging and drowning

¹ The original of Jack Smith was a school companion of the author, who went through the same perilous adventure, and was rescued in the same way as here described.

dogs and cats, and following other juvenile sanguinary amusements.

As might be expected, a youth with such proclivities was not likely to settle down to the quiet and unromantic life of a croftholder, or the more toilsome drudgery of the Haaf fishing. He longed for a field more congenial to his tastes, and one which should afford that excitement and wild adventure which were better suited to his nature ; and no Paul Jones could have desired a better field than that which the smuggling trade on the coast of Shetland afforded at this time.

This trade was chiefly carried on by Dutch vessels manned by Dutch sailors, who were sufficiently familiar with the coast by annually visiting it when prosecuting the herring fishing, as the regular smugglers seldom appeared on the coast until after these fishing "busses" had returned home, and when picked men could easily be obtained. Jack's uncle was a noted smuggler and dealer in contraband goods, which chiefly consisted of gin and tobacco, and was assisted by his nephew in all his daring exploits when landing his illicit commodities at places and in weather which it required the most fearless intrepidity and skill to accomplish ; and thus young Jack's tastes were formed, and the way opened up for his future career as a bold and successful smuggler.

As will be remembered, Jack when a schoolboy was smitten by the charms of Lelah Halcro (his ignominious defeat by the hero of our tale, on the occasion of the bloody conflict in which they engaged on her account, was never entirely forgotten or forgiven by him) ; and it is therefore not too much to say that from that time a secret determination of revenge was formed in his mind, and a hope at least entertained that what could be gained by the influence of love might one day be secured by force.

On a quiet evening, in the month of August 1744, a gaily painted vessel with gaudy pennants, high poop, and large

square sail, was seen to heave-to close in with the land, and send a boat ashore to one of the creeks called Voe, and which still bears that name, On approaching the shore a number of green-painted casks was observed in the boat, which indicated that a supply of water was the only apparent object the boat had in visiting the shore.

While the sailors were engaged in filling the water casks, there approached them a lad about seventeen years of age, of fair ruddy complexion, strongly built, and wearing a compromise in dress between that of a sailor and a landsman.

“Fadder,” inquired the new comer, addressing the officer in command, “you want de youngus on board ship?” “Yah ! yah !” responded the party addressed, and he shifted a quid of tobacco from right to left in his mouth ; “you come board and spraach de captain—moy skip, plentach grout, Steekabrod, schnaps and tabac.”

Our friend Jack (for he it was who now appeared on the scene) required no such flattering description of the ship and her liberal supply of stores to induce him to come on board. He longed to stand on her polished decks, and to see her gaudy pennants floating over his head, and to realise the pleasures of

“ A life on the ocean wave,
A home on the rolling deep.”

He therefore sprang on board the boat as she moved from the jetty, seized an oar, and pulled lustily for the ship. As the boat came alongside, a number of swarthy faces peered over the taffrail at the young stranger, as he trimmed his oar and looked up at his future companions. “Wer ist das ?” bawled the skipper through a cloud of smoke which he blew from the recesses of his capacious cheeks, as he held his long-stalked pipe in his right hand, and waited for a reply.

“De youngus hat lüst in de skip kommen,” replied the man, mounting the ladder which hung down the ship’s side.

“Yah! yah!” responded the skipper, nodding his head and taking a vigorous draw at his long pipe, as he eyed Jack’s agile movements, springing up the ladder like a monkey.

The exchange of a few sentences between the captain and the commander of the boat seemed to satisfy the former that he had made a very important addition to his crew, in the person of the young native and already half-made sailor, who had now entered his service. Jack’s intimate knowledge of the coast, his experience in the smuggling trade, and his ability to act as interpreter, when dealing with the natives on the west side of the mainland, where the Dutch language was very little understood—all rendered his services of the highest importance in the interests of the trade in which he was about to engage. A few weeks on board the “Bockanier,” and Jack appeared to be every inch a sailor, his knowledge of the language enabling him to obey orders with the greatest alacrity, and his fearless daring making him quite at home on a yard arm, or in running along the shrouds, as a spider runs along the threads of her web.

On the “Bockanier” returning to the coast with a full cargo of gin and tobacco, Smith boldly piloted the smuggler along the western coast, as far as the island of Trondra, and thus not only avoided the chance of legal interference, feeble as it was, but found a far better market with those remote natives who, even at the high price asked, had never bought so cheap before. As might be expected, Jack came into high favour both with skipper and owners, and in four years from the time of his giving his friends the slip for the wild life of a smuggler, he stood on the deck of the “Bockanier” of Overflackkee as chief mate.

Up to this time, he had never ventured on shore when cruising off any part of the coast between Sumburgh Head and Lerwick, as he had no wish to be recognised by any one who had formerly known him; but now his appearance was so

much altered, while he spoke the language so fluently, and was so thoroughly Dutch, both in build and rig, that even his own mother, had she been alive, could scarcely have recognised him. Thus safe from recognition, he omitted no opportunity of visiting the scenes of his boyhood whenever the vessel lay off that part of the coast, and his anxiety to do so mainly arose from a lingering desire once more to get a glimpse of the maturer charms of his schoolmate, Lelah Halcro.

As unkind fate decreed it, this opportunity did occur, and produced results of the most momentous kind in the lives of those who innocently suffered the consequence of his ill-timed curiosity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

O ! mischief, thou art swift
To enter in the thoughts of desperate men.
SHAKESPEARE.

IN the month of July 1750, on "Meadow-mawin' day," a party of Dutch sailors were seen approaching by a road which led from the creek of Voe, and then, turning to the left, directed their course to the marshy plat, or meadow land, which lies at the bottom of the valley, between Sklaburg and Brew; for here was a gay gathering seen only on "Meadow-mawin' days." The mowers, in home-spun blue knee-breeches, red vests, and knitted caps of the same colour, were gracefully handling their scythes, as they stood erect, and swept, in wide circular swathes, their sharp shining blades through the tall rank grass; while buxom and blooming lasses, in short petticoats, white or coloured slugs,¹ fixed with a single pin at the waist, were actively plying the rake in gathering the hay into ricks, or loading the ponies with it to be carried into the toon² mails, where it was to be spread out for winning.

The sharp ring of the whistling stone on the scythe-blades, the merry laughter of the lasses at their work, the general hum of voices, and the shrill whistle of the pony drivers, all combined to form a chorus of music sweet enough to charm even the heart of a Dutchman.

"Goodendach," said the foremost of the party, as he approached a merry group of lasses busy with their rakes amongst the new-mown grass.

"Goodendach, faader," replied an active, middle-aged

¹ Short gowns.

² Commons.

female, whose air of responsibility indicated that she was directing the work.

“All de moy meshies bein here?” inquired the Dutchman, as he anxiously glanced around at the haymakers. “Nay, one more meshie come dere,” said the spokeswoman, as she pointed to a girl approaching with a rake on her shoulder.

“Ah yah, mine Gott!” exclaimed the Dutchman, as he started, and the blood rushed to his cheeks, and then back again to his heart.

“Come here, Lelah; here’s dy sweetheart waitin’ ta see dee,” said one of the girls laughing. Ah! thoughtless girl! how little did she know that her language was well understood by the swarthy-looking, heavy-built Dutchman, with jewelled ears and fingers, who now stood before her, and that her jest was indeed a terrible reality! He was a sweetheart, and none other than Jack Smith of Mirends, the school companion and discarded lover of Lelah Halcro; and it was her presence which thrilled his frame, and drew from him the exclamation which he uttered on seeing her.

Now in the full bloom of womanhood, perfect as a Grecian statue, the glance of her matchless eyes, so full of soft liquid beauty, sent the fatal shaft again home to his heart, and the strong man reeled beneath the shock.

The die for evil was cast, and days of darkness and trouble were stored up in the future.

The apparent Dutchman, however, quickly recovered himself, and pointing towards the mowers, he exclaimed, “Ver moy! ver moy! de same in my countrie, peoples bein ver happy dese times.” With this he turned on his heel, and with a parting “goodendach” repeated by each of the party, the heavy *clomp* of their wooden shoes soon died away in the distance, as they returned by the same road to join their boat, which waited for them at the head of the Voe.

“I winder what yon Hollonders wir wantin?” said Janet

Wirk, as she resumed her rake, and began to pile up a cole of the new cut grass.

“Lord kens,” replied Meggie Mowat, resting on her rake ; “yon wid be da skipper, I’m tinkin’, dat spak ta Eppie—da ane wi’ da rings in his lugs, an’ dat had da better kind o’ claes on.”

“Yea, I’se warren dee yon wid be da skipper,” replied her companion ; “I wiss I hed minded ta ax him for sweeticooks ; I tink he wid a gean wis some. Did ye no notice, bairns, what a change cam ower his face whin he saw Lclah Halcro comin’ ? What wid ye say dat yon’s mebbe Johnny Smith dat guid awa wi’ da smugglers a lock a years sin syne ?”

“Hie tongue, lass, an’ be na a füle,” replied Eppie Gordie ; “he’s nae mair Johnny Smith den I am. Lord pity dee, lass, da man cudna spaek a wurd o’ plain English, far less Shetland ! Na, na, da wicked sinner dat he wis, I doot he made a warr end.”

The opinion formed by the haymakers that the supposed Dutchman was a skipper, was a correct one, for Jack Smith now owned no superior on board the “Bockanier,” and as fate sometimes decrees that one man’s misfortune shall be another man’s good luck, so it was in this case ; for when on a voyage to the Shetland coast the previous season, the “Bockanier” was caught in one of those south-east gales which sometimes sweep the German Ocean, and barely escaped foundering, with the loss of her bulwarks and lower spars, and two hands, with the captain, were washed overboard. This occurred while the vessel was lying-to between Sumburgh Head and Fair Isle. Jack then as next superior officer, assumed the command ; and when the gale moderated, he bore up for the west coast of Shetland, and running into Scalloway, got his vessel refitted, and then in a cruise among the islands he disposed of his cargo on highly advantageous terms.

On his return to Holland, as might be expected, he

met with a cordial reception from the owners of the "Bokanier," and was confirmed in the command of that vessel.

A few days after the vessel's arrival at Overflakkee, Captain Smith left his ship in charge of one of the owners, in order that he might visit the late captain's widow, to convey the mournful intelligence of her husband's death. She lived with an only daughter, in a small chateau on the banks of the Waal, a few miles above the town of Bummel, and was a woman of great personal attractions, and amiable qualities of mind.

Just before starting on his sad errand, the captain was fortunate enough to meet with a countryman of his own, one Bill Ericson, a native of Lerwick, who had served several years in the Dutch trade as mate; and now being out of a ship, had come to Overflakkee on a sort of "Jack-ashore" trip. Bill had been highly educated, according to the standard of education of those times, and began his career in the medical profession; but disliking further acquaintance with the healing art than that which a ship's medicine-chest afforded, he quickly performed the operation of cutting his studies short and going to sea. The captain being in want of a mate, and knowing the cut of Bill's jib that he was the right sort of craft, engaged him at once. The long boat was then lowered, and the captain, with Bill and three other seaman, sprang on board, and the sail being hoisted, she was soon gliding up the smooth waters of the Maas.

On the arrival at the house of Frau Vanderboor, she received with becoming sorrow the sad intelligence which her visitors brought, but she did not on that account neglect the duties of hospitality; and on the captain taking his leave, he fancied the cordial grasp she gave his hand indicated that he might safely repeat his visit at some other time, without being considered an intruder.

"My eye, captain," said Bill, after they had got into the boat; "thereaway is a nice anchorage. It cheats Bill if that

tidy little Dutch craft won't haul down the black flag, whenever she has got true blue to hoist. Throw her a tow-line, and haul taut under her quarter, full sail, studsails alow and aloft, all sea dimples and sunshine ;" and Bill winked and chuckled at the figure which his own fancy had conjured up.

"Avast there, Bill," cried the captain ; "I ain't goin' athwart the hawse of that here frigate. I have my weather-eye open in the wake of a nice leetle craft, west-nowd-west. Bearings 60 north and 1.20 west ; and when I next take soundings thereaway, shiver my timbers if I don't have a survey."

"Ay ! ay ! captain," replied Bill, "all right, but belay there a jiffy ; what if the skipper and owner all in one be aboard ? mebbe he'll port helm hard, and run to windward, and then"—and Bill struck the side of his nose with his forefinger.

"Clap a stopper in that jaw tackle of yours, Bill," said the captain, not quite liking Bill's familiar manner, and still less the unpalatable truth which his figurative speech conveyed.

The reader need scarcely be informed, that the captain's allusions were to his old schoolmate Lelah Halcro, and indicated his intention of seeing her on his return voyage to the Shetlands ; and this he accomplished, as we saw in a former chapter, when he visited the haymakers on "Meadow-mawin' day," in the neighbourhood of Skelaburg.

As we then saw, the captain and his party (his mate Bill being one of the number), were returning to their boat, which waited for them at the head of the Voe, and after a steady pull of about two miles off the land, where the "Bockanier" lay, the boat brought up under her quarter. On coming on board, the captain and Bill retired to their cabin, and placing a bottle of gin between them, sat down for the purpose of imbibing its contents, while they discussed the subject of the expedition in which they had been engaged.

"Now I say, Bill," cried the captain, as he raised a glass

of gin to his lips, "here's to the Beauty of Dynrastarness (that's the old name of my calf-ground, you know). That lovely leetle frigate I showed you is the one I told you about in Holland. My eyes! I was nearly capsized when I saw her, she's so vastly hansomier now. You said some landlubber would have her in tow. May be so; but will he get the weather gauge of Jack? No, never," and the captain looked fierce, and brought down his heavy fist on the table with such a thump as made the bottle jump a couple of inches from it.

"All right, cap'n," replied Bill slowly draining his glass; "but there's a little dead reckoning here, cap'n, I want to look at; how are you to get a warp aboard when you take this tidy leetle craft in tow? That's the tickler Bill can't make out no ways."

"Jest you belay there, mate," said the captain, as he filled another glass; "Jack knows how to tack and wear, and never hauls down his colours when he's got to fight; but here's to my bonnie birdie in a flowing bumper;" and the captain drained his glass.

"And here's to her, I say, cap'n; only once in my life have I seen so lovely a face, and that was afore I put my hands in the tar-bucket. Ah! cap'n, that leetle business near made a sheer hulk of poor Bill Ericson; but no matter, it's all over now. I was not myself for a long spell, an' so out of gear aloft," and Bill pointed to his forehead, "that I began to write poetry!"

"Did you though, Bill?" cried the captain, with surprise. "Well, I should like to do that 'ere sort of thing, but I don't see any ways how I should get it to splice; can't you show me how to handle the marlinspike, and just have a keek in your locker, and see if you ain't got some spun yarn there away?"

"I rather think I have, though," said Bill; "anyways, I'll overhaul for it;" and Bill rose and rummaged in his chest, and after hauling out his "toggery," and turning over a lot of well-

worn books, he came on a parcel of manuscript, yellow with years and grease. "This here is the best one," said Bill, pulling out a paper from the centre of the bundle; "though it does not clink like the chain cable, this is what I now call blank shot, though when I talked finer, and had more learnin' than I have now, I called it blank verse, and I think it will just do for your pretty Polly, what you call her?"

"Lelah," cried the captain, "but fire away, Bill; let's have the smell of this blank shot of yours; and there's a match for you," added the captain, filling out another glass of gin.

Bill tasted the liquor, and then opened out the paper, and read in a fine clear voice, and with perfect pronunciation, as follows:—

As I wandered through this vale of tears,
 There fell a ray of light across my path,
 And by it I beheld the loveliest form
 That ever sat upon the lap of earth
 Since Eve in bliss and ease luxurious
 Reclined beneath the shadow of the grove.
 A maid, in all the glory of her charms,
 Stood bathed in mellow light before me;
 Her auburn locks in wanton ringlets fell
 Adown her snowy neck and heaving bosom;
 Her graceful mein and symmetry of mould
 Outvied all powers of ancient Grecian art;
 Her cheeks had borrowed from the rose's dye
 Enough to contrast with the lily-white
 Of her fair brow. Her eyes, soft as the dove's,
 Sparkled with matchless brilliancy,
 And through them shone the essence of
 A thousand human souls.
 Twin roes that fed on Hermon's dewy slopes,
 White like the waving lilies which they crop,
 Nestled beneath the dainty silken bands,
 Which straining, bound them in their sacred fold.
 Salem's wisest king, in boldest imagery
 And glowing oriental strains, could only tell
 My ecstasy, thus to behold her heaving bosom
 Rise and fall in gentle undulations

Like slumbering waves on Thule's rocky shore,
 Which oft in early youth I've watched
 By full orb'd moon her silvery rays reflecting.
 Tumultuous passions seized upon my soul,
 And thrilled my frame with countless vibrations ;
 And in that moment of wild ecstasy,
 I wished to draw her to my beating heart ;
 But as I stretched forth my arms to clasp her,
 The fading ray of light did melt away
 In softer rainbow hues, when darker still
 The shades around me closed ; but like
 A gentle zephyr breathing past, I heard
 Her voice in pitying accents say,

“ FAREWELL ! ”

“ Shot and blazes ! ” exclaimed the captain, slapping his thigh as Bill finished his paper, “ if that ain't Lelah to a tee. You call that blank cartridge, Bill ? Well, maybe so ; but I'm a Dutchman and a half if there ain't flash and fire enough in it to blow up a liner ; and I'm blowed if I don't have a mind to lower away the long boat, and catch my pretty bird to-night ; so what say you, Bill ? will you be staunch as the best bower, and join me ? ”

“ Now, cap'n, belay there, ” said Bill looking serious, “ this 'ere love affair of yours has unshipped your running gear aloft, and put you two points off the course ; and if you don't get all clear again, we're in Davy Jones' locker as straight as a pike-staff. You know, ” continued Bill, placing his arms akimbo, and looking straight at the captain, “ this 'ere pretty wench has got friends ; and suppose they don't show the white feather, what then ? Blood an' murder, I guess, with a fast sailing frigate in our wake, and a bow chaser ticklin' our stern post atween wind and water with thirty-two pounder pellets. No, no, cap'n, that leetle game of yours won't play. Port helm, an' take in some canvass till fair weather comes, soft and gently, or it won't do ; that's my reckonin' ! ”

“ Well, well, ” said the captain calmly, “ maybe your right,

Bill. Next trip anyways I'll take soundings, and prick out on the chart, an' then we shall see the bearings."

The reader will no doubt be able to gather from the highly figurative language of those two worthies, that the plot to carry off Lelah Halcro from her friends and home, was only prevented by the clearer judgment of the mate Bill Ericson, who foresaw that such a daring act could not be attempted in broad daylight without the risk of bloodshed, and certain punishment overtaking the perpetrators of such an outrage ; he therefore used his utmost influence to dissuade the captain from entering upon so dangerous an enterprise, and to wait until a more favourable chance should occur for accomplishing his object. Calmer reflection also showed the captain that an opportunity of this kind would be best brought about by obtaining such information from the natives as would make it clear whether Lelah Halcro was really the betrothed of his old rival, Olla Ollison ; and if so, according to the well-known habits of lovers in those parts, they would have a trysting-place. To find out where that trysting-place was, became therefore the first step to be taken.

On his return voyage about two months after, he omitted no opportunity, while dealing with the natives of Dunrossness, to learn from them all he could about Lelah Halcro and her sweetheart ; and this he did with great art, and in such a way as entirely to disarm suspicion, always speaking in broken English, and making it appear that it was the beauty and fine appearance of *all* the girls he saw in the meadow, that made him so anxious about their welfare and matrimonial prospects ; and thus gradually he ferreted out the truth that Lelah Halcro was to be married to the schoolmaster, Olla Ollison, and that they were accustomed to meet at night at their trysting-place, near the cliffs of Trosswickness. The captain, moreover, learned that it was only on fine evenings, and with clear moonlight, that the lovers went to so great a distance, and these

circumstances appeared to him to be highly favourable to the success of his scheme, because the same fine weather which would tempt them to stroll so far, would enable him to land in any of the creeks around the Ness, and which he knew it was impossible to do in rough weather. He therefore determined to cruise off the land, and wait the chance of such fine weather as should one time or other bring together such a combination of circumstances as would enable him to capture the girl without resistance by her lover or friends ; and perhaps without its being known by any one what had become of her. In thus maturing his plan, his early experience and knowledge of the coast also came to his aid. He knew every stack and heilig, and "gio" and landing-place around the Ness, and he also remembered his experience at seal shooting when a young lad. In those times seals were very numerous around the coast, but owing to the precipitous nature of the rocks, only a very small proportion of the animals wounded were captured ; and in many instances wounded seals were known to crawl up on the rocks during the night-time, and be found dead by the limpet-gatherers or sillick-fishers who visited the spot on the following day. A wounded seal on a rock gave out a mournful, moaning sound ; and this the captain in his young days used to imitate for the purpose of playing practical jokes on the boys who accompanied him. He would conceal himself underneath a rock, and then, imitating the dying seal, would bring the boys to the spot in great excitement, when suddenly he would spring from his hiding-place, and laugh at their disappointment. This early accomplishment he now hoped to turn to practical and important use. He hoped that in the event of the lovers descending the shelving rock, as they might very likely do to avoid being seen by the sillick-fishers who passed that way, he could imitate a wounded seal while lying in ambush in one of the creeks, and thus decoy the young man from the side of his sweetheart, and then seize him, while another party in the boat

would capture the girl.

With his plan thus fully matured, and ready to be put into execution, he continued to cruise off the coast, anxiously scanning the heavens, and wishing for such a favourable lull in the weather as should make it safe for him to land on any part of the coast ; but as it was now the month of October, each day seemed to lessen the prospect of settled weather, and at last a stong gale from the east sprang up, which forced him to abandon the coast, and proceed on his voyage to Holland, deeply chagrined at his want of luck, as he called it, but fully determined that, at some time during the following year, he would carry out his design, but as much earlier in the season as would give him a better chance of that weather which was necessary for its success.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Along the solitary shore,
While flitting sea-fowl round me cry
Across the rolling dashing roar,
I'll westward turn my wistful eye.

BURNS.

ON that evening when Lelah Halcro and her lover met for the last time at their trysting-place near the "banks" of Trosswickness, a boat might have been seen approaching from the south. After crossing the Voe she kept close to the shore, and was soon almost concealed from view by the dark shadows which the over-hanging cliffs cast upon the silent waters. The rowers, dressed in the garb of Dutch sailors, conversed in whispers, as they dipped their muffled oars with slow and steady stroke, and leaving in the wake of the boat, as she glided on, a luminous sparkling stream of phosphoric light.

In the stern of the boat was seated a man of somewhat bulky proportions, enveloped in a cloak, and wearing on his head a low-crowned hat, slouched over his eyes. In his right hand he grasped the tiller of the boat, making her turn sharply to every bend in the irregular outline of the shore; in his left he nervously clutched the folds of his cloak, scanning with restless eye the rugged summits of the dizzy heights above, and which were now sharply defined against the clear blue moonlit sky.

The reader will scarcely need to be informed that the steersman of this boat was none other than the smuggler Jack Smith, and now commander of the "Bockanier" of Overflakee, which vessel lay lazily resting on the bosom of the deep, about two miles off the land, her tall spars and quivering sails

reflecting the silvery sheen of a full-orbed moon. The four oarsmen consisted of the mate Bill Ericson, and three picked men of the ship's crew.

This was now the "Bockanier's" second voyage to the Shetland coast that season. On the first voyage the captain made his annual cruise amongst the islands on the west coast, reserving the east for his second voyage, which would bring him there early in August, so as to catch the fine weather which generally prevails during that month, and upon which depended the success of his enterprise.

Fortune sometimes favours the tyrant who crushes a nation's liberties, and also the midnight assassin who strikes his victim in the dark ; and it favoured Jack Smith, the smuggler, and now sea-robber, on that calm night, when the silvery moon had wooed the lovers to their trysting-place, and when the restless waves which washed the dark rocky shore of Trosswickness were murmuring softly as they bore onward on their placid bosom the spoiler and tyrant--that spoiler who was about to rend asunder and trample under his feet the web of human happiness, sparkling with gems and spotless as snow, which two fond hearts had been weaving for themselves during many long years. Alas ! how little they dreamed, as they rested on the shelving rock, and looked out upon the broad expanse of the dark waters slumbering at their feet, and gently flickering in silvery undulations beneath the pale moon, that this peaceful scene was about to be overcast by the wild tempest of unholy passion, and that the light and joy of life was about to be quenched in the darkness of grief and despair. The wolf was prowling near for his prey, and the remorseless paw of the crouching tiger was about to strike down Lelah Halcro's protector from her side, and carry her off to his den.

"I say, Bill, dus you know birds 'as roosts when the moon shines bright," at last whispered the captain, with an affected chuckle, as he jerked his thumb in the direction of the creek

to which the prow of the boat was pointing.

"I guess I do, cap'n," replied Bill, in the same undertone, as he rested his oar ; " but, to be straight with you, cap'n, shiver me if I much like this 'ere catchin' business, especially as when you catch the hen-sparrow there may be some ugly business to do, if she's got a game cock for a mate, and one as knows how to use his bill and talons."

" Belay there, Bill," replied the captain, in a loud whisper, the words hissing through his teeth as he spoke ; " none of your gammon hereaway ; a true blue salt never croaks even when it blows hard, and now it's smooth sea and clear lunar observations ; so you ain't goin' to disobey orders when the captin's got on the quarterdeck, nor show the white feather when true blue is the hoist. Your cock-sparrow or Master Tommiewake won't have a feather pulled, if he keeps his claws stowed, and puts a stopper on his jaw tackle ; but leave me to tackle him anyhow, while you tackle Miss Kittywake, my pretty bird. I wouldn't hurt a feather of her wing for the ' Bockanier' where she floats ; but she *must be* caught and tamed," and the captain clenched his fist and looked fierce.

Bill was not slow to perceive that it was now too late to attempt turning the captain from his purpose, and that any hint in this direction would only bring against himself the charge of cowardice ; he therefore merely said, " All right, cap'n. Bill knows his duty, and always has done it. Catchin' a bird, howsoever, is one thing, and taming another ; hopes you do the last as well as Bill does the first ;" and Bill winked, and dipped his oar with a strong pull, in order to bring the boat's head close to the rock at which the captain and his accomplice were to land. This was a level rock, forming a natural jetty, on one side of the creek about 200 yards to the east of the lovers' trysting-place. As soon as the boat touched the rock the captain sprang out, followed by the sailor Vander Dunder, who was to accompany him, and both began to ascend the tortuous

and dangerous path by which only the lofty summit of the cliff could be reached.

“Now, Dunder,” whispered the captain, as the ascent began to get more difficult, “keep your weather-eye open, and don’t be falling overboard. You ain’t got no standing riggin’ here, my lad ; so pitch off them clumpers of yours, they won’t go to Holland with ye.”

“Yah ! yah !” replied the Dutchman, in a suppressed voice, as he slipped off his wooden clogs, and continued to mount the steep ascent, the captain leading the way.

“Mein Gott, captain,” exclaimed the Dutchman, as, now midway up the cliff, he gazed in terror from a perilous footing at the overhanging crag above ; “you not goin’ up dat der place—mine head go dis vay,” and the Dutchman pointed to his forehead, and made a circular motion with his left hand.

“By G——, your head shall go *that way* if you don’t stop that,” fiercely hissed the captain, as he jerked his arm down in the direction in which Vander Dunder’s head was to pilot his body.

“You keep close astern o’ me,” continued the captain, in a softer tone, “and I’ll take you up as sound as a pump-bolt. I have done this here traverse sailin’ afore now, and knows the course all right.”

Thus encouraged, the Dutchman clambered after his leader, now and then catching hold of the captain’s legs when there was nothing better to hold by. At last, after considerable exertion, and many heart-quakings and narrow escapes on the part of the heavy-footed son of the flat country, the summit was gained, and the captain, still leading the way, struck off to the west, and then made a circuit to the north, so as to return to the head of the creek, which lay on the north side of the rocky declivity where the lovers were seated. Here the captain, with his companion, descended, and after clambering to some distance over the huge masses of fallen rock,

which the force of the waves had piled up in the head of creek, they came in sight of the point around which the boat was expected to come, and after waiting a few moments, her dark form was seen stealthily approaching, but keeping so close to the rock as scarcely to be discernible, and was soon again lost sight of as she entered the dark shadow cast by the projecting cliff on the motionless water beneath.

As soon as the captain concluded that the boat had reached a stack or isolated rock, where Bill, now in command, had been instructed to halt, and which stood near where the lovers were seated, and which concealed the boat from view, he disappeared again amongst the fallen rock, selecting an aperture formed by two rugged masses resting against each other; he here concealed himself under the projecting ends of one of the fragments, while he placed the Dutchman in a similar position on the opposite side. He now put his fingers to his lips, and sent forth a long wail in imitation of a dying seal, which in the calm night, echoed back from the precipitous cliffs with a mournful cadence. As he anticipated, and as we saw from the hermit's own narrative of what occurred on that eventful night, this stratagem succeeded; for no sooner did the young man hear this sound proceed from the creek than he sprung to his feet, and, bounding away over the sloping rock, was soon lost to view amongst the rugged fragments in the creek already described. Entering at a point a little above high water mark, he treaded his way through the narrow openings until he passed the one where his enemies were lying in ambush. Just as he was passing through he felt himself seized by the feet from behind; and the opening being so small that he had no room to turn upon his assailants, he struggled in vain for liberty, until exhausted by loss of blood from the wounds caused by the sharp pointed rock beneath him.

While this tragic scene was being enacted, the boat noiselessly glided from her hiding-place behind the rock, but was not

observed by Lelah Halcrow ; for, at that moment she was earnestly straining her eyes in the direction in which her lover had gone, and anxious to see him return again in safety ; but her ear caught the sound of advancing footsteps, and on turning round the apparition of three men met her affrighted gaze. Her superstitious fears, so common in that age, flashed across her mind, converted these three beings, in human form, into demons or ghostly apparitions arisen out of the sea ; for the boat was again out of sight, and the horror of the moment chilled her heart, and she swooned away, and would have fallen on the rock where she stood had not the strong arms of Bill Ericson caught her as she fell, who, rough sailor though he was, felt all the nobler impulses of his nature stirred within him by such an affecting scene ; and had the way been open to give effect to his feelings, could at that moment have fought his way through seas of blood in defence of the lovely burden he quickly and gently bore to the boat. Here placing himself in the stern sheets, he supported his still unconscious charge, by placing his arm round her waist, her fair drooping head resting on his shoulder. Alas ! how transient are life's fleeting pleasures ! How vain its most fondly cherished hopes ! In a few short moments how terrible the change ! *Then*, two fond hearts beat in unison, and bright hopes built their aerial tenements of future bliss. *Now*, all has passed into the land of forgetfulness, and loved voices are silent as the grave. One lies stretched upon the cold rock, the blood still trickling from his wounds ; the other, a captive and still unconscious that the cup of bliss has passed from her lips, and one full of human woe and agonizing grief given her to drink in its stead.

Oh, remorseless nature ! how unbending are thy laws ! how stern and inflexible are thy rules ! how couldst thou be calm, and smile, and sigh, and murmur soft music, while youth, beauty, and innocence were betrayed, and the loving spirit of that bright form eclipsed in dark unconsciousness ? O stars !

why did you twinkle in undimmed lustre ? and thou, pale moon, was there no fragment of cloud to hide thy face from such a scene ? Thou, Author of Nature upon thy throne of Justice, who holdest the whirlwind in the hollow of thy hand, and lightnings speed at thy behest, why didst Thou not smite the spoiler with a blast from heaven, and consume his accursed and cruel heart because it had no pity ?

Dear Lelah, child of innocence and truth, God does not cause the lightning and the whirlwind to descend for thy rescue ; but He can keep thee spotless and pure ; yea, on the raging billow, and in the midst of fierce and lawless men, and in thy long sojourn in a foreign land, no evil shall come nigh thee. He that keeps thee does not slumber nor sleep ; and when thy pillow shall be no more bedewed with tears, He will bring thee again to the land of thy birth, and to the arms of thy lover and thy long lost friends !

As soon as the struggles of their youthful victim had ceased, the captain and Van der Dunder hurried from the spot, and seeing the boat waiting, gave a loud whistle, which was at once answered by the forward motion of the boat towards the rock jetty, where the captain and his accomplice waited to be taken on board.

“ God bless you, Bill,” exclaimed the captain, as he sprang into the boat ; “ you’re a staunch fellow, and every inch of a true blue ; and here’s my pretty bird at last. She ain’t hurt, I hope, Bill ; is she ? ” inquired the captain, looking anxiously at the lovely and still almost lifeless form which rested on Bill’s bosom.

“ Cap’n,” said Bill hoarsely, “ you said, God bless me ; and I say amen to that, when I’m out of this ’ere business ; but, cap’n, if there be such a Bein’ aloft, which I sometimes doubt, and if He has got blessin’s for you and me to-night, He ain’t fair and square if He don’t put a pinch o’ brimstone in them. That’s my say, cap’n ; and blow my brains out for it, if you like.”

“Avast there, Bill!” cried the captain, quivering with rage. “Unship!—give me the girl—feather your oar,” and the captain sprang to the side of his captive, and Bill sullenly rose, and seating himself at an oar, began to pull.

“Give way!” hoarsely hawled the captain, and the rowers bent their oars like willows, as the sparkling foam danced from the bows of the boat as she rushed onward, leaving a broad stream of molten silver in her wake.

CHAPTER XIX.

Beneath the rough coat of the sailor lad
An honest heart beats lightly.

OLD PLAY.

As we saw from the hermit's own narrative of what occurred on this eventful night—shortly after his assailants had left him, he recovered consciousness, but awakened to find life's joys had fled, and the world before him a vale of tears. But cruel fate relented when she looked upon his beloved Lelah, now a captive in the tyrant's grasp, and therefore let her dream on. Only once or twice during the short passage to the ship did she languidly raise her long silken eyelashes, and look dreamily around ; and then, as she again fetched a long-drawn sigh, the cloud of unconsciousness again closed over her. He that tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, pitied the poor lamb now shorn of all her earthly treasures, and did not permit her to know at once the darkness and desolation which had overtaken her ; He tempered the chill blast of adversity to her feeble strength, and enabled her to pass safely through the fiery ordeal of affliction that awaited her.

As the boat entered the dark shadows which the motionless sails of the "Bockanier" cast upon the slumbering waters, Bill quickly drew in his oar, and springing to his feet, said—"Now, cap'n, as a favour for my share in this business, you just let me take this child aboard ; I can do it gently, and I like to do it, cap'n." And Bill turned his face away from the captain, and looked up at the drooping pennant which hung from the mast head ; for a big tear rolled down his cheek, and his voice quivered as he spoke.

"All right, Bill," replied the captain, "that same

favour ain't by no means a big one ; but, big or little, you've earned it fairly ; so here you are, my lad ; I know you won't slip her overboard," he added, as Bill raised the lovely burden in his arms, and tenderly carried her up the steps of the strong wooden ladder, which had been let fall just as the boat approached the gangway.

Descending the cabin-steps, Bill laid the still unconscious Lelah on a couch which formed one side of the elegant cabin, and then gazed upon her with a mournful expression on his weather-beaten countenance, while the captain stood by his side, stern and unmoved, with his arms crossed, and his lips compressed, as if determined to hide the contending emotions which warred within his breast.

"Ain't my pretty Polly goin' to flare up, Bill?" inquired the captain, after a pause ; and, with an assumed air of pleasantry, he added, "when she does, Bill, you'll be nurse, and get her braced round again all taut and square."

"Cap'n," said Bill, "just belay there, and bring me a little brandy and water."

"Here you are, Bill," said the captain, as he held a glass of water, and Bill sprinkled the shining drops on Lelah's forehead, and then, rising her head gently on his arm, he moistened her pale lips with a few drops of brandy from a glass which was also handed him by the captain.

As these restoratives were applied, the feeble pulse throbbed, and the pale cheek became gently flushed, and Lelah Halcro awakened as from a trance.

"Where am I?" she faintly inquired, "and why does the house move so ; and why are strangers here?"

"Don't you know me, Lelah?" exclaimed the captain, coming forward, as Bill withdrew, to one side, "your old schoolmate, Jack Smith, that fought for you like a Turk, and loved you as his life ; and here we are now all right, tight, and happy, on board the gallant 'Bockanier,' bound for Holland

—a jolly country, and a lady I'll make you there. So cheer up, my pretty bird, and don't look glum ;—fair weather, a fair wind, and your old friend, Jack Smith, the jolly true blue, and as staunch as the best bower ; and what could you wish more ?”

Slowly did Lelah Halcro raise herself from the couch on which she rested, as the captain's hurried sentences fell upon her ear, the meaning of which her wandering senses did not seem to comprehend, until the dreaded name of “ Jack Smith” was repeated ; and then a flash of intelligence passed over her countenance, and she sprang to her feet, as if endowed with superhuman strength.

“ Wretch, fiend, and murderer !” she exclaimed, as she fixed her flashing eyes upon the man who stood before her, and which seemed to penetrate his very soul. “ Where is my lover ? Does not his blood call for vengeance from the cold rock where he now lies ? but strike here, and let me follow him !” and she pointed to her bosom.

“ Now, now, my pretty Lelah,” cried the captain, “ you've got a list to sta'bord, and all on the wrong tack. We ain't in the murderin' line at all hereaways ; so, just you lower your gaff, my pretty girl, and make yourself at home till we get on the tother side, and then we shall have a leetle bit of neat splicing to do, an' that will make it all square ; so give me your hand, my pretty mate, an' let us be friends till something better turns up.”

“ Monster !” exclaimed the noble girl, as she shrunk back with horror from the proffered hand, “ that hand has blood on it. It is the hand of a murderer ; let it not touch me. God gave me life, and I dare not take it away while you leave me alone, captive as I am ; but put that blood-stained hand upon me, and I cast myself upon God's mercy, and seek refuge from your power in the cold embrace of death. Then take my poor body,” she continued, in a solemn voice, “ and wrap it in a hammock, and in the silent night let it fall with a heavy plunge

in the deep, and let it sink down, down to the Land of Rest ! But when the wind moans through the shrouds of your ship, then list, and hear my ghost shrieking for vengeance ! Then look and see the drops of my murdered lover's blood falling on your deck ; and no water shall ever wash them out ; and——”

“ O Bill, Bill,” exclaimed the captain, as he struck his hands on his forehead, and rushed on deck, followed by his comrade, “ I cannot stand that,” he muttered, gasping as he grasped the taffrail, and trembling in every limb. “ Not that I suppose,” he added after a pause, “ that the fellow is dead, though no doubts on it, he might soon come to a sheer hulk, and water-logged too, if nobody found him out ; but what shivers my timbers, Bill, from stem to stern, is that infernal old yarn about —Stand from under.’ Never since I first heered that same yarn has it got out of my head, and now the croak of that corbie we have got aboard has made it worse than ever ; and, if it be true what she says, that the fellow is dead, and maybe she knows, then what are we to do, Bill ? that's the reckonin' that beats me, and I give it up.”

“ Well, well, captain,” replied Bill, “ you know well I told you I did not like at all that catchin' business when you first spoke of it ; and now you see what's come of it ; but if you want my reckonin', cap'n, this is it all, straight and down on the nail ; an' I say, you keep away from this 'ere girl, or she's overboard or through the cabin windows afore you can say ‘ Jack Robinson ;’ and then I guess, cap'n, we shall have two ghosts with a finger in this pie of yours instead of one. Now, then, if that's as straight as a pike-staff, you ask what are we to do, and that same question is what I've got to answer ; and it is this, cap'n,—that you and I shift our quarters to the night-house upon deck, and let the girl have the cabin all to herself ; and if you make that square, I'm out of my reckonin' if I don't bring her round to the wind all right.”

¹ See Note P. Sailors' Superstitions.

“But, Bill,” interposed the captain, “suppose that’s the course till we make the Dutch coast, how do you steer then, my lad? that’s the tickler, I fancy.”

“O, no tickler at all, cap’n,” replied Bill; “you just look at my reckonin’, an’ I’ll prick you out on the chart all clear. You know Mrs Vanderboor, and her pretty leetle Polly; there away is a nice anchorage for your Lelah, till she gets as tame as a duck.”

“Just anchor there, Bill,” exclaimed the captain with animation, and bringing his heavy fist down on the taffrail with a thump; “that’s the harbour, and it’ll do. You’re a clever fellow, you are, Bill; and I’ll leave you in charge of this ’ere leetle craft, for I see it all clear as the forestay. If I take the helm, she’ll yaw an’ play the devil with us; so you go below, and see how she looks now after the squall.”

“All right, captain, thank you,” replied Bill, as he descended the cabin steps, and found Lelah seated on the couch, with her hands clasped, and the tears coursing down her lovely cheeks—a friendly flood which had come to her relief, and cooled the burning fever of her brain. She started as Bill entered; but on seeing that it was not the captain, she looked calmer, and said, in a soft meek voice, “Now I am ready to die; let death come, and my sorrows shall cease.”

“Oh my good girl!” cried Bill, his voice choked with emotion, “don’t say that; I am a friend and countryman; and I swear by Heaven, that no harm shall come to you while I am mate of this ship. The captain has promised that he will not trouble you, and this cabin you’re to have all to yourself till we get to Holland, and then I know a friend there as will take care of you; and I know God will take care of you, and bring you out of all this trouble yet;” and Bill turned away his face to hide his tears.

“Is it possible, O God!” Lelah exclaimed, clasping her hands and looking up, while the tears flowed afresh, “that I

am still under thy care, and that Thou hast sent me a friend even in this place, and in this hour of my tribulation? But what are friends to me?" she added mournfully; "my lover lies cold and still on yonder shore; and I shall no more hear his loving voice, nor see his loved form. But who are you that offer to be my friend?" she inquired after a pause.

"I am Bill Ericson, mate of this vessel," he replied, "and it was myself that carried you on board from the boat; and it's all because I've got a soft heart, and can't help it; and if it must come out, Lelah (for that I know is your name), it is because you are so like my own pretty Polly now resting in the churchyard. I love you for her sake, God help me! I shall never love another; but he who hurts you, my dear girl, shall first step over my dead body—that's it;" and Bill looked as if the annihilation of some one was necessary to give emphasis to this declaration.

"Thank you, and may God bless you," Lelah replied. "He has surely sent you in the hour of need. But can you tell me if my lover was murdered, or how I was brought here?"

"I hope he was not, Lelah," replied Bill; "but I do not know, and therefore I will not deceive you; but by-and-by I shall tell you all I know; but first you need some refreshment, which I will tell the cook to bring;" and Bill hurried up the steps.

While those thrilling scenes were passing on board the "Bockanier," a gentle breeze had sprung up, and filled her broad canvas, every inch of which had been shaken out by the captain's orders; and as the breeze freshened, the gallant ship, as if instinctive with life, and flying from a revengeful foe, gathered speed in her onward course, and dashed the dancing foam from her bows as she left a broad shining track in her wake. Far to windward lay the islands, like a dark fragment of cloud against the western horizon; and Lelah Halcro, a captive, lonely and forlorn, was bidding a long adieu to the

home of her fathers, and the scenes of her happy childhood and youth. But sad as her fate was, she was at least safe from intrusion, and from the detested presence of her captor ; and this inestimable boon she owed first to her own marvellous courage and nobility of soul, and next to the warm-hearted and generous Bill Erickson, who, by a thorough knowledge of human nature, and especially of the weak points in the character of his superior officer, had got himself constituted her protector and guardian. Why he should have allowed himself to become an accomplice in effecting her abduction may appear at first sight strange and contradictory, but a moment's reflection will show that it was all but impossible for him to act otherwise. It must be remembered that he was only one of the party ; and even if any plan for her escape had been practicable, he did not know how far he could rely on the men under his command ; besides, Lelah Halcro never would have sought her own safety while her lover's fate was uncertain, and had she been left at liberty, would have fled to his rescue, with the risk of rendering the tragedy of that memorable night still more terrible than it was.

The first glance at the lovely face and form of Lelah Halcro awakened in the bosom of Bill Ericson such emotions as he could not conceal. She strikingly resembled his own dear Polly, as he loved to call her, though many years had passed since he had laid her under the green sod ; but he cherished her memory with undying affection, and felt called upon to protect one who so much resembled her, as he would have protected her. He therefore eagerly took advantage of the captain's superstitious fears, and adopted such a course as would not only protect the object of his solicitude from danger, but bring her into a closer relationship with himself ; and in such a way as the sincerity and generosity of his feelings could be best manifested, and yet without compromising his position as an officer of the ship.

That Lelah Halcro, a peasant girl, and with such a limited education as her position in life commanded, should so act the heroine, and put forth such power as to strike terror into the heart of the bold and lawless smuggler, may to some appear strange, if not improbable; but how many instances does history furnish of a similar nature? The poet says—

“O woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please;
When pain and sorrow wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou.”

And in the hour of trial, or in defence of assailed virtue, woman establishes a still higher claim to the name of angel, and has often risen to an altitude of power, and grandeur of character, which has smitten the spoiler as with a blast from Heaven, and turned his craven heart into water.

See Lelah Halcro, on a calm summer eve, when seated by her lover's side, soft and gentle as the cushat dove, her sweet silvery voice musical as an angel's whisper, and her eyes beaming forth the tenderest emotions of the soul; and then see her a captive in the cabin of the “Bockanier,” and in the hated presence of her betrayer, and fully conscious of the peril to which she is exposed, and you see how the glorious nobility of virtue has changed the simple maiden into the heroine; her matchless beauty giving power and force to that torrent of eloquence which flowed from her lips, the very words of which came to her as if by inspiration, because few of them were to be found in her native dialect.

CHAPTER XX.

I sigh for Scotia's home, and I gaze across the sea,
But I cannot get a glimpse o' my ain countree.

GILFILLAN.

As we saw, when Lelah Halcro awoke to consciousness in the cabin of the "Bockanier," she could not comprehend why she was in such a place, nor how she had been brought there; but when the dreaded name of "Jack Smith" was understood by her, the mystery was solved, and the dark plot in which he had been engaged was laid bare as if by a flash of lightning. She saw in a moment the danger she was in, and the only means by which she could escape from it. She did not fall on her knees and implore him to release her for the sake of friends and home, for she well knew that Jack Smith neither feared God nor regarded man. There was only one power on earth which could overawe him, and that was the power of superstition, which held such a sway over the minds of men in that age, and more especially the class to which he belonged; and this power she wielded with such effect as to produce the happy results of being removed from his hated presence, and safe from his machinations.

Three days and nights of a fair wind filling the broad sails of the "Bockanier," and making her skim the ocean like a bird, brought in sight the low lines of the Dutch coast. During all that time Bill faithfully attended to the wants of his lovely charge, giving the cook special directions on her account, and producing for her table the best the ship could afford, which, owing to the smoothness of the sea, and her exemption from sea-sickness, she was able to partake of. He also did all in his power to alleviate the anguish of her mind, caused by the dread-

ful uncertainty which hung over the fate of her lover, and the thoughts of the sorrow in which she knew her friends were plunged,—mourning her as one dead. Bill took special precautions to protect her from intrusion, by allowing her to lock the cabin door on the inside, opening it only when he gave the password of his own name. The captain was fully aware of how he was loathed by his captive, and that any attempt on his part to make advances towards her might be attended with dreadful consequences, the thought of which had already so scared him. He was therefore contented to trust to time and the influence of Widow Vanderboor to bring Lelah to a different state of mind. On the vessel's arrival, therefore, at Overflakke, he allowed her to depart in the boat with Bill and two seamen without seeing her, merely remarking to Bill as he was about to leave,—

“Tell Missus Vanderboor as how I shall steer up river next voyage, and see my little kittywake, an' hopes by that time she's got her as tame as a duck.”

“All right, cap'n,” replied Bill ; “I shall go over all that sort o' dead reckonin' when I get up ; and no manner of doubts the missus will know how many fives make fifteen, and have it all straight and square next trip.”

So saying, Bill returned to the cabin to assist Lelah to the boat, and the captain walked forward to give orders to the sailors doing duty there.

The owner of a vast fortune and of wide domains, if languishing on a bed of sickness, or racked with pain, would, if health could be restored, feed sweetly on a crust, and sleep soundly on a straw pallet. So it was with Lelah Halcro ; dark and dreary was the path which her feet had trodden during the past few days and nights, lengthened as they were into ages ; and darker still was the future upon which she was entering. But to be relieved from the power and presence of the man whom she looked upon as the murderer of her lover was relief indeed,

and a soothing of her sorrows ; and the expression of this feeling passed in fitful gleams over her sad countenance as the boat glided on her course up the smooth waters of the Maas.

During the passage few words were exchanged, as Bill had previously fully acquainted Lelah with his design, and the arrangements to be made for her safety,—being first to privately inform Widow Vanderboor of Lelah's history, her abduction, and the supposed murder of her lover by Captain Smith ; and next, if he did not find sufficient reason to trust Widow Vanderboor as Lelah's protector and guardian, to run any personal risk on her account, in order to find her a place of safety beyond the Captain's reach or knowledge.

On Bill's arriving with his fair companion at the house of Widow Vanderboor, he announced himself with, "Gooden Dach, mein good Frau Vanderboor," and then introducing Lelah, continued,—“dis moy meshie come to you from Captain Smitz of de 'Bockanier ;' he come up river next voyage and see you, but not dis time.”

“Oh, ver goot, ver goot,” replied the widow, grasping Lelah's hand between both hers ; “mein ver dear *freund*, Capitain Smitz, *freund* he *mein freund*, and *mein* leetle Gretchen's *freund* ; and *du* stay long time, and be so *freundlich* vit us.”

“Thank you, my good lady,” faintly replied Lelah, as she sank on a couch to which she had been led by the kind widow.

The ominous words which the latter had just uttered, and indicating her friendship for Captain Smith, shot through the heart of the fair Lelah with a thrill of terror ; for she imagined how her own safety might be compromised in such a relationship, and forgot at the moment what Bill had previously assured her of, that if he found any reason to doubt Widow Vanderboor's fidelity as her protectress, he should find some other place of safety for her, and leave the other two seamen to return to the ship without him.

Widow Vanderboor, ignorant of the true cause of what troubled her fair visitor, attributed it to fatigue, and therefore sympathizingly replied, "Ah, mein ver poor *kind*, ship not goot for Fraulein; but be better in von two days; and den go out vit mein own *Tochter* to de pretty *garten*, and dat make Fraulein vell."

Bill guessed the cause of Lelah's distress, and therefore thought it better to make an explanation at once to Widow Vanderboor, so as to save any further misunderstanding. He therefore, addressing her, said—

"Me would sprach with you in this odder room for one small moment, and mine friend, Lelah, will rest a leetle."

"Ver goot, ver goot," replied the widow, as she led the way to the adjoining apartment.

"Now, mine good friend," Bill began, when both were seated, "me want to tell you dat Captain Smitz is one bad man. He has killed—murdered this poor child's sweetheart, and torn her away from her fadder and modder, and dey tink she is lost—drowned by fallin' over de rocks; and he now want you to help to force this poor child to marry him."

"Ah, *mein Gott!* I sall die," she exclaimed, as she turned ashy pale and trembled with terror. "Is it possible," she added, after a pause, "dat what you tell me of Capitain Smitz is true?"

"Yes, mine good lady," Bill replied, "it is all true, I know it is; and dis is why I want to tell you keep and protect dis poor child, and I will pay you mine own self. Not that she can ever be mine sweetheart; but I love her for mine own poor sweetheart's sake dat is dead, and I shall never marry anoder."

"Ah, mine goot brave mate!" exclaimed the widow, as she burst into tears, "*Gott* vill bless you, and dis poor *kind* shall be mine *kind*, like mine own dear Gretchen; and not till dis poor heart beats no more in mein bosom, and not till Capitain Smitz steps over mine dead bodie, shall any harm

come to dis dear *freund* of yours, and you shall pay noting."

The declaration of such noble and generous sentiments by this warm-hearted and amiable lady, was more than Bill's already overstrained feelings could bear, and the emotion he felt deprived him of the power of utterance. He clasped his hands over his face to hide his tears, while his stalwart frame shook with suppressed sobs.

"Ah, mine dear lady!" he at length exclaimed, "God will bless you, and Bill will pray for you when far away on the billow; though he may not do that for himself. Your kindness to dis poor lamb, now lonely and forlorn, will bring down Heaven's best blessings upon you; and dis is poor Bill's earnest prayer, and he is sure it will come so."

"Thank you, mein ver dear *freund*," sighed the widow, as she wiped the tears from her face; "but we must now see Fraulein Lelah, and say vords to comfort her." So saying, she opened the door, and Bill rushing up to Lelah, who had now fully recovered, exclaimed, "Thank God, Lelah, it is now all square! This noble lady is your safeguard, and under her roof no one can harm you. The load is now off my mind, and I shall die happy whenever that time comes; and so goodbye, I shall come and see you again next voyage."

"Nay, nay! mine dear friend," cried the kind-hearted widow, "you sit down and get some refreshments vit us, and see mein Gretchen who comes here, and vill be so happy to see you and von new friend, Fraulein Lelah;" and the widow pointed to her daughter, approaching by a winding path which led through the gay parterres which surrounded the chateau on all sides.

While the table was being covered with the choicest viands the house could afford, Gretchen entered. She was a lovely rosy girl about fourteen years of age, who, smiling and blushing, was led by her mother to Lelah, and introduced as "mein own Gretchen, your sister;" and then turning to Gretchen, she said—

“Meine liebe, diese junge Dame wird mit uns bleiben. Sie müssen zu ihr freundlich sein, und versuchen sie glücklich machen den ihre Freunde sin gestorben, und sic ist sehr unglücklich.”

“Ja, meine Mutter,” replied Gretchen, *“ich will sie lieben als eine Schwester.”*

The repast being over, Bill arose to take his departure, and after taking an affectionate farewell of Lelah, Widow Vanderboor, and her daughter, he hurried to the boat with feelings of mingled joy and sadness. He felt his heart oppressed by a sense of melancholy at parting from Lelah, and had a presentiment that he would see her no more ; but the complete success of his mission, and the safety and happiness of one who lay so near his heart, was in some measure a soothing of his grief. Poor Bill, the coming event had indeed cast its shadow before, and his presentiment that he should see Lelah Halcro no more, alas ! proved too true ; for, on her returning voyage to Shetland, the “Bockanier” was lost, and all hands on board perished in a fearful hurricane which she encountered when off the Doggerbank, but her fate was not known till long after, when a fragment of wreck bearing her name was picked up on the Shetland coast.

It was not till many years after that the sad and ultimate fate of her generous friend and protector became known to Lelah, and then she mourned him as a brother ; and her already wounded heart bled afresh at the loss of one whose friendship was so pure, so noble, and unselfish, and who was willing to sacrifice even his life in defence of her who never could return him any favour. No doubt poor Bill died like a true British sailor, and left this changing scene, this vale of tears, with few regrets, for—

What was this world to him ?
 His Polly was no more ;
 She was not here to meet again,
 But on the other shore.

And as the path there lay,
Deep through the yawning wave,
He smiled as one came rolling on,
To seal his ocean grave !

Also beneath that wave sunk, to rise no more, the bold and lawless man, the noted smuggler Jack Smith, with all his sins upon his head ; unless, indeed, he sought forgiveness at the eleventh hour. But here the curtain must fall—we dare follow him no further,

If any earthly pleasure could heal a broken heart, Lelah Halcro might have been happy ; for in her new home she experienced at the hands of Widow Vanderboor more than a mother's kindness, while her daughter loved Lelah as her adopted sister with the most devoted affection, and studied by a thousand endearing ways to carry Lelah's thoughts from the sorrows of the past to the enjoyments of life, which were now so fully put within her reach.

Widow Vanderboor studiously avoided any mention of Lelah's past sorrows, and tried by every means in her power to wean her thoughts from them. She had every reason to believe, from what Bill Ericson had told her, that Lelah's lover was no longer alive, and therefore, to return to her native land would only be to open up the wound afresh in her heart, and leave her in a solitary home to brood in silent sorrow over her irreparable loss, which, in her present position, refined society and loving sympathy could so well supply. She therefore considered it her duty even to conceal from Lelah the knowledge of any chance which might occur for her returning to her native land ; but this was a very remote contingency indeed, as, by the loss of the "Bockanier," the only connecting link between Widow Vanderboor and the sea-coast was broken ; nor was she likely again to receive visits from any one from that quarter.

Fraulein Gretchen had just finished her education, and

perceiving that Lelah, though several years older than herself, was deficient in everything, at once undertook, as a pleasing duty and labour of love, to instruct her adopted sister ; and this she did with a zeal and earnestness which soon produced the most gratifying results.

Lelah Halcro proved a very apt scholar, and her progress was such as both pleased and surprised her kind friends. She soon learned to speak the German language fluently, which was Widow Vanderboor's mother tongue. She also made great progress in music, drawing, and indeed in all the accomplishments which Fraulein Gretchen herself possessed.

Thus Lelah's time was fully occupied either with her studies, or walking out with Gretchen in those sylvan retreats which the banks of the Waal so amply afforded. It was therefore only when she retired to rest, and when her head was laid on her pillow, that she could indulge in the luxury of tears. Then indeed "she wept sore in the night time, and her tears were on her cheeks," but they were tears of relief, and quenched the burning sorrow which consumed her heart ; and she was thus enabled, with the commencement of each new day, to put on that air of contentment and happiness which she considered it her duty to show to her kind friends as the only reward she could give them for all their kindness and care of her.

Thus years rolled on, but the wound in the heart of Lelah Halcro healed not.

"Time but the impression deeper makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear,"

she could well say, for ever and anon, the face and form of her long lost Olla stood before her, as he appeared in the happy days of their plighted love ; and oft friendly sleep opened dreamland, and brought back the bright visions of the past, the trysting-place by the sea-shore, and all the sweet memories

which crowded round those happy meetings ; but, alas ! it was only a dream, for

“ Her sorrows awoke with the dawning of morn,
And the voice in her dreaming ear melted away.”

Eight long years had come and gone, and Lelah Halcro was still the adopted daughter of Widow Vanderboor, and the loved sister of Fraulein Gretchen ; but as the latter had recently become betrothed to a wealthy Dutch merchant, her walks with Lelah were not quite so frequent, and thus the latter was left much by herself, and which, indeed, she seemed to desire.

Her native beauty, so bright and dazzling when it bloomed in all its rustic freshness, had now become more *spirituelle* by sorrow, by the influence of education and refined society ; but her smiles, once so sunny, still shone through the veil of melancholy which hung over her lovely countenance—that countenance which no one could look upon without being moved ; and many conquests she would have made amongst the young mynheers in the land of her sojourn ; but Widow Vanderboor and her daughter knowing how sternly her purpose was fixed, did all in their power to prevent her being molested in any way by unwelcome addresses.

When walking alone, or when seated by the river, and screened from view by the tall willows which skirted its banks, her thoughts were occupied by strange musings. She would then go back in thought to the land of her birth, and feel a yearning to see it once more. Then would come up before her the vision of her murdered lover, and the thought that even were she to go back now it must make her heart bleed afresh ; and, besides, how could she leave those who had been more than mother and sister to her ? And as she tried to banish the subject from her mind, this question would flash back again, Was her lover really dead ? Was there not a possibility that he might still be alive ? And if this were barely possible,

ought she not to go back, even if it were only to know the worst, and settle for ever those doubts which distressed her? Perhaps her father and mother were dead ; and if so, then she would only make a short stay, and return again to Holland, to live and die beside her adopted mother and sister.

These musings so long and often occupied her mind, and formed what to her might be called a feast of joy and sorrow, that she tried to put her thoughts in verse ; and in doing so, she sought words to suit a very old air which she remembered mothers in her native country singing when putting their babes asleep. As she remembered, it was sung in a low plaintive voice, like a wail of sorrow, as if the unknown future of the babe was the burden of the mother's grief.

To such an air Lelah's words, as will be seen, were singularly appropriate. She called it

THE EXILE'S LAMENT.

Break, O heart, or cease thine aching !
 Let thine anguish now be o'er ;
 Friendly sleep, with no awakening,
 Seal mine eyelids evermore.

Death, O death, why dost thou flee me
 When I love thy cold embrace ?
 When from sorrow thou canst free me !
 When from woe my soul release !

Long I've pined in silent anguish,
 In this strange and foreign land ;
 Yet in grief I still must languish,
 By a cruel murderer's hand.

Yes ! that hand is stained with crimson ;
 See my lover's blood thereon !
 See him like a hero dying !
 All unaided, all alone !

Loving hands, O lift him softly !
 Smooth the pillow for his rest !

Kiss, for me, his brow still lovely ;
Spread bright daisies on his breast.

Bear him gently, lay him softly
Down into his narrow bed :
Let the sod be green and flowery
That wraps my darling lover's head !

But, methinks, a spirit whispers,
" Olla lives, and oft for me
Watches by the murmuring billow,
Gazes on the silent sea."

By the pale moonlight he wanders
Weary, lonely, and forlorn ;
By our trysting-place, the Headland,
There his hapless fate to mourn.

Shall I meet him, O my lover—
Shall I yet his form embrace ?
Shall our sorrow yet be over—
Shall I see his smiling face ?

Trosswick banks, shall I behold you,
Towering with your crags on high ?
Shall your dark outlines unfold you
To my tearful, longing eye ?

Sumburgh Beacon, brightly gleaming
Like a twinkling guiding star ;
Will thy light, so joyful streaming,
Guide me where my treasures are ?

Guide me o'er the stormy billow,
Where my youthful feet did roam,
From the land of flood and willow,
To my own dear native home !