

tenderness which I perceived the young gentleman to exchange with my little one and a murmured word or two which were not meant for my old ears. I also was aware that the youth cast from time to time a keen glance in the direction of that vessel which had already given us abundant food for distrust.

While we stood thus, my alarm and anxiety grew with every moment, as I recounted in my own mind all those harrowing tales of privateers and pirates, and other evil-disposed searovers, which made the lives of seafaring folk at that period a continual menace. The captain, though plainly anxious, strove to put a good face upon the matter, declaring that no privateer, howsoever audacious, would venture to attack a vessel almost within hail of New York. But even as he spoke he was apprised by the lookout that some one was signalling from shore. We all made a forward movement to the ship's side, gazing in the direction indicated. Our young gentleman, Philip French, levelled a pair of powerful glasses, which, after having taken a look, he handed to me without a word. I beheld a figure outlined against the ragged sky, that had grown dark in the interim. The figure seemed disproportionately tall as it danced to and fro, to and fro, waving a white cloth, and having so wild and uncanny an appearance that one was led to suspect a supernatural apparition. Our captain, however, understood, though in what manner I know not, that he was being warned against the strange vessel as a most dangerous privateer, which he must seek to avoid.

'I knew it for a Frenchman,' burst forth an old salt, who was leaning over the rail, his weather-beaten countenance screwed up into innumerable wrinkles, and his bleared eyes gazing out over the water, 'and that's what I sez, from the minit I clapped eyes on yonder craft.'

'And,' put in a younger man who swung in the shrouds beside him, 'she is like enough now to send us to Davy Jones, or tow us after her for a prize.' To which he added an oath which need not here be set down. I will confess that I trembled from head to foot as I overheard a remark that fitted in so precisely with my own surmises. Every countenance was overshadowed by the gravity of the hour, though Mr. French strove to keep up a light heart and to support my daughter's courage. As our captain and crew bent to the work of running us ashore, the strange ship, standing toward us at a moderate rate of speed, suddenly sent a shot which fell harmlessly into the brine, followed by a second that slightly grazed our side. It was evident that she strove rather to alarm than to injure us, since no doubt it was her hope to take the Phoenix intact as a prize.

Endcavoring to conceal my fears, I stood conversing with the two merchants, who were at no pains to hide their dismay. They openly bewailed the impending loss of their merchandise, having on board one hundred pipes of fine Canary brandy, fifty pipes of palm wine, a dozen bales of rich silk, and the like; and to their lamentations I made answer:

'Such losses, gentlemen, be indeed deplorable, but infinitely preferable to the loss of our lives or our personal liberty.'

I perceived at this juncture that Philip had left my daughter's side and stood in close colloquy with the captain. I strained my ears to catch the matter of their discourse, which was presently borne to me by a sharp gust of wind.

'There is but one course for you to pursue,' the young man was saying, 'and that is to lower the ship's boat, so that the young lady and her father, with yonder gentlemen, may be carried ashore, if they be so minded. For myself, I will most readily remain to abide by the ship's fortunes, and peradventure, to render some assistance.'

These latter words, as I could see, had reached my daughter, who became of a deadly pallor, with a nervous clasp of her hands. I felt of a sudden old and weary, so fully was it borne in upon me that those two young things thenceforward belonged to each other, and that I should but be the spectator whatsoever might betide.

The captain made some demur to these proposals, declaring that he could not leave the brigantine short-handed when a fight was imminent. But the younger man, strong-willed and of a temper that is most certain in all circumstances to dominate, finally prevailed. He represented that it was the master's first duty to place in safety those passengers who were entrusted to his care, and especially that one of the gentler sex who might be in the most imminent peril.

Meantime the situation grew each instant more alarming, the storm that had been hovering about the north-eastern heavens crept momentarily nearer, and darkness was approaching. There was not an instant to be lost. The boat was lowered, and at the urgent insistence of my daughter, the elderly merchants

were lowered first. She would have had me descend next, but that I stoutly refused to stir from the deck until she was in safety. What a look was that which I beheld upon her face, and I likewise heard Philip's whispered words, as he held her hand, the which he only relinquished when she had descended several rungs of the ladder and was received by two stout mariners.

'At worst,' he said, 'our parting will be but for a brief space, Maid Marian.'

To which the girl responded faintly:

'Pray Heaven that it may be so.'

Once my daughter was seated in the boat I made ready to follow her, and as for my child's sake appeared best. The descent was sufficiently perilous for one of my build, and the waves rose angrily as the little craft tossed upon their crest. I cast a longing look backwards, toward where Philip stood beside the master. Sore was my heart, for I had learned to value the lad, and his courage and manly bearing would have been as a sheet anchor in the difficulties by which we were confronted. And, moreover, there was my daughter, who, I knew, was greatly perturbed for his safety. But the seamen who accompanied us had declared that the boat was heavy enough in such a sea, since but two of them could be spared to convey us shorewards, and Philip had passed his word to remain and lend such assistance as he might to the captain.

The mariners set to their oars, and presently we were as a speck upon those angry waters, being propelled shorewards by all the strength of their sinewy arms. I caught a last glance, in the gathering darkness, of the gallant figure of Philip erect beside the captain, his curled periwig flowing in the breeze, and a smile upon his lips, as he waved his hat in farewell. My daughter, meanwhile, sat still as death, her face ashen pale, her eyes fixed upon the vanishing brigantine.

As for the merchants, they did but bewail the loss of their fine wines and rich silks, which would of a certainty go to enrich the coffers of the Frenchman, so that at length I was moved to reproach them with such manifest ingratitude to a watchful Providence who had saved us from a worse fate. And in truth we had presently ample cause for anxiety as to our bodily safety. Both wind and wave were against us, the light had all but faded from the sky, and the booming of the surge on the shore made us tremble for the possibility of reaching there. This, however, we did through the mercy of God and the protection of His heavenly Mother, which my little girl did not cease to invoke for us and those left behind, from the time of our leaving the vessel. She even prevailed upon me to join with her in reciting aloud the prayers of the Rosary, despite the amazement of our companions and the seamen, who were of the Calvinistic persuasion.

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It was many a day before we had tidings of the good ship Phoenix or of those whom we had left therein. Rumors of many sorts in truth were plentiful, some averring that she had gone down with every soul on board, and others that after a desperate fight she, with her crew and the sole passenger, had been carried away as a prize by that most audacious privateer.

It was during this interval of suspense that I had reason to reflect upon the power of love when once it seizes upon the heart of man or maid. For my merry child, so lately singing and dancing down the garden paths of the conventional enclosure, was now pale and anxious-eyed. Quiet and demure in bearing, she spent hours upon the shore, gazing seawards as though she would have questioned the very gulls or the petrels, who, with omens of storm on their white wings, came shorewards. It was pitiful to hear the poor child seeking from the ship-masters, or others concerned in navigation, every scrap of marine intelligence.

The family of Philip French had made prodigious efforts to discover his whereabouts, offering a prize for the intelligence, and making application to each ship-master who sailed into the bay. At last they received news that the young gentleman himself and Captain Stollen had been grievously wounded—a knowledge which I strove to keep from Marian until it was revealed to her by a meddlesome goodwife of our neighborhood—and that the ship with her crew had been despatched to Martinico as prize to the French.

So the weeks wore on, until one dark night in mid-winter. It was vastly unpleasant weather, with sleet falling outside, and a chill within, and Marian took such poor comfort as she might from a blazing fire upon our capacious hearth. She sat upon a settle at one side thereof, to which she had drawn up her embroidery-frame. Her little fingers worked to and fro, and she sorted with rigorous care the bright colors of her silks.