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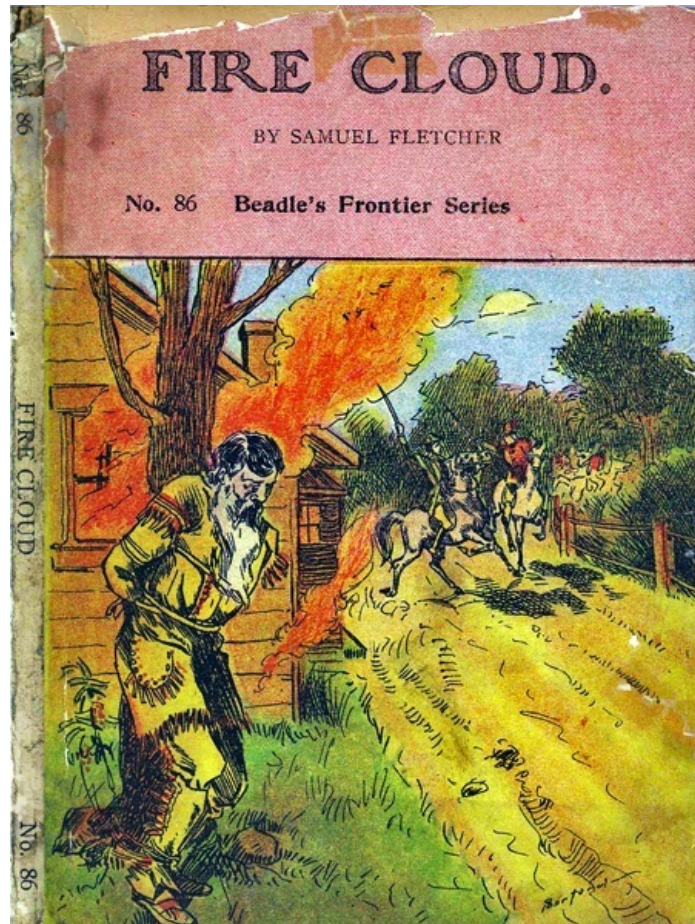
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FIRE CLOUD; OR, THE MYSTERIOUS CAVE. A STORY OF INDIANS AND PIRATES ***



(Printed in the United States of America)

FIRE CLOUD;

OR

The Mysterious Cave.

A Story of Indians and Pirates.

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FIRE CLOUD.

CHAPTER I.

Whether or not, the story which we are about to relate is absolutely true in every particular, we are not prepared to say. All we know about it is, that old Ben Miller who told it to our uncle Zeph, believed it to be true, as did uncle Zeph himself. And from all we can learn, uncle Zeph was a man of good judgment, and one not easily imposed upon.

And uncle Zeph said that he had known old people in his younger days, who stated that they had actually seen the cave where many of the scenes which we are about to relate occurred, although of late years, no traces of any kind could be discovered in the locality where it is supposed to have been situated.

His opinion was, that as great rocks were continually rolling down the side of the mountain at the foot of which the entrance to the cave was, some one or more of these huge boulders had fallen into the opening and completely closed it up.

But that such a cave did exist, he was perfectly satisfied, and that it would in all probability be again discovered at some future day, by persons making excavations in the side of the mountain. And lucky he thought would be the man who should make the discovery, for unheard of treasures he had no doubt would be found stowed away in the chinks and crevices of the rocks.

So much by way of introduction; as we have no intention to describe the cave until the proper time comes, we shall leave that part of the subject for the present, while we introduce the reader to a few of the principal personages of our narrative.

At a distance of some fifteen or twenty miles from the City of New York, on the Hudson river in the shadow of the rocks known as the Palisades, something near two hundred years ago, lay a small vessel at anchor.

The vessel as we have said was small. Not more than fifty or sixty tons burden, and what would be considered a lumbering craft now a days with our improved knowledge of ship building, would at that time be called a very fast sailor.

This vessel was schooner rigged, and every thing about her deck trim and in good order.

On the forecastle sat two men, evidently sailors, belonging to the vessel.

We say sailors, but in saying so we do not mean to imply that they resembled your genuine old *salt*, but something between a sailor and a landsman. They could hardly be called land lubbers, for I doubt if a couple of old salts could have managed their little craft better than they, while they, when occasion required, could work on land as well as water.

In fact they belonged to the class known as river boatmen, though they had no hesitation to venturing out to sea on an emergency.

The elder of these men, who might have seen some fifty years or more, was a short, thick set man with dark complexion, and small grey eyes overshadowed by thick, shaggy brows as black as night.

His mouth was large when he chose to open it, but his lips were thin and generally

compressed.

He looked at you from under his eyebrows like one looking at you from a place of concealment, and as if he was afraid he would be seen by you.

His name was David Rider, but was better known among his associates under the title of Old Ropes.

The other was a man of about twenty-five or thirty, and was a taller and much better-looking man, but without anything very marked in his countenance. His name was Jones Bradley.

"I tell you what, Joe," said his companion, "I don't like the captain's bringin' of this gal; there can't no good come of it, and it may bring us into trouble."

"Bring us into trouble! everything that's done out of the common track, accordin' to you's a goin' to bring us into trouble. I'd like to know how bringing a pretty girl among us, is goin' to git us into trouble?"

"A pretty face is well enough in its way," said Old Ropes, "but a pretty face won't save a man from the gallows, especially if that face is the face of an enemy."

"By the 'tarnal, Ropes, if I hadn't see you fight like the very devil when your blood was up, I should think you was giten' to be a coward. How in thunder is that little baby of a girl goin' to git us into trouble?"

"Let me tell you," said Ropes, "that one pretty gal, if she's so minded, can do you more harm than half a dozen stout men that you can meet and fight face to face, and if you want to know the harm that's goin' to come to us in this case I'll show you."

"The gal, you know's the only daughter of old Rosenthral. Why the captain stole her away, I don't know. Out of revenge for some slight or insult or other, I s'pose. Now the old man, as you're aware, knows more about our business than is altogether safe for us. As I said before, the gal's his only daughter, and he'll raise Heaven and earth but he'll have her again, and when he finds who's got her, do you suppose there'll be any safety for us here? No! no! if I was in the captain's place, I'd either send her back again, or make her walk the plank, as he did, you know who, and so get rid of her at once."

"As for walking the plank," said the young man, laying his hand on his companion's shoulder, danger or no danger, the man who makes that girl walk the plank, shall walk after, though it should be Captain Flint himself, or my name is not Jones Bradley."

"You talk like a boy that had fallen dead in love," said the other; "but anyhow, I don't like the captain's bringing the young woman among us, and so I mean to tell him the first chance I have."

"Well, now's your time," said Bradley, "for here comes the captain."

As he spoke, a man coming up from the cabin joined them. His figure, though slight, was firm and compact. He was of medium height; his complexion naturally fair, was somewhat bronzed by the weather, his hair was light, his eyes grey, and his face as a whole, one which many would at first sight call handsome. Yet it was one that you could not look on with pleasure for any length of time. There was something in his cold grey eye that sent a chill into your blood, and you could not help thinking that there was deceit, and falsehood in his perpetual smile.

Although his age was forty-five, there was scarcely a wrinkle on his face, and you would not take him to be over thirty.

Such was Captain Flint, the commander and owner of the little schooner *Sea Gull*.

"Captain," said Rider, when the other had joined the group; "Joe and I was talking about that gal just afore you came up, and I was a sayin' to him that I was afeard that she would git us into trouble, and I would speak to you about it."

"Well," said Captain Flint, after a moment's pause, "if this thing was an affair of mine entirely, I should tell you to mind your own business, and there the matter would end, but as it concerns you as well as me, I suppose you ought to know why it was done."

"The girl's father, as you know, has all along been one of our best customers. And we suppose that he was too much interested in our success to render it likely that he would expose any of our secrets, but since he's been made a magistrate, he has all at once taken it into his head to set up for an honest man, and the other day he not only told me that it was time I had changed my course and become a fair trader, but hinted that he had reason to suspect that we were engaged in something worse than mere smuggling, and that if we did not walk pretty straight in future, he might be compelled in his capacity of magistrate to make an example of us."

"I don't believe that he has got any evidence against us in regard to that last affair of ours, but I believe that he suspects us, and should he even make his suspicions public, it would work us a great deal of mischief, to say the least of it.

"I said nothing, but thinks I, old boy, I'll see if I can't get the upper hand of you. For this purpose I employed some of our Indian friends to entrap, and carry off the girl for me. I took care that it should be done in such a manner as to make her father believe that she was carried off by them for purposes of their own.

"Now, he knows my extensive acquaintance with all the tribes along the river, and that there is no one who can be of as much service to him in his efforts to recover his daughter, as I, so that he will not be very likely to interfere with us for some time to come.

"I have seen him since the affair happened, and condoled with him, of course.

"He believes that the Indian who stole his daughter was the chief Fire Cloud, in revenge for some insult received a number of years ago.

"This opinion I encouraged, as it answered my purpose exactly, and I promised to render all the assistance I could in his efforts to recover his child.

"This part of the country, as we all know, is getting too hot for us; we can't stand it much longer; if we can only stave off the danger until the arrival of that East Indiaman that's expected in shortly there'll be a chance for us that don't come more than once or twice in a lifetime.

"Let us once get the pick out of her cargo, and we shall have enough to make the fortunes of all of us, and we can retire to some country where we can enjoy our good luck without the danger of being interfered with. And then old Rosenthral can have his daughter again and welcome provided he can find her.

"So you see that to let this girl escape will be as much as your necks are worth."

So saying, Captain Flint left his companions and returned to the cabin.

"Just as I thought," said Old Ropes, when the captain had gone, "if we don't look well to it this unlucky affair will be the ruin of us all."

CHAPTER II.

Carl Rosenthral was a wealthy citizen of New York. That is, rich when we consider the time in which he lived, when our mammoth city was little more than a good-sized village, and quite a thriving trade was carried on with the Indians along the river, and it was in this trade chiefly, that Carl Rosenthral and his father before him, had made nearly all the wealth which Carl possessed.

But Carl Rosenthral's business was not confined to trading with the Indians alone, he kept what would now be called a country store. A store where everything almost could be found, from a plough to a paper of needles.

Some ten years previous to the time when the events occurred which are recorded in the preceding chapter, and when Hellena Rosenthral was about six years old, an Indian chief with whom Rosenthral had frequent dealings, and whose name was Fire Cloud, came in to the merchant's house when he was at dinner with his family, and asked for something to eat, saying that he was hungry.

Now Fire Cloud, like the rest of his race, had an unfortunate liking for strong drink, and was a little intoxicated, and Rosenthral not liking to be intruded upon at such a time by a drunken savage, ordered him out of the house, at the same time calling him a drunken brute, and making use of other language not very agreeable to the Indian.

The chief did as he was required, but in doing so, he put his hand on his tomahawk and at the same time turned on Rosenthral a look that said as well as words could say, "Give me but the opportunity, and I'll bury this in your skull."

The chief, on passing out, seated himself for a moment on the stoop in front of the house.

While he was sitting there, little Hellena, with whom he had been a favorite, having often seen him at her father's store, came running out to him with a large piece of cake in her hand, saying:

"Here, No-No, Hellena will give you some cake."

No-No was the name by which the Indian was known to the child, having learned it from hearing the Indian make use of the name no, no, so often when trading with her father.

The Indian took the proffered cake with a smile, and as he did so lifted the child up in his arms and gazed at her steadily for a few moments, as if he wished to impress every feature upon his memory, and then sat her down again.

He was just in the act of doing this when the child's father came out of the dining-room.

Rosenthral, imagining that the Indian was about to kidnap his daughter, or do her some violence, rushed out ordering him to put the child down, and be off about his business.

It was the recollection of this circumstance, taken in connection with the fact that Fire Cloud had been seen in the city on the day on which his daughter had disappeared, which led Rosenthral to fix upon the old chief as the person who had carried off Hellena.

This opinion, as we have seen, was encouraged by Captain Flint for reasons of his own.

The facts in the case were these.

Rosenthral, as Captain Flint had said, although for a long time one of his best customers, knowing to, and winking at his unlawful doings, having been elected a magistrate took it in to his head to be honest.

He had made money out of his connection with the smuggler and pirate, and he probably thought it best to break off the connection before it should be too late, and he should be involved in the ruin which he foresaw Captain Flint was certain to bring upon himself if he continued much longer in the reckless course he was now pursuing.

All this was understood by Captain Flint, and it was as he explained to his men, in order to get the upper hand of Rosenthral, and thus prevent the danger which threatened him from that quarter, he had caused Hellena to be kidnapped, and conveyed to their grand hiding place, the cave in the side of the mountain.

Rosenthral at this time resided in a cottage on the banks of the river, a short distance from his place of business, the grounds sloping down to the water.

These grounds were laid out into a flower garden where there was an arbor in which Hellena spent the greater part of her time during the warm summer evenings.

It was while lingering in this arbor rather later than usual that she was suddenly pounced upon by the two Indians employed by Captain Flint for the purpose, and conveyed to his vessel, which lay at anchor a short distance further up the river.

Captain Flint immediately set sail with his unwilling passenger, and in a few hours afterwards she was placed in the cave under the safe keeping of the squaw who presided over that establishment.

If the reader would like to know what kind of a looking girl Hellena Rosenthral was at this time, I would say that a merrier, more animated, if not a handsomer face he never looked upon. She was the very picture of health and fine spirits.

Her figure was rather slight, but not spare, for her form was compact and well rounded, and her movements were as light and elastic as those of a deer.

Her complexion was fair, one in which you might say without any streak of fancy, the lily was blended with the rose.

Her eyes were blue and her hair auburn, bordering on the golden, and slightly inclined to wave rather than to curl.

Her nose was of moderate size and straight, or nearly so.

Some would say that her mouth was rather large, but the lips were so beautifully shaped, and then when she smiled she displayed such an exquisite set of the purest teeth, setting off to such advantage the ruby tinting of the lips, you felt no disposition to find fault with it.

We have spoken of Hellena's look as being one of animation and high spirits, and such was its general character, but for some time past a shadow of gloom had come over it.

Hellena was subject to the same frailties which are common to her sex. She had fallen in love!

The object of her affections was a young man some two or three years older than herself, and at first nothing occurred to mar their happiness, for the parents of both were in favor of the match.

As they were both young, however, it was decided to postpone their union for a year.

In the meantime, Henry Billings, the intended bridegroom, should make a voyage to Europe in order to transact some business for his father, who was a merchant trading with Amsterdam.

The vessel in which he sailed never reached her place of destination.

It was known that she carried out a large amount of money sent by merchants in New York, as remittances to those with whom they had dealings in Europe. This, together with certain facts which transpired shortly after the departure of the vessel, led some people to suspect that she had met with foul play somewhere on the high seas; and that not very far from port either.

Hellena, who happened to be in her father's store one day when Captain Flint was there, saw on his finger a plain gold ring which she was sure had belonged to her lover.

This fact she mentioned to her father after the captain had gone.

Her father at that time ridiculed her suspicions. But he afterwards remembered circumstances connected with the departure of the vessel, and the movements of Captain Flint about the same time, which taken in connection with the discovery made by his daughter, did seem to justify the dark suspicions created in the mind of his daughter.

But how was he to act under the circumstance? As a magistrate, it was his business to investigate the matter. But then there was the danger should he attempt to do so, of exposing his own connection with the pirate.

He must move cautiously.

And he did move cautiously, yet not so cautiously but he aroused the suspicions of Captain Flint, who, as we have seen, in order to secure himself against the danger which threatened him in that quarter, had carried off the daughter of the merchant.

CHAPTER III.

When the vessel in which young Billings set sail started she had a fair wind, and was soon out in the open sea.

Just as night began to set in, a small craft was observed approaching them, and being a much faster sailor than the larger and heavily laden ship, she was soon along-side.

When near enough to be heard, the commander of the smaller vessel desired the other to lay too, as he had important dispatches for him which had been forgotten.

The commander of the ship not liking to stop his vessel while under full sail merely for the purpose of receiving dispatches, offered to send for them, and was about lowering a boat for that purpose, when the other captain, who was none other than Captain Flint, declared that he could only deliver them in person.

The captain of the ship, though in no very good humor, finally consented to lay too, and the two vessels were soon lying along side of each other.

Now although while lying at, or about the wharves of New York, the two men already introduced to the reader apparently constituted the whole crew of Captain Flint's vessel, such was by no means the fact, for there were times when the deck of the little craft would seem fairly to swarm with stout, able-bodied fellows. And the present instance, Captain Flint had no sooner set foot upon the deck of the ship, than six or eight men fully armed appeared on the deck of the schooner prepared to follow him.

The first thing that Captain Flint did on reaching the deck of the ship was to strike the captain down with a blow from the butt of a large pistol he held in his hand. His men were soon at his side, and as the crew of the other vessel were unarmed, although defending themselves as well as they could, they were soon overpowered.

Several of them were killed on the spot, and those who were not killed outright, were only reserved for a more cruel fate.

The fight being over, the next thing was to secure the treasure.

This was a task of but little difficulty, for Flint had succeeded in getting one of his men shipped as steward on the ill-fated vessel.

One of those who had escaped the massacre was James Bradley. He had, by order of Captain Flint, been lashed to the mast at the commencement of the fight.

He had not received a wound. All the others who were not killed were more or less badly hurt.

These were unceremoniously compelled to walk the plank, and were drowned.

When it came to Billings' turn, there seemed to be some hesitation among the pirates subjecting him to the same fate as the others.

Jones Bradley, in a particular manner, was for sparing his life on condition that he would pledge himself to leave the country, never to return, and bind himself to eternal secrecy.

But this advice was overruled by Captain Flint himself, who declared he would trust no one, and that the young man should walk the plank as the others had done.

From this decision there was no appeal, and Henry Billings resigned himself to his fate.

Before going he said he would, as a slight favor, to ask of one of his captors.

And then pulling a plain gold ring off his finger, he said:

"It is only to convey this to the daughter of Carl Rosenthall, if he can find means of doing so, without exposing himself to danger. I can hardly wish her to be made acquainted with my fate."

When he had finished, Captain Flint stepped up saying that he would undertake to perform the office, and taking the ring he placed it upon his own finger.

By this time it was dark. With a firm tread Billings stepped upon the plank, and the next moment was floundering in the sea.

The next thing for the pirates to do was to scuttle the ship, which they did after helping themselves to so much of the most valuable portion of the cargo as they thought they could safely carry away with them.

In about an hour afterwards the ship sank, bearing down with her the bodies of her murdered crew, and burying, as Captain Flint supposed, in the depths of the ocean all evidences of the fearful tragedy which had been enacted upon her deck.

The captain now directed his course homeward, and the next day the little vessel was lying in port as if nothing unusual had happened, Captain Flint pretending that he had returned from one of his usual trading voyages along the coast.

The intercourse between the new and the old world was not so frequent in those days as now. The voyages, too, were much longer than at present. So that, although a considerable time passed, bringing no tidings of the ill-fated vessel without causing any uneasiness.

But when week after week rolled by, and month followed month, and still nothing was heard from her, the friends of those on board began to be anxious about their fate.

At length a vessel which had sailed some days later than the missing ship, had reported that nothing had been heard from her.

The only hope now was that she might have been obliged by stress of weather to put in to some other port.

But after awhile this hope also was abandoned, and all were reluctantly compelled to come to the conclusion that she had foundered at sea, and that all on board had perished.

After lying a short time in port, Captain Flint set sail up the river under pretence of going on a trading expedition among the various Indian tribes.

But he ascended the river no further than the Highlands, and come to anchor along the mountain familiarly known as Butterhill, but which people of more romantic turn call Mount Tecomthe, in honor of the famous Indian chief of that name.

Having secured their vessel close to the shore, the buccaneers now landed, all save one, who was left in charge of the schooner.

Each carried with him a bundle or package containing a portion of the most valuable part of the plunder taken from the ship which they had so recently robbed.

Having ascended the side of the mountain for about two hundred yards, they came to what seemed to be a simple fissure in the rocks about wide enough to admit two men abreast.

This cleft or fissure they entered, and having proceeded ten or fifteen feet they came to what appeared to be a deep well or pit.

Here the party halted, and Captain Flint lighted a torch, and producing a light ladder, which was concealed in the bushes close by, the whole party descended.

On reaching the bottom of the pit, a low, irregular opening was seen in the side, running horizontally into the mountain.

This passage they entered, Indian file, and bending almost double.

As they proceeded the opening widened and grew higher, until it expanded into a rude chamber about twelve feet one way by fifteen feet the other.

Here, as far as could be seen, was a bar to all further progress, for the walls of the chamber appeared to be shut in on every side.

But on reaching the further side of the apartment, they stopped at a rough slab of stone, which apparently formed a portion of the floor of the cave.

Upon one of the men pressing on one end of the slab, the other rose like a trap door, disclosing an opening in the floor amply sufficient to admit one person, and by the light of the torch might be seen a rude flight of rocky stairs, descending they could not tell how far.

These were no doubt in part at least artificial.

The slab also had been placed over the hole by the pirates, or by some others like them who had occupied the cave before this time, by way of security, and to prevent surprise.

Captain Flint descended these steps followed by his men.

About twenty steps brought them to the bottom, when they entered another horizontal passage, and which suddenly expanded into a wide and lofty chamber.

Here the party halted, and the captain shouted at the top of his voice:

"What ho! there, Lightfoot, you she devil, why don't you light up!"

This rude summons was repeated several times before it received any answer.

At length an answer came in what was evidently a female voice, and from one who was in no very good humor: "Oh, don't you get into a passion now. How you s'pose I know you was coming back so soon."

"Didn't I tell you I'd be back to-day!" angrily asked Flint.

"Well, what if you did," replied the voice. "Do you always come when you says you will?"

"Well, no matter, let's have no more of your impudence. We're back bow, and I want you to light up and make a fire."

The person addressed was now heard retiring and muttering to herself.

In a few moments the hall was a blaze of light from lamps placed in almost every place where a lamp could be made to stand.

The scene that burst upon the sight was one of enchantment.

The walls and ceiling of the cavern seemed to be covered with a frosting of diamonds, multiplying the lamps a thousand fold, and adding to them all the colors of the rainbow.

Some of the crystals which were of the purest quartz hanging from the roof, were of an enormous size, giving reflections which made the brilliancy perfectly bewildering.

The floor of the cavern was covered, not with Brussels or Wilton carpets, but with the skins of the deer and bear, which to the tread were as pleasant as the softest velvet.

Around the room were a number of frames, rudely constructed to be sure, of branches, but none the less convenient on that account, over which skins were stretched, forming comfortable couches where the men might sleep or doze away their time when not actively employed.

Near the center of the room was a large flat stone rising about two feet above the floor. The top of this stone had been made perfectly level, and over it a rich damask cloth had been spread so as to make it answer all the purposes of a table. Boxes covered with skins, and packages of merchandise answered the purpose of chairs, when chairs were wanted.

"Where is the king, I should like to know?" said Captain Flint, looking with pride around the cavern now fully lighted up; "who can show a hall in his palace that will compare with this?"

"And where is the king that is half so independent as we are?" said one of the men.

"And kings we are," said Captain Flint; "didn't they call the Buccaneers Sea Kings in the olden time?"

"But this talking isn't getting our supper ready. Where has that Indian she-devil taken

herself off again?"

The person here so coarsely alluded to, now made her appearance again, bearing a basket containing a number of bottles, decanters and drinking glasses.

She was not, to be sure, so very beautiful, but by no means so ugly as to deserve the epithet applied to her by Captain Flint.

She was an Indian woman, apparently thirty, or thirty-five years of age, of good figure and sprightly in her movements, which circumstance had probably gained for her among her own people, the name of Lightfoot.

She had once saved Captain Flint's life when a prisoner among the Indians, and fearing to return to her people, she had fled with him.

It was while flying in company with this Indian woman, that Captain Flint had accidentally discovered this cave. And here the fugitives had concealed themselves for several days, until the danger which then threatened them had passed.

It was on this occasion that it occurred to the captain, what a place of rendezvous this cave would be for himself and his gang; what a place of shelter in case of danger; what a fine storehouse for the plunder obtained in his piratical expeditions!

He immediately set about fixing it up for the purpose; and as it would be necessary to have some one to take charge of things in his absence, he thought of none whom he could more safely trust with the service, than the Indian woman who had shared his flight.

From that time, the cave became a den of pirates, as it had probably at one time been a den of wild beasts.

Which was the better condition, we leave it for the reader to decide.

The only other occupant of the cave was a negro boy of about fourteen or fifteen years of age, known by the name of Black Bill.

He seemed to be a simple, half-witted, harmless fellow, and assisted Lightfoot in doing the drudgery about the place.

"What have you got in your basket, Lightfoot?" asked Captain Flint.

"Wine," replied the Indian.

"Away with your wine," said the captain; "we must have something stronger than that. Give us some brandy; some fire-water. Where's Black Bill?" he continued.

"In de kitchen fixin' de fire," said Lightfoot.

"All right, let him heat some water," said the captain; "and now, boys, we'll make a night of it," he said, turning to his men.

The place here spoken of by Lightfoot as the kitchen, was a recess of several feet in the side of the cave, at the back of which was a crevice or fissure in the rock, extending to the outside of the mountain.

This crevice formed a natural chimney through which the smoke could escape from the fire that was kindled under it.

The water was soon heated, the table was covered with bottles, decanters and glasses of the costliest manufacture. Cold meats of different kinds, and an infinite variety of fruits were produced, and the feasting commenced.

CHAPTER IV.

Yes, the pirate and his crew were now seated round the table for the purpose as he said, of making a night of it. And a set of more perfect devils could hardly be found upon the face of the earth.

And yet there was nothing about them so far as outward appearance was concerned, that would lead you to suppose them to be the horrible wretches that they really were.

With the exception of Jones Bradley, there was not one among them who had not been guilty of almost every crime to be found on the calendar of human depravity.

For some time very little was said by any of the party, but after a while as their blood warmed under the influence of the hot liquor, their tongues loosened, and they became more

talkative. And to hear them, you would think that a worthier set of men were no where to be found.

Not that they pretended to any extraordinary degree of virtue, but then they had as much as anyone else. And he who pretended to any more, was either a hypocrite or a fool.

To be sure, they robbed, and murdered, and so did every one else, or would if they found it to their interest to do so.

"Hallo! Tim," shouted one of the men to another who sat at the opposite side of the table; "where is that new song that you learned the other day?"

"I've got it here," replied the person referred to, putting his finger on his forehead.

"Out with it, then."

"Let's have it," said the other.

The request being backed by the others Tim complied as follows.

THE BUCCANEER.

Fill up the bowl,
Through heart and soul,
Let the red wine circle free,
Here's health and cheer,
To the Buccaneer,
The monarch of the sea!

The king may pride,
In his empire wide,
A robber like us is he,
With iron hand,
He robs on land,
As we rob on the sea.

The priest in his gown,
Upon us may frown,
The merchant our foe may be,
Let the judge in his wig,
And the lawyer look big,
They're robbers as well as we!

Then fill up the bowl,
Through heart and through soul,
Let the red wine circle free,
Drink health and cheer,
To the Buccaneer.
He's monarch of the sea.

"I like that song," said one of the men, whose long sober face and solemn, drawling voice had gained for him among his companions the title of Parson. "I like that song; it has the ring of the true metal, and speaks my sentiments exactly. It's as good as a sermon, and better than some sermons I've heard."

"It preaches the doctrine I've always preached, and that is that the whole world is filled with creatures who live by preying upon each other, and of all the animals that infest the earth, man is the worst and cruelest."

"What! Parson!" said one of the men, "you don't mean to say that the whole world's nothing but a set of thieves and murderers!"

"Yes; I do," said the parson; "or something just as bad."

"I'd like to know how you make that out," put in Jones Bradley. "I had a good old mother once, and a father now dead and gone. I own I'm bad enough myself, but no argument of yours parson, or any body else's can make me believe that they were thieves and murderers."

"I don't mean to be personal," said the parson, "your father and mother may have been angels for all I know, but I'll undertake to show that all the rest of the world, lawyers, doctors and all, are a set of thieves and murderers, or something just as bad."

"Well Parson, s'pose you put the stopper on there," shouted one of the men; "if you can sing a song, or spin a yarn, it's all right; but this ain't a church, and we don't want to listen to one

of your long-winded sermons tonight."

"Amen!" came from the voices of nearly all present.

The Parson thus rebuked, was fain to hold his peace for the rest of the evening.

After a pause of a few moments, one of the men reminded Captain Flint, that he had promised to inform them how he came to adopt their honorable calling as a profession.

"Well," said the captain, "I suppose I might as well do it now, as at any other time; and if no one else has anything better to offer, I'll commence; and to begin at the beginning, I was born in London. About my schooling and bringing up, I haven't much to say, as an account of it would only be a bore.

"My father was a merchant and although I suppose one ought not to speak disrespectfully of one's father, he was, I must say, as gripping, and tight-fisted a man as ever walked the earth.

"I once heard a man say, he would part with anything he had on earth for money, but his wife. My father, I believe, would have not only parted with his wife and children for money, but himself too, if he had thought he should profit by the bargain.

"As might be expected, the first thing he tried to impress on the minds of his children was the necessity of getting money.

"To be sure, he did not tell us to steal, as the word is generally understood; for he wanted us to keep clear of the clutches of the law. Could we only succeed in doing this, it mattered little to him, how the desired object was secured.

"He found in me an easy convert to his doctrine, so far as the getting of money was concerned; but in the propriety of hoarding the money as he did when it was obtained, I had no faith.

"The best use I thought that money could be put too, was to spend it.

"Here my father and I were at swords' points, and had it not been that notwithstanding this failing, as he called it, I had become useful to him in his business, he would have banished me long before I took into my head to be beforehand with him, and become a voluntary exile from the parental roof.

"The way of it was this. As I have intimated, according to my father's notions all the wealth in the world was common property, and every one was entitled to all he could lay his hands on.

"Now, believing in this doctrine, it occurred to me that my father had more money than he could ever possibly make use of, and that if I could possess a portion of it without exposing myself to any great danger, I should only be carrying out his own doctrine.

"Acting upon this thought, I set about helping myself as opportunity offered, sometimes by false entries, and in various ways that I need not explain.

"This game I carried on for some time, but I knew that it would not last forever. I should be found out at last, and I must be out of the way before the crash came.

"Luckily a chance of escape presented itself.

"My father, in connection with two or three other merchants, chartered a vessel to trade among the West India islands.

"I managed to get myself appointed supercargo. I should now be out of the way when the discovery of the frauds which I had been practicing I knew must be made.

"As I had no intention of ever returning, my mind was perfectly at ease on this score.

"We found ready sale for our cargo, and made a good thing of it.

"As I have said, when I left home, it was with the intention of never returning, though what I should do while abroad I had not decided, but as soon as the cargo was disposed of, my mind was made up.

"I determined to turn pirate!

"I had observed on our outward passage, that our vessel, which was a bark of about two hundred tons burden, was a very fast sailor, and with a little fitting up, could be made just the craft we wanted for our purpose.

"During the voyage, I had sounded the hands in regard to my intention of becoming a Buccaneer. I found them all ready to join me excepting the first mate and the steward or

cook, rather, a negro whose views I knew too well beforehand, to consult on the matter.

"As I knew that the ordinary crew of the vessel would not be sufficient for our purpose, I engaged several resolute fellows to join us, whom I prevailed on the captain to take on board as passengers.

"When we had been about a week out at sea and all our plans were completed, we quietly made prisoners of the captain and first mate, put them in the jolly boat with provisions to last them for several days, and sent them adrift. The cook, with his son, a little boy, would have gone with them, but thinking that they might be useful to us, we concluded to keep them on board.

"What became of the captain and mate afterwards, we never heard.

"We now put in to port on one of the islands where we knew we could do it in safety, and fitted our vessel up for the purpose we intended to use her.

"This was soon done, and we commenced operations.

"The game was abundant, and our success far exceeded our most sanguine expectations.

"There would be no use undertaking to tell the number of vessels, French, English, Spanish and Dutch, that we captured and sunk, or of the poor devils we sent to a watery grave.

"But luck which had favored us so long, at last turned against us.

"The different governments became alarmed for the safety of their commerce in the seas which we frequented, and several expeditions were fitted out for our special benefit.

"For a while we only laughed at all this, for we had escaped so many times, that we began to think we were under the protection of old Neptune himself. But early one morning the man on the look-out reported a sail a short distance to the leeward, which seemed trying to get away from us.

"It was a small vessel, or brig, but as the weather was rather hazy, her character in other respects he could not make out.

"We thought, however, that it was a small trading vessel, which having discovered us, and suspecting our character, was trying to reach port before we could overtake her.

"Acting under this impression, we made all sail for her.

"As the strange vessel did not make very great headway, an hour's sailing brought us near enough to give us a pretty good view of her, yet we could not exactly make out her character, yet we thought that she had a rather suspicious look. And still she appeared rather like a traveling vessel, though if so, she could not have much cargo on board, and as she seemed built for speed, we wondered why she did not make better headway.

"But we were not long left in doubt in regard to her real character, for all at once her port-holes which had been purposely concealed were unmasked, and we received a broadside from her just as we were about to send her a messenger from our long tom.

"This broadside, although doing us little other damage, so cut our rigging as to render our escape now impossible if such had been our intention. So after returning the salute we had received, in as handsome a manner as we could, I gave orders to bear down upon the enemy's ship, which I was glad to see had been considerably disabled by our shot. But as she had greatly the advantage of us in the weight of material, our only hope was in boarding her, and fighting it out hand to hand on her own deck.

"The rigging of the two vessels was soon so entangled as to make it impossible to separate them.

"In spite of all the efforts of the crew of the enemy's vessel to oppose us we were soon upon her deck. We found she was a Spanish brigantine sent out purposely to capture us.

"Her apparent efforts to get away from us had been only a ruse to draw us on, so as to get us into a position from which there could be no escape.

"I have been in a good many fights, but never before one like that.

"As we expected no quarter, we gave none. The crew of the Spanish vessel rather outnumbered us, but not so greatly as to make the contest very unequal. And in our case desperation supplied the place of numbers.

"The deck was soon slippery with gore, and there were but few left to fight on either side. The captain of the Spanish vessel was one of the first killed. Some were shot down, some were hurled over the deck in the sea, some had their skulls broken with boarding pikes, and there was not a man left alive of the Spanish crew; and of ours, I at first thought that I was

the only survivor, when the negro cook who had been forgotten all the while, came up from the cabin of our brig, bearing in his arms his little son, of course unharmed, but nearly frightened to death. Strange as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that with the exception of a few slight scratches, I escaped without a wound.

"To my horror I now discovered that both vessels were fast sinking. But the cook set me at my ease on that score, by informing me that there was one small boat that had not been injured. Into this we immediately got, after having secured the small supply of provisions and water within our reach, which from the condition the vessels were, was very small.

"We had barely got clear of the sinking vessels, when they both went down, leaving us alone upon the wide ocean without compass or chart; not a sail in sight, and many a long, long league from the nearest coast.

"For more than a week we were tossing about on the waves without discovering a vessel. At last I saw that our provisions were nearly gone. We had been on short allowance from the first. At the rate they were going, they would not last more than two days longer. What was to be done? Self preservation, they say is the first law of human nature; to preserve my own life, I must sacrifice my companions. The moment the thought struck me it was acted upon.

"Sam, the black cook, was sitting a straddle the bow of the boat; with a push I sent him into the sea. I was going to send his boy after him, but the child clung to my legs in terror, and just at that moment a sail hove in sight and I changed my purpose.

"Such a groan of horror as the father gave on striking the water I never heard before, and trust I shall never hear again."

"At that instant the whole party sprang to their feet as if started by a shock of electricity, while most fearful groan resounded through the cavern, repeated by a thousand echos, each repetition growing fainter, and fainter until seeming to lose itself in the distance.

"That's it, that's it," said the captain, only louder, and if anything more horrible.

"But what does all this mean?" he demanded of Lightfoot, who had joined the astonished group.

"Don't know," said the woman.

"Where's Black Bill?" next demanded the captain.

"Here I is," said the boy crawling out from a recess in the wall in which he slept.

"Was that you, Bill?" demanded his master.

"No; dis is me," innocently replied the darkey.

"Do you know what that noise was?" asked the captain.

"S'pose 'twas de debble comin' after massa," said the boy.

"What do you mean, you wooley-headed imp," said the captain; "don't you know that the devil likes his own color best? Away to bed, away, you rascal!"

"Well, boys," said Flint, addressing the men and trying to appear very indifferent, "we have allowed ourselves to be alarmed by a trifle that can be easily enough accounted for.

"These rocks, as you see, are full of cracks and crevices; there may be other caverns under, or about as, for all we know. The wind entering these, has no doubt caused the noise we have heard, and which to our imaginations, somewhat heated by the liquor we have been drinking, has converted into the terrible groan which has so startled us, and now that we know what it is, I may as well finish my story.

"As I was saying, a sail hove in sight. It was a vessel bound to this port. I and the boy were taken on board and arrived here in safety.

"This boy, whether from love or fear, I can hardly say, has clung to me ever since.

"I have tried to shake him off several times, but it was no use, he always returns.

"The first business I engaged in on arriving here, was to trade with the Indians; when having discovered this cave, it struck me that it would make a fine storehouse for persons engaged in our line of business. Acting upon this hint, I fitted it up as you see.

"With a few gold pieces which I had secured in my belt I bought our little schooner. From that time to the present, my history it as well known to you as to myself. And now my long yarn is finished, let us go on with our sport."

But to recall the hilarity of spirits with which the entertainment had commenced, was no

easy matter.

Whether the captain's explanation of the strange noise was satisfactory to himself or not, it was by no means so to the men.

Every attempt at singing, or story telling failed. The only thing that seemed to meet with any favor was the hot punch, and this for the most part, was drank in silence.

After a while they slunk away from the table one by one, and fell asleep in some remote corner of the cave, or rolled over where they sat, and were soon oblivious to everything around them.

The only wakeful one among them was the captain himself, who had drank but little.

He sat by the table alone. He started up! Could he have dozed and been dreaming? but surely he heard that groan again!

In a more suppressed voice than before, and not repeated so many times, but the same horrid groan; he could not be mistaken, he had never heard anything else like it. The matter must be looked into.

CHAPTER V.

Although it was nearly true, as Captain Flint had told his men, that they were about as well acquainted with his history since he landed in this country as he was himself, such is not the case with the reader. And in order that he may be as well informed in this matter as they were, we shall now endeavor to fill up the gap in the narrative.

To the crew of the vessel who had rescued him and saved his life, Captain Flint had represented himself as being one of the hands of a ship which had been wrecked at sea, and from which the only ones who had escaped, were himself and two negroes, one of whom was the father of the boy who had been found with him. The father of the boy had fallen overboard, and been drowned just before the vessel hove in sight.

This story, which seemed plausible enough, was believed by the men into whose hands they had fallen, and Flint and the negro, received every attention which their forlorn condition required. And upon arriving in port, charitable people exerted themselves in the captain's behalf, procuring him employment, and otherwise enabling him to procure an honest livelihood, should he so incline.

But honesty was not one of the captain's virtues.

He had not been long in the country before he determined to try his fortune among the Indians.

He adopted this course partly because he saw in it a way of making money more rapidly than in any other, and partly because it opened to him a new field of wild adventure.

Having made the acquaintance of some of the Indians who were in the habit of coming to the city occasionally for the purpose of trading, he accompanied them to their home in the wilderness, and having previously made arrangements with merchants in the city, among others Carl Rosenthal, to purchase or dispose of his furs, he was soon driving a thriving business. In a little while he became very popular with the savages, joined one of the tribes and was made a chief.

This state of things however, did not last long. The other chiefs became jealous of his influence, and incited the minds of many of the people against him.

They said he cheated them in his dealings, that his attachment to the red men was all pretence. That he was a paleface at heart, carrying on trade with the palefaces to the injury of the Indians. Killing them with his fire water which they gave them for their furs.

In all this there was no little truth, but Flint, confident of his power over his new friends, paid no attention to it.

A crisis came at last.

One of the chiefs who had been made drunk by whiskey which he had received from Flint in exchange for a lot of beaver skins, accused the latter of cheating him; called him a paleface thief who had joined the Indians only for the purpose of cheating them.

Flint forgetting his usual caution took the unruly savage by the shoulders and thrust him out of the lodge.

In a few moments the enraged Indian returned accompanied by another, when the two attacked the white man with knives and tomahawks.

Flint saw no way but to defend himself single-handed as he was, against two infuriated savages, and to do to if possible without killing either.

This he soon discovered was impossible. The only weapon he had at command was a hunting knife, and he had two strong men to contend against. Fortunately for him, one of them was intoxicated.

As it was, the savage who had begun the quarrel, was killed, and the other so badly wounded that he died a few hours afterwards.

The enmity of the whole tribe was now aroused against Flint, by the unfortunate termination of this affair.

It availed him nothing to contend that he had killed the two in self defence, and that they begun the quarrel.

He was a white man, and had killed two Indians, and that was enough.

Besides, how did they know whether he told the truth or not?

He was a paleface, and palefaces had crooked tongues, and their words could not be depended upon. Besides their brethren were dead, and could not speak for themselves.

Finally it was decided in the grand council of the tribe that he should suffer death, and although they called him a paleface, as he had joined the tribe he should be treated as an Indian, and suffer death by torture in order that he might have an opportunity of showing how he could endure the most horrible torment without complaining.

The case of Flint now seemed to be a desperate one. He was bound hand and foot, and escape seemed out of the question.

Relief came from a quarter he did not anticipate.

The place where this took place was not on the borders of the great lakes where the tribe to which Flint had attached himself belonged, but on the shores of the Hudson river a few miles above the Highlands, where a portion of the tribe had stopped to rest for a few days, while on their way to New York, where they were going for the purpose of trading.

It happened that there was among them a woman who had originally belonged to one of the tribes inhabiting this part of the country, but who while young, had been taken prisoner in some one of the wars that were always going on among the savages. She was carried away by her captors, and finally adopted into their tribe.

To this woman Flint had shown some kindness, and had at several times made her presents of trinkets and trifles such as he knew would gratify an uncultivated taste. And which cost him little or nothing. He little thought when making these trifling presents the service he was doing himself.

Late in the night preceding the day on which he was to have been executed, this woman came into the tent where he lay bound, and cut the thongs with which he was tied, and telling him in a whisper to follow her, she led the way out.

With stealthy and cautious steps they made their way through the encampment, but when clear of this, they traveled as rapidly as the darkness of the night and the nature of the ground would admit of.

All night, and a portion of the next day they continued their journey. The rapidity with which she traveled, and her unhesitating manner, soon convinced Flint that she was familiar with the country.

Upon reaching Butterhill, or Mount Tecomthe, she led the way to the cave which we have already described.

After resting for a few moments in the first chamber, the Indian woman, who we may as well inform the reader was none other than our friend Lightfoot, showed Flint the secret door and the entrance to the grand chamber, which after lighting a torch made of pitch-pine, they entered.

"Here we are safe," said Lightfoot; "Indians no find us here."

The moment Flint entered this cavern it struck him as being a fine retreat for a band of pirates or smugglers, and for this purpose he determined to make use of it.

Lightfoot's knowledge of this cave was owing to the fact, that she belonged to a tribe to whom alone the secrets of the place were known. It was a tribe that had inhabited that part

of the country for centuries. But war and privation had so reduced them, that there was but a small remnant of them left, and strangers now occupied their hunting grounds.

The Indians in the neighborhood knew of the existence of the cave, but had never penetrated farther than the first chamber, knowing nothing of the concealed entrance which led to the other. Having as they said, seen Indians enter it who never came out again, and who although followed almost immediately could not be found there, they began to hold it in a kind of awe, calling it the mystery or medicine cave, and saying that it was under the guardianship of spirits.

Although the remnants of the once powerful tribe to whom this cave had belonged, were now scattered over the country, there existed between them a sort of masonry by which the different members could recognise each other whenever they met.

Fire Cloud, the Indian chief, who has already been introduced to the reader, was one of this tribe.

Although the existence of the cave was known to the members of the tribe generally, the whole of its secrets were known to the medicine men, or priests only.

In fact it might be considered the grand temple where they performed the mystic rites and ceremonies by which they imposed upon the people, and held them in subjection.

Flint immediately set about fitting up the place for the purpose which he intended it.

To the few white trappers who now and then visited the district, the existence of the cave was entirely unknown, and even the few Indians who hunted and fished in the neighborhood, were acquainted only with the outer cave as before stated.

When Flint was fully satisfied that all danger from pursuit was over, he set out for the purpose of going to the city in order to perfect the arrangements for carrying out the project he had in view.

On passing out, the first object that met his view was his faithful follower Black Bill, sitting at the entrance.

"How the devil did you get here!" was his first exclamation.

"Follered de Ingins what was a comin' arter massa," replied the boy.

Bill had followed his master into the wilderness, always like a body servant keeping near his person when not prevented by the Indians, which was the case while his master was a prisoner.

When the escape of Flint was discovered, he was free from restraint, and he, unknown to the party who had gone in pursuit, had followed them.

From the negro, Flint learned that the Indians had tracked him to the cave, but not finding him there, and not being able to trace him any further, they had given up the pursuit.

Flint thinking that the boy might be of service to him in the business he was about to enter upon, took him into the cave and put him in charge of Lightfoot.

On reaching the city, Flint purchased the schooner of which he was in command when first introduced to the reader.

It is said that, "birds of a feather flock together," and Flint having no difficulty gathering about him a number of kindred spirits, was soon in a condition to enter upon the profession as he called it, most congenial to his taste and habits.

CHAPTER VI.

When the crew of the schooner woke up on the morning following the night in which we have described in a previous chapter, they were by no means the reckless, dare-devil looking men they were when they entered the cave on the previous evening.

For besides the usual effects produced on such characters by a night's debauch, their countenances wore the haggard suspicious look of men who felt judgment was hanging over them; that they were in the hands of some mysterious power beyond their control. Some power from which they could not escape, and which sooner or later, would mete out to them the punishment they felt that they deserved.

They had all had troubled dreams, and several of them declared that they had heard that terrible groan during the night repeated if possible, in a more horrible manner than before.

To others the ghosts of the men they had lately murdered, appeared menacing them with fearful retribution.

As the day advanced, and they had to some extent recovered their spirits by the aid of their favorite stimulants, they attempted to laugh the matter off as a mere bugbear created by an imagination over heated by too great an indulgence in strong drink.

Although this opinion was not shared by Captain Flint, who had carefully abstained from over-indulgence, for reasons of his own, he encouraged it in his men.

But even they, while considering it necessary to remain quiet for a few days, to see whether or not, any harm should result to them, in consequence of their late attack on the merchant ship, none of them showed a disposition to pass another night in the cave.

Captain Flint made no objection to his men remaining outside on the following night, as it would give him the opportunity to investigate the matter, which he desired.

On the next night, when there was no one in the cavern but himself and the two who usually occupied it, he called Lightfoot to him, and asked her if she had ever heard any strange noises in the place before.

"Sometime heard de voices of the Indian braves dat gone to the spirit land," said the woman.

"Did you ever hear anything like the groan we heard last night?"

"Neber," said Lightfoot.

"What do you think it was?" asked the captain.

"Tink him de voice ob the great bad spirit," was the reply.

Captain Flint, finding that he was not likely to learn anything in this quarter that would unravel the mystery, now called the negro.

"Bill," he said, "did you ever hear that noise before?"

"Ony once, massa."

"When was that, Bill?"

"When you trow my—"

"Hold your tongue, you black scoundrel, or I'll break every bone in your body!" roared his master, cutting off the boy's sentence in the middle.

The boy was going to say:

"When you trow'd my fadder into the sea."

The captain now examined every portion of the cavern, to see if he could discover anything that could account for the production of the strange sound.

In every part he tried his voice, to see if he could produce those remarkable echoes, which had so startled him, on the previous night, but without success.

The walls, in various parts of the cavern, gave back echoes, but nothing like those of the previous night.

There were two recesses in opposite sides of the cave. The larger one of these was occupied by Lightfoot as a sleeping apartment. The other, which was much smaller, Black Bill made use of for the same purpose.

From these two recesses, the captain had everything removed, in order that he might subject them to a careful examination.

But with no better success than before.

He tried his voice here, as in other parts of the cavern, but the walls gave back no unusual echoes.

He was completely baffled, and, placing his lamp on the table, he sat down on one of the seats, to meditate on what course next to pursue.

Lightfoot and Bill soon after, at his request, retired.

He had been seated, he could not tell how long, with his head resting on his hands, when he was aroused by a yell more fearful, if possible, even than the groan that had so alarmed him on the previous night.

The yell was repeated in the same horrible and mysterious manner that the groan had been.

Flint sprang to his feet while the echoes were still ringing in his ears, and rushed to the sleeping apartment, first, to that of the Indian woman, and then, to that of the negro.

They both seemed to be sound asleep, to all appearance, utterly unconscious of the fearful racket that was going on around them.

Captain Flint, more perplexed and bewildered than ever, resumed his seat by the table; but not to sleep again that night, though the fearful yell was not repeated.

The captain prided himself on being perfectly free from all superstition.

He held in contempt the stories of ghosts of murdered men coming back to torment their murderers.

In fact, he was very much inclined to disbelieve in any hereafter at all, taking it to be only an invention of cunning priests, for the purpose of extorting money out of their silly dupes. But here was something, which, if not explained away, would go far to stagger his disbelief.

He was glad that the last exhibition had only been witnessed by himself, and that the men for the present preferred passing their nights outside; for, as he learned from Lightfoot, the noises were only during the night time.

This would enable him to continue his investigation without any interference on the part of the crew, whom he wished to keep in utter ignorance of what he was doing, until he had perfectly unraveled the mystery.

For this purpose, he gave Lightfoot and Black Bill strict charges not to inform the men of what had taken place during the night.

He was determined to pass the principal portion of the day in sleep, so as to be wide awake when the time should come for him to resume his investigations.

CHAPTER VII.

On the day after the first scene in the cave, late in the afternoon, three men sat on the deck of the schooner, as she lay in the shadow of forest covered mountain.

These were Jones Bradley, Old Ropes, and the man who went by the name of the Parson. They were discussing the occurrences of the previous night.

"I'm very much of the captain's opinion," said the Parson, "that the noises are caused by the wind rushing through the chinks and crevices of the rocks."

"Yes; but, then, there wan't no wind to speak of, and how is the wind to make that horrible groan, s'pose it did blow a hurricane?" said Jones Bradley.

"Just so," said Old Ropes; "that notion about the wind makin' such a noise at that, is all bosh. My opinion is, that it was the voice of a spirit. I know that the captain laughs at all such things, but all his laughin' don't amount to much with one that's seen spirits."

"What! you don't mean to say that you ever actually see a live ghost?" asked the Parson.

"That's jist what I do mean to say," replied Old Ropes.

"Hadn't you been takin' a leetle too much, or wasn't the liquor too strong?" said the Parson.

"Well, you may make as much fun about it as you please," said Old Ropes; "but I tell you, that was the voice of a spirit, and, what's more, I believe it's either the spirit of some one that's been murdered in that cave, by some gang that's held it before, and buried the body over the treasure they've stowed away there, or else the ghost of some one's that's had foul play from the captain."

"Well," said the Parson, "if I thought there was any treasure there worth lookin' after, all the ghosts you could scare up wouldn't hinder me from trying to get at it."

"But, no matter about that; you say you see a live ghost once. Let's hear about that."

"I suppose," said Old Ropes, "that there aint no satisfaction in a feller's tellin' of things that aint no credit to him; but, howsomever, I might as well tell this, as, after all, it's only in the line of our business."

"You must know, then, that some five years ago, I shipped on board a brig engaged in the same business that our craft is."

"I needn't tell you of all the battles we were in, and all the prizes we made; but the richest

prize that ever come in our way, was a Spanish vessel coming from Mexico, With a large amount of gold and silver on board.

"We attacked the ship, expecting to make an easy prize of her, but we were disappointed.

"The Spaniards showed fight, and gave us a ternal sight of trouble. Several of our best men were killed.

"This made our captain terrible wrothy. He swore that every soul that remained alive on the captured vessel should be put to death.

"Now, it so happened that the wife and child (an infant,) of the captain of the Spanish vessel, were on board. When the others had all been disposed of, the men plead for the lives of these two. But our captain would not listen to it; but he would let us cast lots to see which of us would perform the unpleasant office.

"As bad luck would have it, the lot fell upon me. There was no shirking it.

"It must be done; so, the plank was got ready. She took the baby in her arms, stepped upon the plank, as I ordered her, and the next moment, she, with the child in her arms, sank to rise no more; but the look she gave me, as she went down, I shall never forget.

"It haunts me yet, and many and many is the time that Spanish woman, with the child in her arms, has appeared to me, fixing upon me the same look that she gave me, as she sank in the sea.

"Luck left us from that time; we never took a prize afterwards.

"Our Vessel was captured by a Spanish cruiser soon afterwards. I, with one other, succeeded in making our escape.

"The captain, and all the rest, who were not killed in the battle, were strung out on the yard-arm."

"Does the ghost never speak to you?" asked the Parson.

"Never," replied Old Ropes.

"I suppose that's because she's a Spaniard, and thinks you don't understand her language," remarked the Parson, sneeringly. "I wonder why this ghost of the cave don't show himself, and not try to frighten us with his horrible boo-woeing."

"Well, you may make as much fun as you please," replied Old Ropes; "but, mark my words for it, if the captain don't pay attention to the warning he has had, that ghost will show himself in a way that won't be agreeable to any of us."

"If he takes my advice, he'll leave the cave, and take up his quarters somewhere else."

"What! you don't mean to say you're afraid!" quietly remarked the Parson.

"Put an enemy before me in the shape of flesh and blood, and I'll show you whether I'm afeard, or not," said Old Ropes; "but this fighting with dead men's another affair. The odds is all agin you. Lead and steel wont reach 'em, and the very sight on 'em takes the pluck out of a man, whether he will or no.

"An enemy of real flesh and blood, when he does kill you, stabs you or shoots you down at once, and there's an end of it; but, these ghosts have a way of killing you by inches, without giving a fellow a chance to pay them back anything in return."

"It's pretty clear, anyway, that they're a 'ternal set of cowards," remarked the Parson.

"The biggest coward's the bravest men, when there's no danger," retorted Old Ropes.

To this, the Parson made no reply, thinking, probably, that he had carried the joke far enough, and not wishing to provoke a quarrel with his companion.

"As to the affair of the cave," said Jones Bradley; "I think very much as Old Ropes does about it. I'm opposed to troubling the dead, and I believe there's them buried there that don't want to be disturbed by us, and if we don't mind the warning they give us, still the worse for us."

"The captain don't seem to be very much alarmed about it," said the Parson; "for he stays in the cave. And, then, there's the Indian woman and the darkey; the ghost don't seem to trouble them much."

"I'll say this for Captain Flint," remarked Old Ropes, "if ever I knowed a man that feared neither man nor devil, that man is Captain Flint; but his time'll come yet."

"You don't mean to say you see breakers ahead, do you?" asked the Parson.

"Not in the way of our business, I don't mean," said Ropes; "but, I've had a pretty long experience in this profession, and have seen the finishing up of a good many of my shipmates; and I never know'd one that had long experience, that would not tell you that he had been put more in fear by the dead than ever he had by the living."

"We all seem to be put in low spirits by this afternoon," said the Parson; "s'pose we go below, and take a little something to cheer us up."

To this the others assented, and all three went below.

CHAPTER VIII.

All Captain Flint's efforts to unravel the mysteries of the cave were unsuccessful; and he was reluctantly obliged to give up the attempt, at least for the present; but, in order to quiet the minds of the crew, he told them that he had discovered the cause, and that it was just what he had supposed it to be.

As everything remained quiet in the cave for a long time after this, and the minds of the men were occupied with more important matters, the excitement caused by it wore off; and, in a while, the affair seemed to be almost forgotten.

And here we may as well go back a little in our narrative, and restore the chain where it was broken off a few chapters back.

When Captain Flint had purchased the schooner which he commanded, it was with the professed object of using her as a vessel to trade with the Indians up the rivers, and along the shore, and with the various seaports upon the coast.

To this trade it is true, he did to some extent apply himself, but only so far as it might serve as a cloak to his secret and more dishonorable and dishonest practices.

Had Flint been disposed to confine himself to the calling he pretended to follow, he might have made a handsome fortune in a short time, but that would not have suited the corrupt and desperate character of the man.

He was like one of those wild animals which having once tasted blood, have ever afterward an insatiable craving for it.

It soon became known to a few of the merchants in the city, among the rest Carl Rosenthall, that Captain Flint had added to his regular business, that of smuggling.

This knowledge, however, being confined to those who shared the profits with him, was not likely to be used to his disadvantage.

After a while the whole country was put into a state of alarm by the report that a desperate pirate had appeared on the coast.

Several vessels which had been expected to arrive with rich cargoes had not made their appearance, although the time for their arrival had long passed. There was every reason to fear that they had been captured by this desperate stranger who had sunk them, killing all on board.

The captain of some vessels which had arrived in safety reported having been followed by a suspicious looking craft.

They said she was a schooner about the size of one commanded by Captain Flint, but rather longer, having higher masts and carrying more sail.

No one appeared to be more excited on the subject of the pirate, than Captain Flint. He declared that he had seen the mysterious vessel, had been chased by her, and had only escaped by his superior sailing.

Several vessels had been fitted out expressly for the purpose of capturing this daring stranger, but all to no purpose; nothing could be seen of her.

For a long time she would seem to absent herself from the coast, and vessels would come and go in safety. Then all of a sudden, she would appear again and several vessels would be missing, and never heard from more.

The last occurrence of this kind is the one which we have already given an account of the capturing and sinking of the vessel in which young Billings had taken passage for Europe.

We have already seen how Hellena Rosenthall's having accidentally discovered her lover's ring on the finger of Captain Flint, had excited suspicions of the merchant's daughter, and

what happened to her in consequence.

Captain Flint having made it the interest of Rosenthral to keep his suspicions to himself if he still adhered to them, endeavored to convince him that his daughter was mistaken, and that the ring however much it might resemble the one belonging to her lover, was one which had been given to him by his own mother at her death, and had been worn by her as long as he could remember.

This explanation satisfied, or seemed to satisfy the merchant, and the two men appeared to be as good friends as ever again.

The sudden and strange disappearance of the daughter of a person of so much consequence as Carl Rosenthral, would cause no little excitement in a place no larger than New York was at the time of which we write.

Most of the people agreed in the opinion with the merchant that the girl had been carried off by the Indian Fire Cloud, in order to avenge himself for the insult he had received years before. As we have seen, Captain Flint encouraged this opinion, and promised that in an expedition he was about fitting out for the Indian country, he would make the recovery of the young woman one of his special objects.

Flint knew all the while where Fire Cloud was to be found, and fearing that he might come to the city ignorant as he was of the suspicion he was laboring under, and thereby expose the double game he was playing, he determined to visit the Indian in secret, under pretence of putting him on his guard, but in reality for the purpose of saving himself.

He sought out the old chief accordingly, and warned him of his danger.

Fire Cloud was greatly enraged to think that he should be suspected carrying off the young woman.

"He hated her father," he said, "for he was a cheat, and had a crooked tongue. But the paleface maiden was his friend, and for her sake he would find her if she was among his people, and would restore her to her friends."

"If you enter the city of the palefaces, they will hang you up like a dog without listening to anything you have to say in your defence," said Flint.

"The next time Fire Cloud enters the city of the palefaces, the maiden shall accompany him," replied the Indian.

This was the sort of an answer that Flint wished, and expected, and he now saw that there was no danger to be apprehended from that quarter.

But if Captain Flint felt himself relieved from danger in this quarter, things looked rather squally in another. If he knew how to disguise his vessel by putting on a false bow so as to make her look longer, and lengthen the masts so as to make her carry more sail, he was not the only one who understood these tricks. And one old sailor whose bark had been chased by the strange schooner, declared that she very much resembled Captain Flint's schooner disguised in this way.

And then it was observed that the strange craft was never seen when the captain's vessel was lying in port, or when she was known to be up the river where he was trading among the Indians.

Another suspicious circumstance was, that shortly after the strange disappearance of a merchant vessel, Flint's schooner came into port with her rigging considerably damaged, as if she had suffered from some unusual cause. Flint accounted for it by saying that he had been fired into by the pirate, and had just escaped with the skin of his teeth.

These suspicions were at first spoken cautiously, and in whispers only, by a very few.

They came to the ears of Flint himself at last, who seeing the danger immediately set about taking measures to counteract it by meeting and repelling, what he pretended to consider base slanders invented by his enemies for the purpose of effecting his ruin.

He threatened to prosecute the slanderers, and if they wished to see how much of a pirate he was, let them fit out a vessel such as he would describe, arm her, and man her according to his directions, give him command of her, and if he didn't bring that blasted pirate into port he'd never return to it himself. He'd like no better fun than to meet her on equal terms, in an open sea.

This bragadocia had the desired effect for awhile; besides, although it could hardly be said that Flint had any real friends, yet there were so many influential men who were concerned with him in some of his contraband transactions. These dreaded the exposure to themselves, should Flint's real character be discovered, which caused them to answer for him in the place of friends.

These men would no doubt be the first to crush him, could they only do so without involving themselves in his ruin.

But all this helped to convince Flint that his time in this part of the country was pretty near up, and if he meant to continue in his present line of business, he must look out for some new field of operations.

More than ever satisfied on this point, Captain Flint anxiously awaited the arrival of the vessel, the capture of which was to be the finishing stroke of his operations in this part of the world.

CHAPTER IX.

When Captain Flint had decided to take possession of the cavern, and fit it up as a place of retreat and concealment for himself and his gang, he saw the necessity of having some one whom he could trust to take charge of the place in his absence. A moment's reflection satisfied him there was no one who would be more likely to serve him in this capacity than the Indian woman who had rescued him from the fearful fate he had just escaped.

Lightfoot, who in her simplicity, looked upon him as a great chief, was flattered by the proposal which he made her, and immediately took charge of the establishment, and Captain Flint soon found that he had no reason to repent the choice he had made, so far as fidelity to his interests was concerned.

For a while at first he treated her with as much kindness as it was in the nature of such as he to treat any one.

He may possibly have felt some gratitude for the service she had rendered him, but it was self-interest more than any other feeling that caused him to do all in his power to gain a controlling influence over her.

He loaded her with presents of a character suited to her uncultivated taste.

Her person fairly glittered with beads, and jewelry of the most gaudy character, while of shawls and blankets of the most glaring colors, she had more than she knew what to do with.

This course he pursued until he fancied he had completely won her affection, and he could safely show himself in his true character without the risk of losing his influence over her.

His manner to her now changed, and he commenced treating her more as a slave than an equal, or one to whom he felt himself under obligations.

It is true he would now and then treat her as formerly, and would occasionally make her rich presents, but it would be done in the way that the master would bestow a favor on a servant.

Lightfoot bore this unkind treatment for some time without resenting it, or appearing to notice it. Thinking perhaps that it was only a freak of ill-humor that would last but for a short time, and then the great chiefs attachment would return.

Flint fancied that he had won the heart of the Indian woman, and acting on the presumption that "love is blind," he thought that he could do as he pleased without losing hold on her affections.

In this he had deceived himself. He had only captured the woman's fancy. He had not won her heart.

So that when Lightfoot found this altered manner of the captain's towards her was not caused by a mere freak of humor, but was only his true character showing itself, her fondness for him, if fondness it could be called, began to cool.

Things had come to this pass, when Hellena Rosenthall was brought into the cave.

The first thought of Lightfoot was that she had now discovered the cause of the captain's change of manner towards her. He had found another object on which to lavish his favors and here was her rival. And she was to be the servant, the slave of this new favorite.

Flint, in leaving Hellena in charge of Lightfoot, gave strict charges that she should be treated with every attention, but that she should by no means be allowed to leave the cave.

The manner of Lightfoot to Hellena, was at first sullen: and reserved, and although she paid her all the attention that Hellena required of her, she went no further.

But after awhile, noticing the sad countenance of her paleface sister, and that her face was

frequently bathed in tears, her heart softened toward her, and she ventured to ask the cause of her sorrow. And when she had heard Hellena's story, her feelings towards her underwent an entire change.

From this time forward the two women were firm friends, and Lightfoot pledged herself to do all in her power to restore her to her friends.

Her attachment to Captain Flint was still too strong, however, to make her take any measures to effect that object, until she could do so without endangering his safety.

But Lightfoot was not the only friend that Hellena had secured since her capture. She had made another, and if possible a firmer one, in the person of Black Bill.

From the moment Hellena entered the cavern, Bill seemed to be perfectly fascinated by her. Had she been an angel just from heaven, his admiration for her could hardly have been greater. He could not keep his eyes off of her. He followed her as she moved about, though generally at a respectful distance, and nothing delighted him so much, as to be allowed to wait upon her and perform for her such little acts of kindness as lay within his power.

While Hellena was relating the story of her wrongs to Lightfoot, Black Bill sat at a little distance off an attentive listener to the narrative. When it was finished, and Hellena's eyes were filled with tears, the darkey sprang up saying in an encouraging tone of voice:

"Don't cry, don't cry misses, de debble's comin arter massa Flint berry soon, he tell me so hisself; den Black Bill take care ob de white angel."

This sudden and earnest outburst of feeling and kindness from the negro, expressed as it was in such a strange manner, brought a smile to the face of the maiden, notwithstanding the affliction which was crushing her to the earth.

"Why Bill," said Hellena, "you don't mean to say you ever saw the devil here, do you?"

"Never seed him, but heer'd him doe, sometimes," replied Bill.

Now, Hellena, although a sensible girl in her way, was by no means free from the superstition of the times. She believed in ghosts, and witches, and fairies, and all that, and it was with a look of considerable alarm that she turned to the Indian woman, saying:

"I hope there ain't any evil spirits in this cave, Lightfoot."

"No spirits here dat will hurt White Rose (the name she had given to Hellena) or Lightfoot," said the Indian woman.

"But the place is haunted, though!" said Hellena.

"The spirits of the great Indian braves who have gone to the land of spirits come back here sometimes."

"Do you ever see them?" asked the girl, her alarm increasing.

"Neber see dem, but hear dem sometime," replied Lightfoot.

"Do they not frighten you?" asked Hellena.

"Why should I be afraid?" said Lightfoot, "are they not my friends?"

Lightfoot perceiving that Hellena's curiosity, as well as her fears were excited; now in order to gratify the one, and to allay the other, commenced relating to her some of the Indian traditions in relation to the cavern.

The substance of her narrative was as follows:

She said that a great while ago, long, long before the palefaces had put foot upon this continent, the shores of this river, and the land for a great distance to the east and to the west, was inhabited by a great nation. No other nation could compare with them in number, or in the bravery of their warriors. Every other nation that was rash enough to contend with them was sure to be brought into subjection, if not utterly destroyed.

Their chiefs were as much renowned for wisdom, and eloquence as for bravery. And they were as just, as they were wise and brave.

Many of the weaker tribes sought their protection, for they delighted as much in sheltering the oppressed as in punishing the oppressor.

Thus, for many long generations, they prospered until the whole land was overshadowed by their greatness.

And all this greatness, and all this power, their wise men said, was because they listened to the voice of the Great Spirit as spoken to them in this cave.

Four times during the year, at the full of the moon the principal chiefs and medicine men, would assemble here, when the Great Spirit would speak to them, and through them to the people.

As long as this people listened to the voice of the Great Spirit, every thing went well with them.

But at last there arose among them a great chief; a warrior, who said he would conquer the whole world, and bring all people under his rule.

The priests and the wise men warned him of his folly, and told him that they had consulted the Great Spirit, and he had told them that if he persisted in his folly he would bring utter ruin upon his people. But the great chief only laughed at them, and called them fools, and told them the warnings which they gave him, were not from the Great Spirit, but were only inventions of their own, made up for the purpose of frightening him.

And so he persisted in his own headstrong course, and as he was a great brave, and had won many great battles, very many listened to him, and he raised a mighty army, and carried the war into the country of all the neighbouring nations, that were dwelling in peace with his own, and he brought home with him the spoils of many people. And then he laughed at the priests and wise men once more, and said, go into the magic cave again, and let us hear what the Great Spirit has to say.

And they went into the cave, as he had directed them. But they came out sorrowing, and said that the Great Spirit had told them that he, and his army should be utterly destroyed, and the whole nation scattered to the four winds.

And again he laughed at them, and called them fool, and deceivers.

And he collected another great army, and went to war again. But by this time the other nations, seeing the danger they were in, united against him as a common enemy.

He was overthrown, killed, and his army entirely cut to pieces.

The conquering army now entered this country, and laid it waste, as theirs had been laid waste before.

And the war was carried on for many years, until the prophesy was fulfilled that had been spoken by the Great Spirit, and the people of this once mighty nation were scattered to the four winds.

This people as a great nation are known no longer, but a remnant still remains scattered among the other tribes. Occasionally some of them visit this cave, to whom alone its mysteries are known, or were, Lightfoot said, until she had brought Captain Flint there in order to escape their pursuers.

"Is the voice of the Great Spirit ever heard here now?" enquired Hellena.

Lightfoot said the voice of the Great Spirit had never been heard there since the destruction of his favorite nation, but that the spirits of the braves as he had said before, did sometimes come back from the spirit-land to speak comfort to the small remnant of the friends who still remained upon the earth. To those she belonged.

This narrative of the Indian woman somewhat satisfied the curiosity of Hellena, but it did not quiet her fears, and to be imprisoned in a dreary cavern haunted by spirits, for aught she knew, demons, was to her imagination, about as terrible a situation as she could possibly be placed in.

CHAPTER X.

When there were none of the pirates in the cave, it was the custom of Lightfoot, and Hellena to spread their couch in the body of the cavern, and there pass the night. Such was the case on the night following the day on which Lightfoot had related to Hellena the sad history of her people.

It is hardly to be expected that the young girl's sleep would be very sound that night, with her imagination filled with visions, hob goblins of every form, size, and color.

During the most of the forepart of the night she lay awake thinking over the strange things she had heard concerning the cave, and expecting every moment to see some horrible monster make its appearance in the shape of an enormous Indian in his war paint, and his hands reeking with blood.

After a while she fell into a doze in which she had a horrid dream, where all the things she had been thinking of appeared and took form, but assuming shapes ten times more horrible than any her waking imagination could possibly have created.

It was past midnight. She had started from one of these horrid dreams, and afraid to go to sleep again, lay quietly gazing around the cavern on the ever varying reflections cast by the myriads of crystals that glittered upon the wall and ceiling.

Although there were in some portions of the cavern walls chinks or crevices which let in air, and during some portion of the day a few straggling sunbeams, it was found necessary even during the day to keep a lamp constantly burning. And the one standing on the table in the centre of the cave was never allowed to go out.

As we have said, Hellena lay awake gazing about her.

A perfect stillness reigned in the cave, broken only by the rather heavy breathing of the Indian woman who slept soundly.

Suddenly she heard, or thought she heard a slight grating noise at the further side of the cavern.

Can she be dreaming? or can her eyes deceive her? or does she actually see the wall of the cavern parting? Such actually seems to be the case, and from the opening out steps a figure dressed like an Indian, and bearing in his hand a blazing torch.

Hellena's tongue cleaves to the roof of her mouth, and her limbs are paralyzed with terror. She cannot move if she dare.

The figure moves about the room with a step as noiseless as the step of the dead, while the crystals on the walls seem to be set in motion, and to blaze with unnatural brilliancy as his torch is carried from place to place.

He carefully examines everything as he proceeds; particularly the weapons belonging to the pirates, which seemed particularly to take his fancy. But he carefully replaces everything after having examined it.

He now approaches the place where the two women are lying.

Hellena with an effort closed her eyes.

The figure approached the couch; for a moment he bent over it and gazed intently on the two women; particularly on that of the white maiden. When having apparently satisfied his curiosity, he withdrew as stealthily as he had come.

When Hellena opened her eyes again, the spectre had vanished, and everything about the cave appeared as if nothing unusual had happened.

For a long time she lay quietly thinking over the strange occurrences of the night. She was in doubt whether scenes which she had witnessed were real, or were only the empty creations of a dream. The horrible spectres which she had seen in the fore part of the night seemed like those which visit us in our dreams when our minds are troubled. But the apparition of the Indian seemed more real.

Could she be mistaken? was this, too, only a dream? or were the two scenes only different parts of one waking vision?

To this last opinion she seemed most inclined, and was fully confirmed in the opinion that the cavern was haunted.

Although Hellena was satisfied in her own mind that the figure that had appeared so strangely was a disembodied spirit, yet she had a vague impression that she had somewhere seen that form before. But when, or where, she could not recollect.

When in the morning she related the occurrences of the night to Lightfoot, the Indian expressed no surprise, and exhibited no alarm. Nor did she attempt to offer any explanation seeming to treat it as a matter of course.

Although this might be unsatisfactory to Hellena in some respects, it was perhaps after all, quite as well for her that Lightfoot did not exhibit any alarm at what had occurred, as by doing so she imparted some of her own confidence to her more timid companion.

All this while Black Bill had not been thought of but after a while he crawled out from his bunk, his eyes twice their usual size, and coming up to Hellena, he said:

"Misses, misses, I seed do debble last night wid a great fire-brand in his hand, and he went all round de cave, lookin' for massa Flint, to burn him up, but he couldn't fine him so he went away agin. Now I know he's comin' after massa Flint, cause he didn't touch nobody else."

"Did he frighten you?" asked Hellena.

"No; but I kept mighty still, and shut my eyes when he come to look at me, but he didn't say noffen, so I know'd it wasn't dis darkey he was after."

This statement of the negro's satisfied Hellena that she had not been dreaming when she witnessed the apparition of the Indian.

On further questioning Bill, she found he had not witnessed any of the horrid phantoms that had visited her in her dreams.

As soon as Hellena could do so without attracting attention, she took a lamp and examined the walls in every direction to see if she could discover any where a crevice large enough for a person to pass through, but she could find nothing of the sort.

The walls were rough and broken in many parts, but there was nothing like what she was in search of.

She next questioned Lightfoot about it, asking her if there was any other entrance to the cave beside the one through which they had entered.

But the Indian woman gave her no satisfaction, simply telling her that she might take the lamp and examine for herself.

As Hellena had already done this, she was of course as much in the dark as ever.

When Captain Flint visited the cave again as he did on the following day, Hellena would have related to him the occurrences of the previous night, but she felt certain that he would only laugh at it as something called up by her excited imagination, or treat it as a story made up for the purpose of exciting his sympathy.

Or perhaps invented for the purpose of arousing his superstition in order to make him leave the cave, and take her to some place where escape would be more easy.

So she concluded to say nothing to him about it.

CHAPTER XI.

About a week after the occurrence of the events recorded in the last chapter, Captain Flint and his crew were again assembled in the cavern. It was past midnight, and they evidently had business of importance before them, for although the table was spread as upon the former occasion, the liquors appeared as yet to be untasted, and instead of being seated around the table, the whole party were sitting on skins in a remote corner of the cavern, and conversing in a suppressed tone of voice as if fearful of being heard.

"Something must be done," said one of the men, "to quiet this darn suspicion, or it's all up with us."

"I am for leaving at once," said Old Ropes; "the only safety for us now is in giving our friends the slip, and the sooner we are out of these waters the better it will be for us."

"What, and leave the grand prize expecting to take care of itself?" asked the captain.

"Darn the prize," said Old Ropes, "the East Indiaman ain't expected this two weeks yet, and if the suspicions agin us keep on increasin' as they have for the last ten days, the land pirates'll have us all strung up afore the vessel arrives."

This opinion was shared by the majority of the men. Even the Parson who took delight in opposing Old Ropes in almost every thing, agreed with him here.

"Whether or not," said he, "I am afraid to face death in a fair business-like way, you all know, but as sure as I'm a genuine parson, I'd rather be tortured to death by a band of savage Indians, than to be strung up to a post with my feet dangling in the air to please a set of gaping fools."

"Things do look rather squally on shore, I admit," said the captain, "but I've hit upon a plan to remedy all that, and one that will make us pass for honest men, if not saints, long enough to enable us to finish the little job we have on hand."

"What is that?" enquired a number of voices.

"Why, merely to make a few captures while we are lying quietly in the harbour or a little way up the river. That'll turn the attention of the people from us in another direction, in the mean while, we can bide our time."

"It can," said the captain. "We must man a whale boat or two and attack some one of the small trading vessels that are coming in every day. She must be run on the rocks where she may be examined afterwards, so that any one may see that she has falling in the hands of pirates. None of the crew must be allowed to escape, as that would expose the trick.

"All this must take place while I am known to be on shore, and the schooner lying in port."

This plot, which was worthy the invention of a fiend, was approved by all but Jones Bradley who declared that he would have nothing to do with it. For which disobedience of orders he would have probably been put to death had he been at sea.

The plan of operations having been decided upon, the whole party seated themselves round the table for the purpose as they would say of making a night of it.

But somehow or other they seemed to be in no humor for enjoyment, as enjoyment is understood by such characters.

A gloom seemed to have settled on the whole party.

They could not even get their spirits up, by pouring spirits down.

And although they drank freely, they drank for the most part in silence.

"How is this?" shouted captain Flint, "at last have we all lost our voices? Can no one favor us with a song, or toast or a yarn?"

Hardly had these words passed the lips of the captain, when the piteous moan which had so startled the pirates, on the previous evening again saluted them, but in a more suppressed tone of voice. The last faint murmurs of this moan had not yet died away, when a shout, or rather a yell like an Indian war whoop, rang through the cavern in a voice that made the very walls tremble, its thousand echoes rolling away like distant thunder.

The whole group sprang to their feet aghast.

The two woman followed by Black Bill, terror stricken, joined the group.

This at least might be said of Hellena and the negro. The latter clinging to the skirts of the white maiden for protection, as a mortal in the midst of demons might be supposed to seek the protection of an Angel.

Captain Flint, now laying his hand violently on Lightfoot, said, "What does all this mean? do you expect to frighten me by your juggling tricks, you infernal squaw?" At these words he gave her a push that sent her staggering to the floor.

In a moment he saw his mistake, and went to her assistance (but she had risen before he reached her,) and endeavored to conciliate her with kind words and presents.

He took a gold chain from his pocket, and threw it about her neck, and drew a gold ring from his own finger and placed it upon hers.

These attentions she received in moody silence.

All this was done by Flint, not from any feelings of remorse for the injustice he had done the woman, but from a knowledge of how much he was in her power and how dangerous her enmity might be to him.

Finding that she was not disposed to listen to him, he turned from her muttering to himself:

"She'll come round all right by and by," and then addressing his men said:

"Boys, we must look into this matter; there's something about this cave we don't understand yet. There may be another one over it, or under it. We must examine."

He did not repeat the explanation he had given before, feeling no doubt, that it would be of no use.

A careful examination of the walls of the cave were made by the whole party, but to no purpose. Nothing was discovered that could throw any light upon the mystery, and they were obliged to give it up.

And thus they were compelled to let the matter rest for the present.

When the morning came, the pirates all left with the exception of the captain, who remained, he said, for the purpose of making further investigations, but quite as much for the purpose of endeavoring to find out whether or not, Lightfoot had anything to do with the production of the strange noises. But here again, he was fated to disappointment. The Indian could not, or would not, give any satisfactory explanation.

The noises she contended were made by the braves of her nation who had gone to the spirit

world, and who were angry because their sacred cavern had been profaned by the presence of the hated palefaces.

Had he consulted Hellena, or Black Bill, his investigations would probably have taken a different turn.

The figure of the Indian having been seen by both Hellena and the black, would have excited his curiosity if not his fears, and led him to look upon it as a more serious matter than he had heretofore supposed.

But he did not consult either of them, probably supposing them to be a couple of silly individuals whose opinions were not worth having.

If any doubt had remained in the minds of the men in regard to the supernatural character of the noises which had startled them in the cave, they existed no longer.

Even the Parson although generally ridiculing the idea of all sorts of ghosts and hobgoblins, admitted that there was something in this affair that staggered him, and he joined with the others in thinking that the sooner they shifted their quarters, the better.

"Don't you think that squaw had a hand in it?" asked one of the men: "didn't you notice how cool she took it all the while?"

"That's a fact," said the Parson; "it's strange I didn't think of that before. I shouldn't wonder if it wasn't after all, a plot contrived by her and some of her red-skinned brethren to frighten us out of the cave, and get hold of the plunder we've got stowed away there."

Some of the men now fell in with this opinion, and were for putting it to the proof by torturing Lightfoot until she confessed her guilt.

The majority of the men, however, adhered to the original opinion that the whole thing was supernatural, and that the more they meddled with it, the deeper they'd get themselves into trouble.

"My opinion is," said Old Ropes, "that there's treasure buried there, and the whole thing's under a charm, cave, mountain, and all."

"If there's treasure buried there," said the Parson, "I'm for having a share of it."

"The only way to get treasure that's under charm," said Old Ropes, "is to break the charm that binds it, by a stronger charm."

"It would take some blasting to get at treasure buried in that solid rock," said Jones Bradley.

"If we could only break the charm that holds the treasure, just as like as not that solid rock would all turn into quicksand," replied Old Ropes.

"Did you ever see the thing tried?" asked the Parson.

"No; but I've seen them as has," replied Old Ropes.

"And more than that," continued Old Ropes, "my belief is that Captain Flint is of the same opinion, though he didn't like to say so.

"I shouldn't wonder now, if he hadn't some charm he was tryin', and that was the reason why he stayed in the cave so much."

"I rather guess the charm that keeps the captain so much in the cave is a putty face," dryly remarked one of the men.

CHAPTER XII.

While these things had been going on at the cavern, and Captain Flint had been pretending to use his influence with the Indians for the recovery of Hellena, Carl Rosenthall himself had not been idle in the meantime.

He had dealings with Indians of the various tribes along the river, and many from the Far North, and West, and he engaged them to make diligent search for his daughter among their people, offering tempting rewards to any who would restore her, or even tell him to a certainty, where she was to be found.

In order to induce Fire Cloud to restore her in case it should prove it was he who was holding her in captivity, he sent word to that chief, that if he would restore his child, he would not only not have him punished, but would load him with presents.

These offers, of course made through Captain Flint, who it was supposed by Rosenthall, had more opportunities than any one else of communicating with the old chief.

How likely they would have been to reach the chief, even if he had been the real culprit, the reader can guess.

In fact he had done all in his power to impress the Indian that to put himself in the power of Rosenthall, would be certain death to him.

Thus more than a month passed without bringing to the distracted father any tidings of his missing child.

We may as well remark here, that Rosenthall had lost his wife many years before, and that Hellena was his only child, so that in losing her he felt that he had lost everything.

The Indians whom he had employed to aid him in his search, informed him that they could learn nothing of his daughter among their people, and some of them who were acquainted with Fire Cloud, told him that the old chief protested he knew nothing of the matter.

Could it be that Flint was playing him false?

He could hardly think that it was Flint himself who had stolen his child, for what motive could he have in doing it?

The more he endeavored to unravel the mystery, the stranger and more mysterious it became.

Notwithstanding the statements to the contrary made by the Indians, Flint persisted in giving it as his belief, that Fire Cloud had carried off the girl and was still holding her a prisoner. He even said that the chief had admitted as much to him. Yet he was sure that if he was allowed to manage the affair in his own way, he should be able to bring the Indian to terms.

It was about this time that the dark suspicions began to be whispered about that Captain Flint was in some way connected with the horrible piracies that had recently been perpetrated on the coast, if he were not in reality the leader of the desperate gang himself, by whom they had been perpetrated.

Those suspicions as we have seen, coming to Flint's own ears, had caused him to plan another project still more horrible than the one he was pursuing, in order to quiet those suspicions until he should have an opportunity of capturing the rich prize which was to be the finishing stroke to his achievements in this part of the world.

The suspicions in regard to Captain Flint had reached the ears of Rosenthall, as well as others, who had been secretly concerned with him in his smuggling transactions, although in no way mixed up with his piracies.

Rosenthall feared that in case these suspicions against Flint should lead to his arrest, the whole matter would come out and be exposed, leading to the disgrace if not the ruin, of all concerned.

It was therefore with a feeling of relief, while joining in the general expression of horror, that he heard of a most terrible piracy having been committed on the coast. Captain Flint's vessel was lying in port, and he was known to be in the city.

There was one thing too connected with this affair that seemed to prove conclusively, that the suspicions heretofore harboured against the captain were unjust.

And that was the report brought by the crew of a fishing smack, that they had seen a schooner answering to the description given of the pirate, just before this horrible occurrence took place.

Captain Flint now assumed the bearing of a man whose fair fame had been purified of some foul blot stain that had been unjustly cast upon it, one who had been honorably acquitted of base charges brought against him by enemies who had sought his ruin.

He had not been ignorant, he said, of the dark suspicions that had been thrown out against him.

But he had trusted to time to vindicate his character, and he had not trusted in vain.

Among the first to congratulate Captain Flint on his escape from the danger with which he had been threatened, was Carl Rosenthall.

He admitted that he had been to some extent, tainted with suspicion, in common with others, for which he now asked his forgiveness.

The pardon was of course granted by the captain, coupled with hope that he would not be so

easily led away another time.

The facts in regard to this last diabolical act of the pirates were these.

Captain Flint, in accordance with the plan which he had decided upon, and with which the reader has already been made acquainted, fitted out a small fishing vessel, manned by some of the most desperate of his crew, and commanded by the Parson and Old Ropes.

Most of the men went on board secretly at night, only three men appearing on deck when she set sail.

In fact, no one to look at her, would take her for anything but an ordinary fishing smack.

They had not been out long, before they came in sight of a vessel which they thought would answer their purpose. It was a small brig engaged in trading along the coast, and such a vessel as under ordinary circumstances they would hardly think worth noticing. But their object was not plunder this time, but simply to do something that would shield them from the danger that threatened them on shore.

The time seemed to favor them, for the night was closing in and there were no other vessels in sight.

On the pirates making a signal of distress, the commander of the brig brought his vessel to, until the boat from the supposed smack could reach him, and the crew could make their wants known.

To his surprise six men fully armed sprang upon his deck.

To resist this force there were only himself, and two men, all unarmed.

Of these the pirates made short work not deigning to answer the questions put to them by their unfortunate victims.

When they had murdered all on board, and thrown overboard such of the cargo as they did not want they abandoned the brig, knowing from the direction of the wind, and the state of the tide, that she would soon drift on the beach, and the condition in which she would be found, would lead people to believe that she had been boarded by pirates, and all on board put to death.

After having accomplished this hellish act, they turned their course homeward, bringing the report that they had seen the notorious piratical schooner which had committed so many horrible depredations, leading every one to conclude that this was another of her terrible deeds.

Captain Flint, satisfied with the result of this last achievement, felt himself secure for the present.

He could now without fear of interruption, take time to mature his plans for carrying out his next grand enterprise, which was to be the crowning one of all his adventures, and which was to enrich all engaged in it.

CHAPTER XIII.

Captain Flint's plan for the accomplishment of his last grand enterprise was, as soon as it should be announced to him by those he had constantly on the lookout, that the expected vessel was in sight, to embark in a large whale boat which he had secretly armed, and fitted for the purpose.

After killing the crew of the vessel they expected to capture, he would tack about ship, and take her into some port where he could dispose of the vessel and cargo.

As, in this case, it was his intention to abandon the country for ever, he removed under various pretences, all his most valuable property from the cavern.

The schooner he was to leave in charge of Jones Bradley, under pretence that it was necessary to do so, in order to divert suspicion from him when the thing should have been accomplished.

The fact was, that as he should have no further use for the schooner, and having for some time past, feared that Bradley seemed to be too tender-hearted to answer his purpose, he had determined to abandon him and the schooner together.

At last, news was brought to Captain Flint that a vessel answering the one they were expecting was in sight.

Flint who, with his crew of desperators, was lying at a place now known as Sandy Hook, immediately started in pursuit.

Everything seemed to favor the pirates. The doomed ship was making her way under a light breeze apparently unconscious of danger.

There was one thing about the ship, that struck the pirates as rather unusual. There seemed to be more hands on board than were required to man such a vessel.

"I'm afraid there's more work for us than we've bargained for," said one of the men.

"They seem to have a few passengers on board," remarked Flint, "but we can soon dispose of them."

The principal part of Flint's men had stretched themselves on the bottom of the boat for fear of exciting the suspicion of those on board the ship by their numbers.

As the pirate craft approached the merchant man, apparently with no hostile intention, those on board the ship were watching the boat as closely as they were themselves watched.

As soon as they came within hailing distance, the man at the bow of the boat notified the captain of the ship that he wished to come along side, as he had something of importance to communicate.

The captain of the ship commenced apparently making preparations to receive the visit, when one of the men on deck who had been observing the boat for some time came to him and said:

"That's he. I'm sure I can't be mistaken. The man on the bow of the boat is the notorious pirate Flint."

The pirates were approaching rapidly.

In a moment more they would be along side, and nothing could prevent them from boarding the ship.

In that moment the captain of the ship, by a skilful movement suddenly tacked his vessel about just as the pirates came up, coming in contact with the boat in such a manner as to split her in two in a moment.

A dozen men sprung up from the bottom of the boat, uttering horrid curses while they endeavored to reach the ship or cling to portions of their shattered boat.

The greater portion of them were drowned, as no efforts were made to rescue them.

Three only succeeded in reaching the deck of the ship in safety, and these would probably have rather followed their comrades had they known how few were going to escape.

These three were Captain Flint, the one called the Parson and Old Ropes.

These were at first disposed to show fight, but it was of no use. Their arms had been lost in their struggle in the water.

They were soon overpowered and put in irons.

Great was the excitement caused in the goodly little City of New York, by the arrival of the merchant ship bringing as prisoners, the daring pirate with two of his men whose fearful deeds had caused all the inhabitants of the land to thrill with horror.

And great was the surprise of the citizens to find in that terrible pirate a well-known member of the community, and one whom nearly all regarded as a worthy member of society.

Another cause of surprise to the good people of the city, was the arrival by this vessel, of one whom all had long given up as lost, and that was Henry Billings, the lover of Hellena Rosenthall.

He it was who had recognized in the commander of the whale boat, the pirate Flint, and had warned the captain of the ship of his danger, thereby enabling him to save his vessel, and the lives of all on board.

Captain Flint made a slight mistake when he took the vessel by which he was run down, for the India man he was looking out for. It was an ordinary merchant ship from Amsterdam, freighted with merchandise from that port. Though in appearance she very much resembled the vessel which Captain Flint had taken her for.

The reason young Billings happened to be on board of her was this:

It will be remembered that when the ship in which Billings had taken passage for Europe,

was attacked by the pirates, he was forced to walk the plank.

By the pirates, he was of course supposed to have been drowned, but in this they were mistaken. He had been in the water but a few moments when he came in contact with a portion of a spar which had probably come from some wreck or had been washed off of some vessel.

To this he lashed himself with a large handkerchief which it was his good fortune to have at the time.

Lashed to this spar he passed the night.

When morning came he found that he had drifted out to sea; he could not tell how far.

He was out of sight of land, and no sail met his anxious gaze.

His strength was nearly exhausted, and he felt a stupor coming over him. Then he lost all consciousness.

How long he lay in this condition he could not tell. When he came to himself, he found that he was lying in the birth of a vessel, while a sailor was standing at his side.

The whole thing was soon explained.

He had been discovered by the Captain of a ship bound for England, from Boston.

He had been taken on board, in an almost lifeless condition, and kindly cared for.

In a little while he recovered his usual strength, and although his return home must necessarily be delayed, he trusted to be enabled before a great while to do so and bring to justice the villains who had attempted his murder.

Unfortunately the vessel by which he had been rescued, was wrecked on the coast of Ireland, he and the crew barely escaping with their lives.

After a while, he succeeded in getting to England by working his passage there.

From London, he made his way in the same manner, to Amsterdam, where the mercantile house with which he was connected being known, he found no difficulty in securing a passage for New York.

Billings now for the first time heard the story of Hellena's mysterious disappearance.

It immediately occurred to him that Captain Flint was some way concerned in the affair notwithstanding his positive denial that he knew anything of the matter further than he had already made known.

The capture of Captain Flint, and the other two pirates of course led to the arrest of Jones Bradley who had been left in charge of the schooner.

He was found on board of the vessel, which was lying a short distance up the river, and arrested before he had learned the fate of his comrades.

He was cast into prison with the rest, though each occupied a separate cell.

As no good reason could be given for delaying the punishment of the prisoners, their trial was commenced immediately.

The evidence against them was too clear to make a long trial necessary.

They were all condemned to death with the exception of Jones Bradley, whose punishment on account of his not engaged in last affair, and having recommended mercy in the case of Henry Billings, was committed to imprisonment for life.

When the time came for the carrying out of sentence of the three who had been condemned to death, it was found that one of them was missing and that one, the greatest villain of them all, Captain Flint himself!

How could this have happened? No one had visited him on the previous day but Carl Rosenthall, and he was a magistrate, and surely he would be the last one to aid in the escape of a prisoner!

That he was gone however, was a fact. There was no disputing that.

But If it were a fact that he had made his escape, it was equally true, that he could not have gone very far, and the community were not in the humor to let such a desperate character as he was now known to be, escape without making a strenuous effort to recapture him.

The execution of the two who had been sentenced to die at the same time, was delayed for a

few days in the hope of learning from them, the places where Flint would most probably fly to, but they maintained a sullen silence on the subject.

They then applied to Jones Bradley with, at first, no better result. But when Henry Billings, who was one of those appointed to visit him, happened to allude to the strange fate of Hellena Rosenthall, he hesitated a moment, and then said he knew where the girl was, and that she had been captured by Captain Flint, and kept in close confinement by him.

He had no wish he said to betray his old commander, though he knew that he had been treated badly by him, but he would like to save the young woman.

Captain Flint might be in the same place, but if he was, he thought that he would kill the girl sooner than give her up.

If Captain Flint, was not there, the only ones in the cave besides the girl, were a squaw, and Captain Flint's negro boy, Bill.

For the sake of the girl Bradley said he would guide a party to the cave.

This offer was at once accepted, and a party well armed, headed by young Billings, and guided by Jones Bradley, set out immediately.

CHAPTER XIV.

When Captain Flint made his escape from prison, it naturally enough occurred to him, that the safest place for him for awhile, would be the cave.

In it he thought he could remain in perfect safety, until he should find an opportunity for leaving the country.

The cave, or at least the secret chamber, was unknown to any except his crew, and those who were confined in it.

On leaving the cave, the last time, with a heartlessness worthy a demon, he had barred the entrance to the cavern on the outside, so as to render it impossible for those confined there to escape in that direction.

In fact, he had, be supposed, buried them alive—left them to die of hunger.

Captain Flint reached the entrance of the cave in safety, and found everything as he had left it.

On reaching the inner chamber where he had left the two women and the negro boy, he was startled to find the place apparently deserted, while all was in total darkness, except where a few rays found their way through the crevices of the rocks.

He called the names first of one, and then another, but the only answer he received was the echo of his own voice.

How was this? could they be all sleeping or dead?

They certainly could not have made their escape, for the fastenings were all as he had left them.

The means of striking fire were at hand, and a lamp was soon lighted.

He searched the cave, but could discover no trace of the missing ones.

A strange horror came over him, such as he had never felt before.

The stillness oppressed him; no living enemy could have inspired him with the fear he now felt from being alone in this gloomy cavern.

"I must leave this place," he said, "I would rather be in prison than here."

Again he took up the lamp, and went round the cave, but more this time in hopes of finding some weapon to defend himself with, in case he should be attacked, than with the hope of discovering the manner in which those he had left there had contrived to make their escape.

It had been his custom, lately, on leaving the cavern, to take his weapons with him, not knowing what use might be made of them by the women under the provocation, to which they were sometimes subjected.

The only weapon he could find was a large dagger. This he secured, and was preparing to leave the cavern, when he thought he saw something moving in one corner.

In order to make sure that he had not been mistaken, he approached the place.

It was a corner where a quantity of skins had been thrown, and which it had not been convenient for him to remove, when he left the cavern.

Thinking that one of these skins might be of service to him in the life he would be obliged to live for some time, he commenced sorting them over, for the purpose of finding one that would answer his purpose, when a figure suddenly sprang up from the pile.

It would be hard to tell which of the two was the more frightened.

"Dat you, massa," at length exclaimed the familiar voice of Black Bill. "I tought it was de debil come back agin to carry me off."

"What, is that you, Bill?" said Flint, greatly relieved, and glad to find some one who could explain the strange disappearance of Hellena and Lightfoot.

"Where are the rest, Bill?" he asked; "where's the white girl and the Indian woman?"

"Debble carry dim off," said Bill.

"What do you mean, you black fool?" said his master; "if you don't tell me where they've gone, I'll break your black skull for you."

"Don't know where dar gone," said Bill, tremblingly, "Only know dat de debble take dem away."

Flint finding that he was not likely to get anything out of the boy by frightening him, now changed his manner, saying;

"Never mind, Bill, let's hear all about it."

The boy reassured, now told his master that the night before while he was lying awake near the pile of skins and the women were asleep, he saw the walls of the cavern divide and a figure holding a blazing torch such as he had never seen before, enter the room.

"I tought," said Bill, "dat it was de debble comin' arter you agin, massa, and I was 'fraid he would take me along, so I crawled under de skins, but I made a hole so dat I could watch what he was doin'."

"He looked all round a spell for you, massa, an' when he couldn't find you, den he went were de women was sleepin' an' woke dem up and made dem follow him.

"Den da called me and looked all ober for me an' couldn't find me, an' de debble said he couldn't wait no longer, an' dat he would come for me annudder time, An den de walls opened agin, an' da all went true togedder. When I heard you in de cave, massa, I tought it was de debble come agin to fetch me, an' so I crawled under de skins agin."

From this statement of the boy, Flint come to the conclusion that Bill must have been too much frightened at the time to know what was actually taking place.

One thing was certain, and that was the prisoners had escaped, and had been aided in their escape by some persons, to him unknown, in a most strange and mysterious manner.

Over and over again he questioned Black Bill, but every time with the same result.

The boy persisted in the statement, that he saw the whole party pass out through an opening in the walls of the cavern.

That they had not passed out through the usual entrance was evident, for he found everything as he had left it.

Again he examined the walls of the cavern, only to be again baffled and disappointed.

He began to think that may be after all, the cavern was under a spell of enchantment, and that the women had actually been carried off in the manner described by the negro.

The boy was evidently honest in his statement, believing that he was telling nothing that was not true.

But be all this as it might, the mere presence of a human being, even though a poor negro boy, was sufficient to enable him to shake off the feeling of loneliness and fear, with which he was oppressed upon entering the cavern.

He now determined to remain in the cavern for a short time.

Long enough at least to make a thorough examination of the place, before taking his departure.

This determination of Captain Flint's was by no means agreeable to the negro boy.

Bill was anxious to leave the cave, and by that means escape the clutches of the devil, who was in the habit of frequenting it.

He endeavored to induce Flint to change his resolution by assuring him that he had heard the devil say that he was coming after him. But the captain only laughed at the boy, and he was compelled to remain.

CHAPTER XV.

For several days after the departure of Captain Flint, the inmates of the cavern felt no uneasiness at his absence; but when day after day passed, until more than a week had elapsed without his making his appearance they began to be alarmed.

It had uniformly been the practice of Captain Flint on leaving the cave, to give Lightfoot charges to remain there until his return, and not to allow any one to enter, or pass out during his absence.

This charge she had strictly obeyed.

Singularly enough he had said nothing about it the last time. This, however, made no difference with Lightfoot, for if she thought of it at all, she supposed that he had forgotten it. Still she felt no disposition to disobey his commands, although her feelings towards him, since his late brutal treatment had very much changed.

But their provisions were giving out, and to remain in the cavern much longer, they must starve to death. Lightfoot therefore resolved to go in search of the means of preventing such a catastrophe, leaving the others to remain in the cave until her return.

On attempting to pass out, she found to her horror that the way was barred against her from the outside.

In fact, they were buried alive!

In vain she endeavored to force her way out. The entrance had been too well secured.

There seemed to be no alternative but to await patiently the return of the captain.

Failing in that, they must starve to death!

Their supply of provisions was not yet quite exhausted, and they immediately commenced putting themselves on short allowance, hoping by that means to make them last until relief should come.

While the two women were sitting together, talking over the matter, and endeavoring to comfort each other, Hellena noticing the plain gold ring on the finger of Lightfoot, that had been placed there by Captain Flint during her quarrel with the Indian, asked to be allowed to look at it.

On examining the ring, she at once recognized it as the one worn by her lost lover.

Her suspicions in regard to Flint were now fully confirmed. She was satisfied that he was in some way concerned in the sudden disappearance of the missing man.

Could it be possible that he had been put out of the way by this villain, who, for some reason unknown to any but himself, was now desirous of disposing of her also?

The thought filled her with horror.

That night the two women retired to rest as usual. It was a long time before sleep came to their relief. But it came at last.

The clock which the pirates had hung in the cave, struck twelve, when Hellena started from her slumber with a suppressed cry, for the figure she had seen in the vision many nights ago, stood bending over her! But now it looked more like a being of real flesh and blood, than a spectre. And when it spoke to her, saying, "has the little paleface maiden forgotten; no, no!" she recognized in the intruder, her old friend the Indian chief, Fire Cloud.

Hellena, the feelings of childhood returning, sprang up, and throwing her arms around the old chief, exclaimed:

"Save me, no, no, save me!"

Lightfoot was by this time awake also, and on her feet. To her the appearance of the chief

seemed a matter of no surprise. Not that she had expected anything of the kind, but she looked upon the cave as a place of enchantment, and she believed that the spirits having it in charge, could cause the walls to open and close again at pleasure. And she recognized Fire Cloud as one of the chiefs of her own tribe. He was also a descendant of one of its priests, and was acquainted with all the mysteries of the cavern.

He told the prisoners that he had come to set them at liberty, and bade them follow.

They had got everything for their departure, when they observed for the first time that Black Bill was missing.

They could not think of going without him, leaving him there to perish, but the cavern was searched for him in vain. His name was called to no better purpose, till they were at last compelled to go without him, the chief promising to return and make another search for him, all of which was heard by the negro from his hiding place under the pile of skins as related in the preceding chapter.

The chief, to the surprise of Hellena, instead of going to what might be called the door of the cavern, went to one of the remote corners, and stooping down, laid hold of a projection of rock, and gave it a sudden pressure, when a portion of the wall moved aside, disclosing a passage, till then unknown to all except Fire Cloud himself. It was one of the contrivances of the priests of the olden time, for the purpose of imposing upon the ignorant and superstitious multitude.

On passing through this opening, which the chief carefully closed after him, the party entered a narrow passageway, leading they could not see where, nor how far.

The Indian led the way, carrying his torch, and assisting them over the difficulties of the way, when assistance was required.

Thus he led them on, over rocks, and precipices, sometimes the path widening until it might be called another cavern, and then again becoming so narrow as to only allow one to pass at a time.

Thus they journeyed on for the better part of a mile, when they suddenly came to a full stop. Further progress appeared to be impossible.

It seemed to Hellena that nothing short of an enchanter's wand could open the way for them now, when Fire Cloud, going to the end of the passage, gave a large slab which formed the wall a push on the lower part, causing it to rise as if balanced by pivots at the center, and making an opening through which the party passed, finding themselves in the open air, with the stars shining brightly overhead.

As soon as they had passed out the rock swung back again, and no one unacquainted with the fact, would have supposed that common looking rock to be the door of the passage leading to the mysterious cavern.

The place to which they now came, was a narrow valley between the mountains.

Pursuing their journey up this valley, they came to a collection of Indian wigwams, and here they halted, the chief showing them into his own hut, which was one of the group.

Another time, it would have alarmed Hellena Rosenthral to find herself in the wilderness surrounded by savages.

But now, although among savages far away from home, without a white face to look upon, she felt a degree of security, she had long been a stranger to.

In fact she felt that the Indians under whose protection she now found herself, were far more human, far less cruel, than the demon calling himself a white man, out of whose hands she had so fortunately escaped.

For once since her capture, her sleep was quiet, and refreshing.

CHAPTER XVI.

Black Bill, on leaving the captain, after having vainly endeavored to persuade him to leave the cave, crawled in to his usual place for passing the night, but not with the hope of forgetting his troubles in sleep.

He was more firmly than ever impressed with the idea that the cavern was the resort of the Devil and his imps, and that they would certainly return for the purpose of carrying off his master. To this he would have no objection, did he not fear that they might nab him also, in

order to keep his master company.

So when everything was perfectly still in the cavern excepting the loud breathing of the captain, which gave evidence of his being fast asleep, the negro crept cautiously out of the recess, where he had thrown himself down, and moved noiselessly to the place where the captain was lying.

Having satisfied himself that his master was asleep, he went to the table, and taking the lamp that was burning there, he moved towards the entrance of the cave. This was now fastened only on the inside, and the fastening could be easily removed.

In a few moments Black Bill was at liberty.

As soon as he felt himself free from the cave, he gave vent to a fit of boisterous delight, exclaiming. "Hah! hah! hah! Now de debile may come arter massa Flint as soon as he please, he ain't a goun to ketch dis chile, I reckon. Serb de captain right for trowin my fadder in de sea.

"Hah! hah! hah! he tink I forgit all dat. I guess he fin out now."

Thus he went on until the thought seeming to strike him that he might be overheard, and pursued, he stopped all at once, and crept further into the forest and as he thought further out of the reach of the devil.

The morning had far advanced when captain Flint awoke from his slumber.

He knew this from the few sunbeams that found their way through a crevice in the rocks at one corner of the cave.

With this exception the place was in total darkness, for the lamp as we have said had been carried off by the negro.

"Hello, there, Bill, you black imp," shouted the captain, "bring a light."

But Bill made no answer, although the command was several times repeated.

At last, Flint, in a rage, sprang up, and seizing a raw hide which he always kept handy for such emergencies, he went to the sleeping place of the negro, and struck a violent blow on the place where Bill ought to have been, but where Bill was not.

The captain started. "Has he, too, escaped me?" he exclaimed.

Flint went back, and for a few moments sat down by the table in silence. After awhile the horror at being alone in such a gloomy place, once more came over him.

"Who knows," he thought, "but this black imp may betray me into the hands of my enemies. Even he, should he be so disposed, has it in his power to come at night, and by fastening the entrance of the cavern on the outside, bury me alive!"

So Flint reasoned, and so reasoning, made up his mind to leave the cavern.

Flint had barely passed beyond the entrance of the cave, when he heard the sound of approaching footsteps. He crouched under the bushes in order to watch and listen.

He saw a party of six men approaching, all fully armed excepting one, who seemed to be a guide to the rest.

Flint fairly gnashed his teeth with rage as he recognised in this man his old associate—Jones Bradley.

The whole party halted at a little distance from the entrance to the cave, where Bradley desired them to remain while he should go and reconnoitre.

He had reached the entrance, had made a careful examination of everything about it, and was in the act of turning to make his report, when Flint sprang upon him from the bushes, saying, "So it's you, you traitor, who has betrayed me," at the same moment plunging his dagger in the breast of Bradley, who fell dead at his feet.

In the next moment the pirate was flying through the forest. Several shots were fired at him, but without any apparent effect.

The whole party started in pursuit. But the pirate having the advantage of a start and a better knowledge of the ground, was soon hidden from view in the intricacies of the forest.

Still the party continued their pursuit, led now by Henry Billings.

As the pirate did not return the fire of his pursuers, it was evident that his only weapon was the dagger with which he had killed the unfortunate Bradley.

For several hours they continued their search, but all to no purpose, and they were about to give it up for the present, when one of them stumbled, and fell over something buried in the grass, when up sprang Black Bill, who had hidden there on hearing the approach of the party.

"Lookin' arter massa Flint?" asked the boy, as soon as he had discovered that he was among friends.

"Yes; can you tell us which way he has gone?" asked Billings.

"Gone dat way, and a-runnin' as if de debble was arter him, an' I guess he is, too."

The party set off in the direction pointed out, the negro following.

After going about half a mile, they were brought to a full stop by a precipice over which the foremost one of the party was near falling.

As they came to the brink they thought they heard a whine and a low growl, as of a wild animal in distress.

Looking into the ravine, a sight met their gaze, which caused them to shrink back with horror.

At the bottom of the ravine lay the body of the man of whom they were in pursuit, but literally torn to pieces.

Beside the body crouched an enormous she bear, apparently dying from wounds she had received from an encounter with the men.

Could his worst enemy have wished him a severe punishment?

"De debble got him now," said Black Bill, and the whole party took their way back to the cave.

On their way back, Billings learned from the negro that Hellena in company with Lightfoot, had left the cave several days previous to their coming. Where they had gone he could not tell.

He was so possessed with the idea they had been spirited away by the devil, or some one of his imps in the shape of an enormous Indian, that they thought he must have been frightened out of his wits.

Billings was at a loss what course to take, but he had made up his mind not to return to the city, until he had learned something definite in relation to the fate of his intended bride.

In all probability, she was at some one of the Indian villages belonging to some of the tribes occupying that part of the country.

For this purpose he embarked again in the small vessel in which he had come up the river, intending to proceed a short distance further up, for the purpose of consulting an old chief who, with his family, occupied a small island situated there.

He had proceeded but a short distance when he saw a large fleet of canoes approaching.

Supposing them to belong to friendly Indians, Billings made no attempt to avoid them, and his boat was in a few moments surrounded by the savages.

At first the Indians appeared to be perfectly friendly, offering to trade and, seeming particularly anxious to purchase fire-arms.

This aroused the suspicions of the white men, and they commenced endeavoring to get rid of their troublesome visitors, when to their astonishment, they were informed that they were prisoners!

Billings was surprised to find that the Indians, after securing their prisoners, instead of starting up the river again, continued their course down the stream.

But what he learned shortly after from one of the Indians, who spoke English tolerably well, astonished him still more. And that was, that he was taken for the notorious pirate Captain Flint, of whose escape they had heard from some of their friends recently from the city, and they thought that nothing would please their white brethren so much as to bring him back captive.

It was to no purpose that Billings endeavored to convince them of their mistake. They only shook their heads, as much as to say it was of no use, they were not to be so easily imposed upon.

And so Billings saw there was no help for it but to await patiently his arrival at New York,

when all would be set right again.

But in the meantime Hellena might be removed far beyond his reach.

CHAPTER XVII.

Great was the mortification in the city upon learning the mistake they had made.

Where they had expected to receive praise and a handsome reward for having performed a meritorious action, they obtained only censure and reproaches for meddling in matters that did not concern them.

It was only a mistake however, and there was no help for it. And Billings, although greatly vexed and disappointed, saw no course left for him but to set off again, although he feared that the chances of success were greatly against him this time, on account of the time that had been lost.

The Indians, whose unfortunate blunder had been the cause of this delay, in order to make some amends for the wrong they had done him, now came forward, and offered to aid him in his search for the missing maiden.

They proffered him the use of their canoes to enable him to ascend the streams, and to furnish guides, and an escort to protect him while traveling through the country.

This offer, so much better than he had any reason to expect, was gladly accepted by Billings, and with two friends who had volunteered to accompany him, he once more started up the river, under the protection of his new friends.

War had broken out among the various tribes on the route which he must travel, making it unsafe for him and his two companions, even under such a guide and escort as his Indian friends could furnish them.

Thus he with his two associates were detained so long in the Indian country, that by their friends at home they were given up as lost.

At last peace was restored, and they set out on their return.

The journey home was a long and tedious one, but nothing occurred worth narrating.

Upon reaching the Hudson, they employed an Indian to take them the remainder of the way in a canoe.

Upon reaching Manhattan Island, the first place they stopped at was the residence of Carl Rosenthall, Billings intending that the father of Hellena should be the first to hear the sad story of his failure and disappointment.

It was evening when he arrived at the house and the lamps were lighted in the parlor.

With heavy heart and trembling hands he rapped at the door.

As the door opened he uttered a faint cry of surprise, which was answered by a similar one by the person who admitted him. It was Hellena herself!

The scene that followed we shall not attempt to describe.

CHAPTER XVIII.

At about the same time that Henry Billings, under the protection of his Indian friends, set out on his last expedition up the river, a single canoe with four persons in it, put out from under the shadow of Old Crow Nest, on its way down the stream.

The individual by whom the canoe was directed was an Indian, a man somewhat advanced in years. The others were a white girl, an Indian woman, and a negro boy.

In short, the party consisted of Fire Cloud, Hellena Rosenthall, Lightfoot, and Black Bill, on their way to the city.

They had passed the fleet of canoes in which Billings had embarked, but not knowing whether it belonged to a party of friendly Indians or otherwise.

Fire Cloud had avoided coming in contact with it for fear of being delayed, or of the party

being made prisoners and carried back again.

Could they have but met, what a world of trouble would it not have saved to all parties interested!

As it was, Hellena arrived in safety, greatly to the delight of her father and friends, who had long mourned for her as for one they never expected to see again in this world.

The sum of Hellena's happiness would now have been complete, had it not been for the dark shadow cast over it by the absence of her lover.

And this shadow grew darker, and darker, as weeks, and months, rolled by without bringing any tidings of the missing one.

What might have been the effects of the melancholy into which she was fast sinking, it is hard to tell, had not the unexpected return of the one for whose loss she was grieving, restored her once more to her wonted health and spirits.

And here we might lay down our pen, and call our story finished, did we not think that justice to the reader, required that we should explain some things connected with the mysterious, cavern not yet accounted for.

How the Indian entered the cave on the night when Hellena fancied she had seen a ghost, and how she made her escape, has been explained, but we have not yet explained how the noises were produced which so alarmed the pirates.

It will be remembered that the sleeping place of Black Bill was a recess in the wall of the cavern.

Now in the wall, near the head of the negro's bed, there was a deep fissure or crevice. It happened that Bill while lying awake one night, to amuse himself, put his mouth to the crevice and spoke some words, when to his astonishment, what he had said, was repeated over and over, again.

Black Bill in his ignorance and simplicity, supposed that the echo, which came back, was an answer from some one on the other side of the wall.

Having made this discovery, he repeated the experiment a number of times, and always with the same result.

After awhile, he began to ask questions of the spirit, as he supposed it to be, that had spoken to him.

Among other things he asked if the devil was coming after master.

The echo replied, "The debil comin' after master," and repeated it a great many times.

Bill now became convinced that it was the devil himself that he had been talking to.

On the night when the pirates were so frightened by the fearful groan, Bill was lying awake, listening to the captain's story. When he came to the part where he describes the throwing the boy's father overboard, and speaks of the horrible groan, Bill put his mouth to the crevice, and imitated the groan, which had been too deeply fixed in his memory ever to be forgotten, giving full scope to his voice.

The effect astonished and frightened him as well as the pirates.

With the same success he imitated the Indian war-whoop, which he had learned while among the savages.

The next time that the pirates were so terribly frightened, the alarm was caused by Fire Cloud after his visit to the cave on the occasion that he had been taken for the devil by Bill, and an Indian ghost by Hellena.

Fire Cloud had remained in another chamber of the cavern connected with the secret passage already described, and where the echo was even more wonderful than the one pronounced from the opening through which the negro had spoken.

Here he could hear all that was passing in the great chamber occupied by the pirates, and from this chamber the echoes were to those who did not understand their cause, perfectly frightful.

All these peculiarities of the cavern had been known to the ancient Indian priests or medicine men, and by them made use of to impose on their ignorant followers.

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