

***S. C. MRS. HALL***



***THE BUCCANEER:  
A TALE***

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# CHAPTER I.

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With roomy decks, her guns of mighty strength,  
Whose low-laid mouths each mounting billow  
laves,  
Deep in her draught, and warlike in her length,  
She seems a sea wasp flying on the waves.

DRYDEN.

It was between the hours of ten and twelve on a fine night of February, in the year sixteen hundred and fifty-six, that three men moored a light skiff in a small bay, overshadowed by the heavy and sombre rocks that distinguish the Isle of Shepey from other parts along the coast of Kent, the white cliffs of which present an aspect at once so cheerful and so peculiar to the shores of Britain. The quiet sea seemed, in the murky light, like a dense and motionless mass, save when the gathering clouds passed from the brow of the waning moon, and permitted its beams to repose in silver lines on its undulating bosom.

It was difficult to account for the motive that could have induced any mariner to land upon so unpropitious a spot, hemmed in as it was on every side, and apparently affording no outlet but that by which they had entered—the trackless and illimitable ocean. Without a moment's deliberation, however, the steersman, who had guided his boat into the creek, sprang lightly to the shore: another followed; while the third, folding himself in the capacious cloak his leader

had thrown off, resumed his place, as if resolved to take his rest, at least for a time.

"Little doubt of our having foul weather, master," observed the younger of the two, in a half querulous, half positive tone, as standing on a huge bank of sea-weed, he regarded first the heavens, and then the earth, with the scrutinising gaze of one accustomed to pry into their mysteries. His companion made no answer, but commenced unrolling a rich silk scarf, that had enveloped his throat, and twisting it into loose folds, passed it several times around his waist—having previously withdrawn from a wide leathern belt that intervened between his jacket and trousers a brace of curiously-fashioned pistols, which he now handed to the young sailor, while he elevated the hilt of his dagger, so that, without removing or disturbing the silken sash, he could use it in an instant. Having fully ascertained this point, by drawing the weapon more than once from its sheath, he again deposited the pistols in his belt, and buttoned his vest nearly to the throat; then drew the ends of his sash still more tightly, and placing a hand on either side, turned towards the cliffs, measuring their altitude with an eye, which, though deficient in dignity, was acute, and peculiarly fierce in expression.

The seaman, for such was his calling, was about five feet eight or nine inches in height. His hair, as it appeared from beneath a cap singularly at variance with the fashion of the time, curled darkly round a face, the marked features of which were sufficiently prominent, even in that uncertain light, to denote a person of no ordinary mind or character. His figure was firm and well-proportioned, and, though he

might have numbered fifty years, it had lost neither strength nor elasticity. His whole bearing was that of a man whom nothing could have turned from a cherished purpose, were it for good or evil: though his eye was, as we have described it, fierce and acute, it was also restless and impatient as the waves upon which he had toiled from his earliest years.

Again he surveyed the cliff, and, stepping close to its base, applied the point of a boat-spear to remove the seaweed that spring and high tides had heaped against it; he then summoned the youth to his assistance: after a few moments' search, the lad exclaimed,—

"Here it is, master—here is one—here another—but, my eyes! are we to trust our necks to such footing as this? I'd rather mount the top-gallant of the good ship Providence in the fiercest Nor-wester that ever blow'd, than follow such a lubberly tack."

"Then go back to the boat, sir," replied the elder, as he began, with cautious yet steady daring, to ascend—a course attended with evident danger, "Go back to the boat, sir—and, here, Jeromio! you have not been taught your duty on board the Providence, and, I presume, have no scruples, like our friend Oba Springall. Jeromio! I say, hither and up with me!"

"I am ready, sir," replied the youth, whose momentary dread had been dispelled by this attempt to promote a rival to the post of honour; "I am ready, sir:" muttering, however, soon afterwards to himself, as the difficulties of the way increased, "He thinks no more of his life than if he were a sprat or a spawn." No other word was breathed by either of the adventurers, as they threaded the giddy path, until



about midway, when the elder paused and exclaimed, "A-hoy there, boy! there are two steps wanting; you had better indeed go back. To me, the track has been long familiar; not so to you."

The youth thought of his master's taunt, and Jeromio, and resolved to take his chance. "Ay, ay, sir, no danger when I follow you." But the peril was, in truth, appalling, though its duration was brief. Below, the sea that was now rapidly covering the small creek, rudely agitated and opposed by a rising breeze, dashed and foamed against the rocks. To fall from such a height was inevitable destruction. There was scarcely sufficient light to mark the inequality of the ascending cliffs; and a spectator, gazing on the scene, must have imagined that those who clung to such a spot were supported by supernatural agency. The Skipper, nothing daunted, struck the spear, that had served as a climbing-stick, firmly into the surface of mingled clay and stone, and then, by a violent effort, flung himself upwards, catching with his left hand at a slight projection that was hardly visible; thus, hanging between earth and heaven, he coolly disengaged the staff, and placed it under the extended arm, so as to form another prop; and feeling, as it were, his way, he burrowed with his foot a resting in the cliff, from which he sprang on a narrow ledge, and was in safety. He then turned to look for his young companion, to whom he extended the boat-spear that had been of such service. Animated by his master's success and example, Springall's self-possession was confirmed; and both soon stood on the brow of the precipice.

"Sharp sailing that, boy," observed the elder, as the youth panted at his side.

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Springall, wiping his face with the sleeve of his jacket. "Take a drop, master," he continued, drawing a tin bottle from his bosom, "'twill warm ye after such a cursed cruise."

The Skipper nodded as he accepted the flask, "I hope you are as well armed on all points as on this; but don't take in too great a reef, or it will make you a heavy sailor before your time: drop anchor now, and keep watch here till further orders."

"Keep watch here, sir!" said Springall, in a mournful tone. "And did ye bring me ashore, and up that devil's rope-ladder, to leave me to watch here?"

The Captain looked upon him angrily for a moment. "I am rightly served for taking man or boy out of the canting hulks that lag on the water. Did ye ever chance to hear such a sound on board the ship Providence as 'Silence, and obey orders?' Let not your walk, youngster, extend beyond that point, from which, at daybreak, you can catch a view of the court tree, where, if ancient habits are not all put off, there will be revelries ere long: the old church at Minster will be also within your sight, while the sea between us and the Essex coast, and for miles along the Northern ocean, can scarcely bear a sail that your young eyes will not distinguish. Watch as if your life—as if a thousand lives hung upon the caution of a moment; and remember, while the blue light revolves, which you now see in the vessel's bow, all things abroad go on well. You also know the pass-word for our friends, and the reception for our enemies. If you

should be at all afraid, three loud notes on your whistle will summon Jeromio, and a single flash of your pistol will bring the long-boat off, and into the creek in five minutes. You can then tumble down the devil's rope-ladder, as you call it, and send the less timid Italian to keep watch till my return—you understand me." So saying he strode onwards, leaving the youth, who had not yet passed eighteen summers, to his discontented solitude and ill-temper.

"Understand you! I wonder who does, ever did, or ever will; perched up here like a sea-mew, and not having touched land for five weeks! 'Beyond that point!' I'll be even with him, for I wo'n't walk to that point: I'll just stay in the one spot." With this resolution, he flung himself upon a bank of early wild thyme, that filled the air with its refreshing odour. Long after his master was out of sight, he continued pulling up tufts of the perfumed herb, and flinging them over the cliff.

"Now, by my faith," he mentally exclaimed, "I have a mind to pelt that Jeromio with some of these clay lumps: he is enjoying a sound nap down there, like an overgrown seal, as he is; and I am everlastingly taunted with Jeromio! Jeromio! Jeromio! at every hand's turn. Here goes, to rouse his slumbers." He drew himself gradually forward, and raised his hand to fling a fragment of stone at his fellow-seaman: the arm was seized in its uplifted position, by a figure enveloped in a dark cloak, that, muffled closely round the face, and surmounted by a slouched hat, worn at the time by both Cavalier and Roundhead, effectually concealed the person from recognition. He held the youth in so iron a grasp, that motion was almost impossible; and while the

moon came forth and shone upon them in all her majesty, the two who contended beneath her light might have been aptly compared, in their strength and weakness, to the mighty eagle overcoming the feeble leveret.

The stranger was the first to speak, as motioning with his disengaged hand towards the revolving light that hung in the vessel's bow, he inquired,—

"What colours does that ship carry?"

"Her master's, I suppose."

"And who is her master?"

"The man she belongs to."

"She's a free-trader then?"

"The sea is as free to a free ship, as the land to a free man, I take it."

"Reptile! dare you barter words with me?—Your commander's name?"

The boy made no answer.

"Dost hear me? Your commander's name?" and as the question was repeated, the mailed glove of the interrogator pressed painfully into Springall's flesh, without, however, eliciting a reply.

"He has a name, I suppose?"

"That you, or any cowardly night-walker, would as soon not hear; for it is the name of a brave man," replied the youth at last, struggling violently, but ineffectually, to reach the whistle that was suspended round his neck.

"Fool!" exclaimed the stranger, "dost bandy strength as well as words? Learn that in an instant I could drop thee into the rolling ocean, like the egg of the unwise bird." He raised the youth from the earth, and held him over the precipice,

whose base was now buried in the wild waste of waters, that foamed and howled, as if demanding from the unyielding rock a tribute or a sacrifice.

"Tell me thy master's name."

The heroic boy, though with certain death before him, made no reply. The man held him for about the space of a minute and a half in the same position: at first he struggled fiercely and silently, as a young wolf caught in the hunter's toils; yet fear gradually palsied the body of the unconquered mind, and his efforts became so feeble, that the stranger placed him on his feet, saying,—

"I wish not to hurt thee, child!" adding, in a low and broken voice, "Would that the Lord had given unto me sons endowed with the same spirit! Wilt tell me thy own name?"

"No! If you are a friend, you know our pass-word; if a foe, you shall not know it from me. You can go down the cliff, and ask our commander's name from yon sleepy Orson; his tongue goes fast enough at all seasons."

The stranger entirely withdrew his hold from Springall, while he moved towards the summit of the rock. Quick as lightning, the whistle was applied to the youth's mouth, and three rapid, distinct notes cut through the night air, and were echoed by the surrounding caverns.

"I thank thee, boy," said the mysterious being, calmly; "that tells of Hugh Dalton and the Fire-fly."

And he disappeared so instantaneously from the spot, that Springall rubbed first his eyes, and then his arm, to be assured whether the events of the last few minutes were not the effects of a distempered imagination. He had, however, more certain proof of its reality: for, upon peering

closely through the darkness into the thick wood that skirted the east, he distinctly noted the glitter of steel in two or three points at the same moment; and apprehensive that their landing must have been witnessed by more than one person—the hostile intentions of whom he could scarcely doubt—he examined the priming of his pistols, called to Jeromio to look out, for that danger was at hand, and resumed his watch, fearful, not for his own safety, but for that of his absent commander.

In the mean time, the Skipper, who was known in the Isle of Shepey, and upon other parts of the coast, by the name of Hugh Dalton, proceeded uninterruptedly on his way, up and down the small luxuriant hills, and along the fair valleys of as fertile and beautiful a district as any of which our England can boast, until a sudden turn brought him close upon a dwelling of large proportions and disjointed architecture, that evidently belonged to two distinct eras. The portion of the house fronting the place on which he stood was built of red brick, and regularly elevated to three stories in height; the windows were long and narrow; and the entire of that division was in strict accordance with the taste of the times, as patronised and adopted by the rulers of the Commonwealth. Behind, rose several square turrets, and straggling buildings, the carved and many-paned windows of which were of very remote date, and evidently formed from the relics of some monastery or religious house. Here and there, the fancy or interest of the owner had induced him to remodel the structure; and an ill-designed and ungraceful mixture of the modern with the ancient gave to the whole somewhat of a grotesque

appearance, that was heightened by the noble trees, which had once towered in majesty and beauty, being in many places lopped and docked, as if even the exuberance of nature was a crime in the eyes of the present lord of the mansion.

"Sir Robert," muttered Dalton, "may well change the name of his dwelling from Cecil Abbey to Cecil Place. Why, the very trees are manufactured into Roundheads. But there is something more than ordinary a-foot, for the lights are floating through the house as if it were haunted. The sooner I make harbour, the better."

He paced rapidly forward, and stood before a small building that was then called a porter's lodge, but which had formerly been designated the Abbey Gate, and which, perhaps in consideration of its simple, but singular, beauty, had been spared all modern alteration. The ivy that clustered and climbed to its loftiest pinnacles added a wild and peculiar interest to this remnant of ancient architecture. It contained a high carriage archway, and a lateral passage beneath it, both decorated with numerous ornamental mouldings and columns, flanked at the angles by octagonal turrets of surpassing elegance. An apartment over the arch, which, during the reign of monastic power, had been used as a small oratory, for the celebration of early mass to the servants and labourers of the convent, was now appropriated to the accommodation of the porter and his family.

The Skipper applied his hand to the bell, and rang long and loudly. For some time no answer was returned. Again he rang, and after much delay, an old man was seen

approaching from the house, bearing a torch, which he carefully shaded from the night wind.

"My good friend," inquired the sailor in no gentle tone, "is it Sir Robert's wish that those who come on business should be thus kept waiting?"

"You know little of the affliction with which it has pleased the Lord to visit Sir Robert, or you would not have rung so loudly: our good lady is dying!" and the old man's voice faltered as he spoke the tidings.

"Indeed!" was the only reply of Dalton, as he passed under the archway; but the word was spoken in a tone that evinced strong feeling. The porter requested him to walk into the lodge.

"The place is in confusion; and as to seeing my master, it is a clear impossibility; he has not left our lady's bedside these three days, and the doctor says she will be gathered to her kindred before morning."

"He will leave even her to attend to me; and therefore, my friend, on your own head be the responsibility if you fail to deliver to him this token. I tell you," added Dalton, "death could hardly keep him from me!"

The porter took the offered signet in silence, and only shook his head in reply, as they passed together towards the house.

"You can tell me, I suppose, if Master Roland is still with his Highness's army?"

"Alack and well-a-day! God is just and merciful; but, I take it, the death of that noble boy has gone nigher to break my lady's heart than any other sorrow: the flesh will war against the spirit. Had he died in honourable combat at



Marston or at Naseby, when first it was given him to raise his arm in the Lord's cause!—but to fall in a drunken frolic, not befitting a holy Christian to engage in—it was far more than my poor lady could bear."

"Oliver promised to be a fine fellow."

"Do not talk of him, do not talk of him, I entreat you," replied the domestic, placing his hand on his face to conceal his emotion; "he was, indeed, my heart's darling. Long before Sir Robert succeeded to his brother's property, and when we lived with my lady's father, I was the old gentleman's huntsman, and that dear child was ever at my heels. The Lord be praised! the Lord be praised! but I little thought the blue waves would be his bier before he had seen his twentieth year. They are all gone, sir: five such boys!—the girl, the lamb of the flock, only left. You do not know her, do ye?" inquired the old man, peering with much curiosity into the Skipper's face, as if recognising it as one he had seen in former days.

The sailor made no answer.

They had now entered a small postern-door, which led to the hall by a narrow passage; and the porter proceeded until they stood in one of those vaulted entrances that usually convey an idea of the wealth and power of the possessor.

"You can sit here till I return," observed the guide, again casting an inquiring look upon the form and features of the guest.

"I sit in no man's hall," was the stern reply.

The porter withdrew, and the seaman, folding his arms, paced up and down the paved vestibule, which showed evident tokens of the confusion that sickness and death

never fail to create. He paused occasionally before the huge and gaping chimney, and extended his sinewy hands over the flickering embers of the expiring fire: the lurid glare of the departing flames only rendered the darkness of the farthestmost portion of the hail more deep and fearful. The clock chimed eleven: it was, as ever, the voice of Time giving warning of eternity!

A light gleamed at the most distant end of the apartment, and a slight but graceful girl approached the stranger. She was habited in a close vest of grey cloth: her head covered with a linen cap, devoid of any ornament; from under the plain border of which, a stream of hair appeared, tightly drawn across a forehead of beautiful colour and proportions.

"Will you please to follow, sir, to my master's study?"

Dalton turned suddenly round; the entire expression of his countenance softened, and his firm-set lips opened, as if a word laboured to come forth, and was retained only by an effort.

"Will you not follow, good sir?" repeated the girl, anxiously but mildly. "My master is ill at ease, and wishes to return to my lady's room: it may be——"

The sentence remained unfinished, and tears streamed afresh down cheeks already swollen with weeping.

"Your name, girl?" inquired the stranger, eagerly.

"Barbara Iverk," she replied, evidently astonished at the question. He seized her arm, and, while gazing earnestly in her face, murmured in a tone of positive tenderness,—

"Are you happy?"

"I praise the Lord for his goodness! ever since I have been here, I have been most happy; but my dear lady, who was so kind to me——" Again her tears returned.

"You do not know me?—But you could not." Hugh Dalton gradually relaxed his hold, and pulled from his bosom a purse heavy with Spanish pieces—he presented it to the girl, but she drew back her hand and shook her head.

"Take it, child, and buy thee a riding-hood, or a farthingale, or some such trumpery, which thy vain sex delight in."

"I lack nothing, good sir, I thank ye; and, as to the coined silver, it is only a tempter to the destruction of body and soul."

"As it may be used—as it may be used," repeated the sailor quickly; "one so young would not abuse it."

"Wisdom might be needed in the expenditure; and I have heard that want of knowledge is the forerunner of sin. Besides, I ask your pardon, good sir, but strangers do not give to strangers, unless for charity; and I lack nothing."

She dropped so modest a courtesy, and looked so perfectly and purely innocent, that moisture, as unusual as it might be unwelcome, dimmed the eyes of the stern man of ocean; and as he replaced the dollars, he muttered something that sounded like, "I thank God she is uncontaminated!" He then followed the gentle girl through many passages, and up and down more than one flight of stairs: they both at length stopped before a door that was thickly plated with iron.

"You need not wait," said Dalton, laying his hand on the latch. Barbara paused a moment, to look on the wild being,

so different from the staid persons she was in the daily habit of seeing at the hall; and then her light, even step, faded on the sailor's ear.

Sir Robert Cecil was standing, or rather leaning, with folded arms, against a column of the dark marble chimney-piece, which, enriched by various carvings and mouldings, rose nearly to the ceiling. The Baronet's hair, of mingled grey and black, had been cropped according to the approved fashion of the time; so that his features had not the advantage of either shadow or relief from the most beautiful of nature's ornaments. He might have been a few years older or younger than the sailor who had just entered; but his figure seemed weak and bending as a willow-wand, as he moved slowly round to receive his visiter. The usually polite expression of his countenance deepened into the insidious, and a faint smile rested for a moment on his lip. This outward show of welcome contrasted strangely with the visible tremor that agitated his frame: he did not speak; either from inability to coin an appropriate sentence, or the more subtle motive of waiting until the communication of the stranger was first made.

After a lengthened pause, during which Dalton slowly advanced, so as to stand opposite Sir Robert Cecil, he commenced the conversation, without any of that show of courtesy, which the consciousness of their relative situations might have called for: even his cap was unremoved.

"I am sorry, Sir Robert, to have come at such a time; nor would I now remain, were it not that my business——"

"I am not aware," interrupted the Baronet, "of any matters of '*business*' pending between us. I imagine, on reflection, you will find that all such have been long since concluded. If there is any way, indeed, in which I can oblige you, for the sake of an old servant——"

"*Servant!*" in his turn interrupted Dalton, with emphasis, "we have been companions, Sir Robert—*companions* in more than one act; and, by the dark heavens above us, will be so in another—if necessary."

The haughty Baronet writhed under this familiarity; yet was there an expression of triumphant quietude in his eye, as if he despised the insinuation of the seaman. "I think, considering all things, you have been pretty well paid for such acts, Master Dalton; I have never taken any man's labour for nothing."

"Labour!" again echoed the sailor, "labour may be paid for; but what can stand in lieu of innocence, purity of heart, and rectitude of conduct?"

"Gold—which you have had, in all its gorgeous and glowing abundance."

"'Two'n't do," retorted the other, in a painfully subdued tone; "there is much it cannot purchase. Am I not at this moment a banned and a blighted man—scouted alike from the board of the profligate Cavalier, and the psalm-singing Puritan of this most change-loving country? And one day or another I may be hung up at the yard-arm of a Commonwealth—Heaven bless the mark!—a Commonwealth cruiser!—or scare crows from a gibbet off Sheerness or Queenborough, or be made an example of for some act of piracy committed on the high seas!"

"But why commit such acts? You have wherewithal to live respectably—quietly."

"Quietly!" repeated the Skipper; "look ye, Master—I crave your pardon—*Sir* Robert Cecil; as soon could one of Mother Carey's chickens mount a hen-roost, or bring up a brood of lubberly turkies, as I, Hugh Dalton, master and owner of the good brigantine, that sits the waters like a swan, and cuts them like an arrow—live quietly, quietly, on shore! Santa Maria! have I not panted under the hot sun off the Caribbees? Have I not closed my ears to the cry of mercy? Have I not sacked, and sunk, and burnt without acknowledging claim or country? Has not the mother clasped her child more closely to her bosom at the mention of my name? In one word, for years have I not been a BUCCANEER? And yet you talk to me of quietness!—Sir, sir, the soul so steeped in sin has but two resources—madness, or the grave; the last even I shrink from; so give me war, war, and its insanity."

"Cannot you learn to fear the Lord, and trade as an honest man?"

Dalton cast a look of such mingled scorn and contempt on his companion, that a deep red colour mounted to his cheek as he repeated, "Yes! I ask, cannot you trade as an honest man?"

"No! a curse on trade: and I'm *not* honest," he replied fiercely.

"May I beg you briefly to explain the object of your visit?" said the Baronet at last, after a perplexing pause, during which the arms of the Buccaneer were folded on his breast, and his restless and vigilant eyes wandered round the

apartment, flashing with an indefinable expression, when they encountered the blue retreating orbs of Sir Robert.

"This, then: I require a free pardon from Old Noll, not not only for myself, but for my crew. The brave men, who would have died, shall live, with me. As a return for his Highness's civility, I will give up all free trade, and take the command of a frigate, if it so please him."

"Or a revenue cutter, I presume," observed the Baronet, sarcastically.

"Curse me if I do!" replied Dalton, contemptuously—"the sharks! No, no, I'm not come to that yet; nor would I ever think of hoisting any flag but mine own, were it not for the sake of a small craft, as belonging to—no matter what."

"You have seen but little of the girl."

"Too little: and why? Because I was *ashamed* to see her—but now—not ten minutes ago—I was glad she did not know me. Sir Robert, when your own daughter hangs upon your arm, or looks with her innocent eyes into your face, how do you feel?"

Sir Robert Cecil had been too well schooled in Puritanism to suffer the emotions of his mind to affect his features. He did not reply to the question, but skilfully turning the conversation, brought the intruder back to his old subject.

"How do you purpose procuring this free pardon?"

"I! I know not how to procure it; I only wish it procured: the means are in your power, not mine."

"In mine!" ejaculated the Baronet with well-feigned astonishment; "you mistake, good Dalton, I have no interest at Whitehall; I would not ask a favour for myself."

"That is likely; but you must ask one for me."

"*Must!*" repeated Sir Robert, "is a strange word to use to me, Dalton."

"I'm not scholar enough to find a better," replied the other insolently.

"I cannot if I would," persisted the Baronet.

"One word more, then. The Protector's plans render it impracticable for me to continue, as I have done, on the seas: I know that I am a marked man, and unless something be determined on, and speedily, I shall be exposed to that ignominy which, for my child's sake, I would avoid. Don't talk to me of impossibilities; you *can* obtain the pardon I desire, and, in one word, Sir Robert Cecil, you *must!*"

Sir Robert shook his head.

"At your pleasure, then, at your pleasure; but at your peril also. Mark me! I am not one to be thrown overboard, and make no struggle—I am not a baby to be strangled without crying! If I perish, facts shall arise from my grave—ay, if I were sunk a thousand fathoms in my own blue sea—facts that would—You may well tremble and turn pale! The secret is still in our keeping; only remember, I fall not singly!"

"Insulting villain!" said Sir Robert, regaining his self-command; "you have now no facts, no proofs; the evidence is destroyed."

"It is *not* destroyed, Robert Cecil," observed Dalton, calmly pulling a bundle of papers from his vest: "look here—and here—and here—do you not know your own handwriting? you practised me first in deception: I had not forgotten your kind lessons, when in your presence I committed forged letters to the flames!"



The man laughed the laugh of contempt and bitter scorn as he held forward the documents. For a few moments Sir Robert seemed petrified; his eyes glared on the papers, as if their frozen lids had not the power of shutting out the horrid proofs of his iniquity. Suddenly he made a desperate effort to secure them; but the steady eye and muscular arm of the smuggler prevented it.

"Hands off!" he exclaimed, whirling the Baronet from him, as if he had been a thing of straw; "you know my power, and you know my terms: there needs no more palaver about it."

"Will not gold serve your purpose?"

"No, I have enough of that: I want distinction and fame, a free pardon, and the command of one of your registered and acknowledged plunderers; or, mayhap, baptism for my own bright little Fire-fly, as the 'Babe of Grace;' or—But, hang it, no—I'd sink the vessel first, and let her die, as she has lived, free, free, free! I belong to a civilised set of beings, and must therefore be a slave, a slave to something or some one. Noll knows my talents well, knows that I am as good a commander, ay, and for the matter of that, would be as honest a one as the best."

He paused: the Baronet groaned audibly.

"We have one or two little jobs upon the coasts here of Kent and Essex, trifles that must, nevertheless, be attended to; but this day month, Sir Robert Cecil, we meet again. I will not longer keep you from your wife. Gracious Heaven! where was I when mine expired! But farewell! I would not detain you for her sweet and gentle sake: she will be rewarded for her goodness to my child! Remember," he

added, closing the door, "remember—one month, and Hugh Dalton!"



## CHAPTER II.

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Death! be not proud, though some have called  
thee

Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost  
overthrow,

Die not, poor Death——

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——Why swell'st thou, then?

One short sleep past, we wake eternally';  
And Death shall be no more:—Death! thou  
shalt die.

DR. DONNE.

When Sir Robert Cecil returned to his wife's chamber, all within was silent as the grave. He approached the bed; his daughter rose from the seat she had occupied by its side, and motioned him to be still, pointing at the same time to her mother, and intimating that she slept. "Thank God for that!" he murmured, and drew his hand across his brow, while his chest heaved as if a heavy weight had been removed from it. The attendants had left the room to obtain some necessary refreshment and repose, and father and daughter were alone with the sleeper in the chamber of death. The brow of Lady Cecil was calm, smooth, and unclouded, white as alabaster, and rendered still more beautiful by the few tresses of pale auburn hair that

escaped from under the head-tire. The features were of a noble yet softened character, although painfully emaciated; and not a shadow of colour tinged her upturned lip. Her sleep, though occasionally sound, was restless, and the long shadowy fingers, that lay on the embroidered coverlet, were now and then stirred, as if by bodily or mental suffering. There was an atmosphere of silence, not of repose, within the apartment, at once awful and oppressive; and Sir Robert breathed as if his breathings were but a continuation of suppressed sobs.

Constance Cecil, never in earlier life, never in after years, gracious and beautiful as she ever was, appeared half so interesting to her unhappy father as at that moment. There was at all times about her a majesty of mind and feeling that lent to her simplest word and action a dignity and power, which, though universally felt, it would have been impossible to define. If one could have procured for her a kingdom to reign over, or have chosen from the galaxy of heaven a region worthy her command, it must have been that pale and holy star, which, splendid and alone in the firmament, heralds the approach of day; so unfitted might she have been deemed to mingle with a world less pure, so completely placed by nature above all the littleness of ordinary life. Her noble and majestic form was the casket of a rich and holy treasure, and her father's conscience had often quailed, when contemplating the severity of her youthful virtue. Dearly as he loved his wife, he respected his daughter more, and the bare idea that certain occurrences of former years might be known to her was as a poisoned dagger in his heart. He had been a daring, and was still an

ambitious man—successful in all that men aim to succeed in; wealthy, honoured, and powerful, and—what is frequently more ardently sought for than all—feared; yet would he rather have sacrificed every advantage he had gained—every desire for which he had unhesitatingly bartered his own self-esteem—every distinction he had considered cheaply purchased at the price of conscience, than have lost the good opinion, the confiding love of his only child. Even now he looked upon her with mingled feelings of dread and affection, though her bearing was subdued and her lofty spirit bowed by sorrow, as she stood before him, the thick folds of her dressing-gown falling with classic elegance to her feet, her fine hair pushed back from her forehead and carelessly twisted round her head, and her countenance deepened into an expression of the most intense anxiety: while, assured that the invalid slept on, she whispered into his ear words of consolation, if not of hope.

Lady Cecil had existed for some days in a state of frightful delirium, and, during that time, her ravings had been so loud and continued, that her present repose was elysium to those who loved her. Constance bent her knees, and prayed in silence, long and fervently, for support. Sir Robert, leaning back in the richly-cushioned chair, covered his face with his hands, withdrawing them only when the sleeper groaned or breathed more heavily. At length both felt as if death had indeed entered the chamber, so motionless lay the object of their love: they continued gazing from each other to the couch, until the misty light of morning streamed coldly through the open shutters. Another hour of sad watching passed, and, with a long and

deeply drawn sigh, the sufferer opened her eyes: they were no longer wild and wandering, but rested with calm intelligence on her husband and her child.

"It is long since I have seen you, except in strange dreams," she said, or rather murmured; "and now I shall be with you but for a very little time!"

Constance put to her lips a silver cup containing some refreshment, while Sir Robert supported her head on his arm.

"Call no one in. Constance—Cecil—my moments now are numbered:—draw back the curtains, that I may once more look upon the light of morning!" Constance obeyed; and the full beams of day entered the room. "How beautiful! how glorious!" repeated the dying woman, as her sight drank in the reviving light; "it heralds me to immortality—where there is no darkness—no disappointment—no evil! How pale are the rays of that lamp, Cecil! How feeble man's inventions, contrasted with the works of the Almighty!" Constance rose to extinguish it. "Let it be," she continued, feebly; "let it be, dearest; it has illumined my last night, and we will expire together." The affectionate daughter turned away to hide her tears; but when did the emotion of a beloved child escape a mother's notice?—"Alas! my noble Constance weeping! I thought she, at all events, could have spared me this trial:—leave us for a few moments; let me not see you weep, Constance—let me not see it—tears enough have fallen in these halls;—do not mourn, my child, that your mother will find rest at last."

How often did Constantia remember these words! How often, when the heart that dictated such gentle chiding, had