

The Cruiser of the Mist

J. H. Ingraham

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The Cruiser of the Mist

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CHAPTER I. THE HALF BROTHERS.

On one of those brilliant mornings peculiar to the early autumnal days, when the atmosphere is like crystal in transparency, and the skies are turgid with their deepest blue, two persons stood together upon an eminence that commanded the Bay of Raritan and a wide expanse of the ocean horizon to the eastward.

They were both young men, though there was two or three years difference in their ages. The junior had scarcely passed his nineteenth year. He was a youth of a delicate appearance, with beauty of feature and person almost feminine. His figure was slender and elegant, and his air was gentle and confiding. There was a world of soul speaking from the depths of his large blue eyes, and every movement of his fine mouth betrayed the most exquisite sensibility. His hair was of a bright shining brown, and was worn free from the scissors' profanation, about his white neck, its rich masses mocking the proudest tresses of the fairest maiden. The hands were exquisitely formed and like pliant ivory. Upon one of the fingers sparkled a diamond, the only ornament he wore. Notwithstanding the delicacy of his appearance, and the extreme fairness and beauty of his countenance, there was in his look an expression of decision, a certain air of resolution, that indicated a great and noble spirit. His effeminacy seemed to be on the outer side only, to lay in that which nature had made him, rather than in any deficiency of manly character. It was a house of beauty, in which dwelt the soul of a hero.

His companion was taller and of more imposing stature and aspect. He was about one-and-twenty, but with the physical development of a man two or three years older. His complexion, unlike that of the youth, was dark, his eyes black and full of restless fire, and his air and looks spirited and daring. In legitimate beauty of aspect, he was not surpassed by the other, though his face was as brown as a gypsy's, and his hair as raven black as that of a young Indian chieftain; and, indeed, he not a little resembled in aspect and bearing a Logan or an Osceola.

Both of the young men were clad in suits of mourning. The place upon which they were standing was a slight eminence at the extremity of the grounds of a country seat which was partly visible through the trees in their rear. To their right, not far distant, was visible the picturesque town of Perth Amboy, with its rural spire, and to their left stretched away northward the straits that separate Staten Island from the Jersey main. Opposite was the woodcrowned cape of the island, and passing it, the eye took in the range of Raritan Bay, and the sparkling sea

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beyond Sandy Hook. The rich beauty of the early morning, the dark green shores of the vast island on the other side of the channel; the lively landscape of town and hamlet, villa and farmhouse; the shining waters of the flowing river that mingled its wave with those of the bay at their feet; the fisher's skiff glancing by; the distant sail; the sea-gull with flashing wing; all contributed to draw forth the heart's best emotions in manifestation of gratitude and delight.

But the countenances of the two young men were troubled. The younger stood pensively leaning against an old oak that overshadowed the verdant spot where they were, while the latter, with folded arms and dark brow, paced to and fro a few feet from him.

At length the former, raising his beautiful eyes, filled with sadness and anxiety, spoke:

"My dear Randolph, this grief, nay this anger on your part is wholly unnecessary. I am willing to share with you half of the patrimony!"

"You are kind, kind and noble, brother, like yourself; but I cannot accept it. Nay hear me. I cannot accept from you that which is by right mine own. Against you I have no anger no ill feeling. Although we have different mothers, we are children of the same father, and are brothers. I do not blame you. I only blame, aye if I dared curse her who "

"Randolph! do not curse! Forget not that she is my mother!" cried the youth, placing his jewelled forefinger upon his brother's lips.

"I will not curse her for your sake, Arthur! But *you* know how deeply I am wronged!"

"I know it, Randolph; I feel for you, and I repeat to you that I am ready to do you that justice which you have been denied!"

"Justice should have been extended to wards me by my weak, misguided father. But I will not speak thus bitterly lest I curse my father also. But Arthur, this is a grief heavy to bear a disappointment I was little prepared to meet, though I might have foreseen it from my knowledge of the ambitious and avaricious spirit of my stepmother!"

"She is my *mother*, brother!"

"True, true! I will not speak ill of her before your gentle ears, Arthur!"

Thus speaking, he once more resumed his walk at the foot of the oak, grief and resentment struggling together in his expressive face. Arthur watched his looks with deep solicitude, but suffered him to pursue in silence his stern and troubled thoughts.

The father of these two young men belonged to one of the oldest American families which had been for a century distinguished for its opulence and patriotism. Their grandfather, Colonel Ledyard, was a distinguished officer of the revolution, and was slain at the capture of a redoubt which he had bravely defended to the last extremity. Their father, General Ledyard, but a few weeks before the opening of this story, at the close of the war of 1812, had returned to his estate near Perth Amboy, crowned with honors and with a distinguished military reputation.

Although a brave man and a skilful soldier, he possessed a weakness which converted his household into a scene of unhappiness. Early in life he had wedded a young and beautiful woman, nearly allied by blood to Leni Lenape, a celebrated chief of the Six Nations, being the daughter of Sir Harold Howe, who had married this chief's daughter. Randolph was the issue of this union. A year after his birth his mother died, and in two years afterwards General Ledyard married a lady of distinguished beauty, but of a proud and ambitious spirit. She had birth and

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family reputation to recommend her to his notice, but was almost without a bridal portion. He was fascinated by her beauty, and she by his wealth. It was a union on one side of interest, on the other of infatuation. At length the wife became a mother. From this hour all the ambition of her nature was awakened in behalf of her own child, and by the aid of a deep and well arranged scheme she succeeded in withdrawing the affection of the father from his first-born, and fixing it upon the second boy. Being a woman of a strong mind, and possessed of infinite tact and subtlety, she was not long in gaining that ascendancy over the mind of her infatuated husband, which placed her at once in the throne of domestic rule. Randolph was sent away to a boarding-school before he was in his seventh year, and all the affections and attentions of the parents were lavished upon Arthur. His wonderful beauty endeared him still more to his father, while each day the image of his eldest child faded more and more from his memory.

General Ledyard was not, however, wholly lost to that parental regard which nature called upon him to bestow upon his absent child. Once a year Randolph was brought home to remain during the Christmas holidays; and the general firmly insisted on this privilege for the supplanted boy, although in opposition to the wishes of his wife. These visits of the young Randolph were seasons of great joy to him. He looked forward to them for months, and loved to remember them long after his return from school. During these visits his father, as if in some atonement for his neglect and injustice, took pains to contribute all in his power to his happiness; and although his step-mother did not conceal her dislike to his presence, he managed to enjoy his vacations; for so long as his father smiled upon him, he little heeded the frowning brows of his wife. He therefore remembered the one with dislike, the other with love; for he was not yet old enough to see and understand the injustice done him by his misguided father. On these occasional visits he formed a strong and abiding attachment for the little Arthur, who unconsciously was supplanting his brother in the regard of his father. The child loved him in return with a pure and touching affection; and thus they grew up friends and brothers, bound together by ties of the tenderest affection.

Years passed on, and Randolph was sent to college, while Arthur remained at home under the charge of tutors. Randolph graduated with honor, and returned to his father's roof. It was just before the close of the war with England, and his father was still in the army, though daily expected to return.

The reception of the young heir at Lenape manor was cold and repulsive on the part of his step-mother; but as this was what Randolph looked for from her, it did not distress him. Arthur received him with open arms, and the tenderest expressions of fraternal affection. Randolph was now in his twenty-first year, and just entering the world as a man, and fitted by education to act his part upon its stage with honor. He was now fully capable of viewing his own attitude in his father's house, and clearly comprehending the secret motive which had banished him from childhood from his paternal halls. Yet he loved Arthur no less, nor felt less attachment to his father, whose weakness he saw had thus exiled him from those joys of home which Arthur alone had shared. Towards his brother he harbored none but the kindest feelings. He loved him, aside from all this, and he felt he could never cease to love him. He knew that he was innocent of his father's estrangement towards himself, and he well knew the generous and noble attributes of his head and heart. There was no spirit of rivalry, no envy, no suspicion in his breast towards him. All his hostility was directed towards her whom he was well aware was the proper object of his reproaches and resentment. Towards his father he entertained the same affection and respect which had grown up with him from childhood; and while he censured him for his weakness in submitting to his wife's rule, he loved and honored him for the kindness which he had shown him when he visited home, and for the indulgences which he bestowed upon him during the period of his stay at the university.

Randolph had been a few days at home, in the enjoyment of the society of his brother Arthur, whom he loved for his beauty and gentleness with the tenderness of a brother for a sister, when one evening as he was waiting for Arthur to join him in a row upon the water, a servant appeared and said that Arthur could not come.

"Is he ill?" asked Randolph with quick affection.

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"I think he is not; but he bade me say he was engaged."

"This is singular, when he proposed the sail himself. I will go in and see him!"

Thus speaking, Randolph re-entered the house and hastened to his brother's room. The door was locked. He called to him, and at first received no reply; at length Arthur answered and bade him "go away and not disturb him, but to sail alone if he wished to sail!"

Such a reply from his beloved brother he had never before received; and he was struck with amazement.

"Arthur, can it be possible that is your voice?" he cried with a tone that expressed eloquently his surprise.

"Yes, sir. I do not wish to go with you. Do not annoy me!"

Randolph knew not what to make of this conduct in one who had been hitherto all affection towards him. He was about to give some angry reply, when he checked himself, silently walked through the hall to the terrace and took his way at a quick step towards the water-side. He felt more grief than anger. He wondered wherein he had offended his brother. There was a path by the shore, shady and retired, into which he turned his steps. It was a favorite walk both of Arthur and himself. Here he paced to and fro till twilight, revolving in his mind his conduct, recalling his words and actions, to ascertain how he had drawn upon himself his brother's resentment; for the displeasure of those we love and who have loved us, is the deepest grief the heart can bear. In this examination he acquitted himself.

"I will see Arthur! I will demand an explanation! I will know what I have done; and if I have offended, I will ask his forgiveness! I cannot endure this suspense!"

With this resolution he hastened towards the house. Before he had gone twenty steps, he saw his brother walking with his mother in a retired path. They seemed to be closely engaged in conversation. She was leaning upon his arm. The shadows of the trees near him shielded him from their observation; and they advanced towards the spot where he stood. He withdrew to a covert of laurels, for he did not come to meet Arthur, except when he was alone.

"I will let them pass on, and when they separate I will speak to my brother," he said, as he stepped back from the walk.

They came nearer, walking slowly. Madame Ledyard was a tall and stately woman, with a queenly look, and a face still of great beauty; but its expression was cold and haughty, and full of worldliness. Her ambitious and selfish character was stamped indelibly amid the lines of beauty. They came nearer, so that he could now hear their words. Her face was flushed, and wore an angry air, while his was pale, and bore an expression of deep sorrow and pain. He was listening to her with anxious attention.

"There is nothing, my son, but such guarded treatment towards him, that will save your life. You cannot be blind to his hypocrisy. He assumes the garb of love that he may hold you in his grasp when he would. He knows that you are loved better than himself, and his fiery soul seeks revenge upon you. It was for this that he invites you upon the water. It is the easiest thing for a boat to upset and to call it accident!"

"My dear mother, this suspicion, I again repeat, is unworthy of Randolph. He is noble and true. I asked him to go on the water not he me! I know he loves me sincerely. He cannot hate me merely because our father loves me most. I will love him instead of my father's love. All you say only weakens my suspicions and fears. I am sorry I spoke to him as I did when he came for me. But your story of his duplicities was just ended, and impressed my mind with horror. You are deceived in him, my dearest mother! Randolph is incapable of any wrong towards me;

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and as soon as he returns to the shore, I will cast myself into his arms, and ask his forgiveness!"

"Arthur, you will offend me! You are as vacillating as the wind. What changes your opinion, when, an hour ago, you believed all I told you?"

"Your assertions made since, have each one served to weaken your first general statement of my brother's desire to take my life. It was I that proposed to go a gunning yesterday; it was I that proposed the sail this evening; it was I that wished to mount the young horse that threw me, while Randolph would have deterred me from backing him. You do not love my brother, dear mother, and you easily think evil of him!"

"Well, you will find yourself in peril yet through too much confidence in this fierce and revengeful young man, Arthur. It is at the risk of my displeasure that you associate with him again. The general will be at home in a day or two, and I hope then he will have something to do, besides plot your death!"

"I do not believe Randolph has any evil thought against me, dear mother!" cried Arthur, warmly.

"Bless you, Arthur, my noble Arthur, for that word!" exclaimed Randolph, suddenly appearing before them.

The two brothers rushed into each others arms.

"Forgive me, Randolph!"

"Freely! I have overheard all that you have said in my defence. And you, madam, I also forgive," he said, turning and fixing upon her pale face his deep penetrating glance, "when you can forgive yourself!"

"Arthur, come with me," commanded his step-mother, her voice trembling with rage.

"Randolph, are we friends again?" said the youth in a low tone, grasping his hand.

"Yes, *brother!* I do not blame you! I know where the evil influence works. I only grieve, dear Arthur, that you should have suspected me!"

"Never would I have accused you from any other lips than my dear mother's! I am sorry she does not love you. It shall be my sweet task to undeceive her respecting you, my brother. From this hour "

"*We are* brothers," emphatically responded Randolph, as he pressed Arthur's hand between his own.

CHAPTER II. THE SUBTLE STEP-MOTHER.

The same evening General Ledyard reached home. He met Randolph with the same frank affection with which he embraced Arthur. He gazed upon the former with parental pride, as his heart bore testimony to his manly person and noble air. He felt proud of him as his son. These looks of regard were not unnoticed by Madam Ledyard. They deepened her hostility to the young man, and she resolved that she would seek his destruction, that Arthur might not only share all his father's love, but be also the heir to his property. She was not satisfied that he should inherit one half of it; her cupidity grasped at the whole. It vexed her that his father should entertain towards him the least regard, and she determined to destroy in his bosom, if possible to do so, the remaining traces of his love for him. The two brothers at length retired from the drawing room. Their father bade to each the same kindly good night. For a few moments after they departed, both were silent; at length the general spoke:

"How finely Randolph looks. He is really a noble-looking young man. I can see his mother's air about him! He

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seems to be very fond of Arthur, and Arthur of him. I am glad to see it. They have been much separated, and now they are getting to the years of manhood, they should bind their hearts together!"

"It were better they should be as little with each other as possible," said Madam Ledyard imperatively.

"Why so? Nay, I am glad that Randolph has returned, that Arthur may have a companion. I have lately reflected a good deal upon our neglect of him for so many years, and "

"Neglect? Pray, sir, how have you neglected him? Has he not been to the best schools? Have you ever stinted him in expenses? Has he not passed through the university at a cost of full five thousand dollars out of your purse. Has he not been richly clothed, had horses, and even hounds, and all else that a young man could require? Instead of neglect, you had better say indulgence, General Ledyard! If you had taken my advice, and kept him under more, he would have been better than he is now!"

"Better? Is he not upright and honorable?" demanded the general with surprise.

"Yes, I dare say, so far as his word and money matters are concerned. But "

"But what, my dear wife! You seem to mean something, you hesitate to speak!"

"Well, I will not hesitate. Have you forgotten your love for Arthur?"

"No. He is very dear to me?"

"He is not so dear as this fiery Randolph."

"Nay, he is more so. This you well know."

"Yet you did not speak in praise of Arthur as he went out, but must commend your eldest son's looks and air!"

"Because I have not seen Randolph in eighteen months before, and the change in him has been striking; while it is not three months since I was last at home and saw Arthur. Besides he is always beautiful in my eyes. To praise him is to waste words!"

"I am glad to hear you say so!"

"The boy is very dear to me! yes, far dearer than Randolph, who, as you say, is over fiery."

"Randolph never loved or respected me!"

"For this I do not like him, as you well know."

"But I should not mind this so much, if he loved our dear child!"

"Loved Arthur?"

"Yes."

"They are very fondly attached to one another!"

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"It is only on one side. Arthur in his confidence and good temper, idolizes his unworthy brother. Randolph only assumes a love he never did feel, and never can feel!"

"Is this possible?" demanded General Ledyard with surprise.

Yes, you know how Randolph has been put away, though the eldest, because *I* would not have my child to be domineered over by him. Well, now that he is of age, and can observe for himself, he understands his position, and feels that Arthur is preferred before him in both of our affections. His spirit is goaded by this reflection, and he has resolved that he will avenge himself upon his half-brother for his fancied wrongs. He therefore feigns a love for him, humors him, flatters him, and in every way tries to ingratiate himself into his favor. His object is wholly to lull suspicion both in him and us, and by-and-by take his opportunity to put him out of the way by a sudden death, that shall seem to the world to be accidental!"

"Can this horrible idea have ever been conceived by him?" cried General Ledyard, rising from his chair in great amazement.

"Yes, and he only waits a suitable occasion for accomplishing his purpose against the unsuspecting boy!"

"If I could believe this if I had evidence of this fact but, it is impossible! I cannot believe Randolph capable of any thing so wicked!"

"You do not know the young man so well as I do!" answered the step-mother very decidedly.

"What proof have you?"

"A mother's watchful fears. I have observed him closely. He tempts him to gun with him, to boat with him, to ride unbroken horses, so that he may in this manner have his death compassed without suspicion to himself!"

"It is incredible. What can he gain by it? Simple revenge, because his brother is most loved, could never arm him with such deadly intent against him. I have heard of one brother slaying another who stood in the way of his patrimony. But Randolph can have no such motive!"

"Randolph is avaricious."

"Avaricious? He is the last person "

"Listen to me," interrupted the lady in an imperative manner; "he is avaricious. He knows that but for your second marriage, he would have been your sole heir. He now has hopes of but half of that which he deems his own. He is, therefore, hostile to me, and full of bitter hatred, disguised under the cloak of affection towards Arthur. By removing him, he becomes your sole heir!"

General Ledyard shook his head. He remained painfully thoughtful.

"I do not see that even this is sufficient motive that so great a murder should be done. I never suspected before, that Randolph was avaricious. Yet it may be so. But even the motive is not sufficient!"

"Love and jealousy added to avarice, I doubt not, you will hold as strong enough motives!"

"Yes! but "

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"Randolph Arthur are both admirers of the beautiful Olive Oglethorpe. Arthur is of course, preferred to his brother. Randolph covers his disappointment and jealousy under the mantle of fraternal affection, but only to strike a dagger to his heart from the covert of its folds!"

"What you say may then possibly be true! But if he is a youth of such dark passions, who is to blame? Has he not been banished by us beyond our care and counsels?"

"Not a word, general! I am surprised you should speak thus upon a matter long since perfectly understood between us. I will not hear one word in defence of Randolph. He must be expelled from your roof ere another sun sets, or I and my child will go!"

"Well, well, if he is the person you represent him "

"If he is! Do you question my word, General Ledyard?"

"No, my dear, not your word, but the facts!"

"The facts are as I have told you. Do you wish to delay till Arthur is brought in and laid at your feet a corpse?"

"I will call Randolph, and have speech with him forthwith. I will learn from his own lips "

"Do you think he will confess? You are certainly very simple, General Ledyard, to think he will be foolish enough to criminate himself!"

"Well, then to-morrow I will send him away. He shall be supplied with money, and depart on his travels!"

"He shall not have money; you have thrown away enough upon him. You will impoverish Arthur by this extravagant expenditure of your income!"

"To-morrow I will see what must be done. I am not very well just now. The wound I received is not yet healed, and troubles me when I am at all excited. To-morrow I shall be rested, and then this matter shall be settled to your satisfaction. Yet I cannot think Randolph "

"Don't talk any more, general, it may make your wound worse. Let it pass till to-morrow. I know then you will do just as I wish!"

"Yes, I have always sought your happiness, Ann, in preference to my own!"

The next morning came, and brought with it illness to the misguided father. The relation he had received from his wife of Randolph's character, had filled him with grief and indignation; while he was troubled with fears for the safety of Arthur, whom he loved as Jacob loved Benjamin. He had never ceased to entertain a certain degree of affection for Randolph; but it was not to be weighed with his tender regard for his youngest born. But when he beheld his elder son in the full stature and beauty of manhood, then his heart expanded with paternal pride, and as he gazed on him, he felt towards him something of that parental emotion which had so long lain dormant in his breast. It was this awakening sensibility that the artful and observing woman had grappled with in its first motions.

The agitation of mind which the intelligence of Randolph's wicked purposes towards his brother, produced in him, with the irritation of his unhealed wound, brought on a fever of an alarming character. The third day it reached its crisis. The symptoms, however, promised unfavorably, and on the fourth day his physicians pronounced him doubtful. It was late at night. The attendants had been sent out of the chamber. Madam Ledyard alone remained.

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She bent over the face of the invalid. He slept but with disturbed slumber. At length he awakened and beheld her.

"Ann, I feel that I am near my end. Send to me my sons!" he said feebly.

She left the chamber. In the anteroom sat two men, one of whom held papers in his hand. As she came near them, one of them rose and said,

"We are both here, Madam. How is the general, now?"

"Failing fast," answered the lady, putting to her eyes a cambric handkerchief. "Have you drawn up the will?"

"Yes, madam. Shall I read it to you?"

"If you please. I would like to know if it is as my husband directed."

"It is as you dictated. I have drawn it up word for word, save a blank for the name."

"That is as I wished. I will listen, if you will read rapidly."

The lawyer, in a low voice, ran over the testamentary document to her.

"It is all right. Remain here until I return."

The subtle woman then departed, and crossed the hall towards Arthur's room. In the passage Randolph met her.

"How fares it with my father, madam?" he inquired, in a voice of deep sympathy and looks of filial anxiety.

"He sleeps, and must not be disturbed. The sound of your footsteps annoy him. You will show your regard for him most by keeping your chamber."

Randolph made no reply, but softly retiring to his apartment, closed the door. She waited until she saw it shut, and then entered the room occupied by Arthur. He was asleep.

"My son, rise up quickly and follow me! Your father asks for you. Make no noise, nor delay!"

Arthur followed her across the hall, and past the two men, whose presence he regarded with surprise.

"They are the lawyer and a witness only, my son."

"Why are they here?"

"Your father wishes to make a will."

"There is no need. My brother and myself share equally his estate."

"Hist! do not speak! Enter with me!"

Arthur beheld his father lying like one just ready to depart. He approached and knelt by his bed-side, and bathed his hand in tears.

"Where is your brother?"

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"He said he cared not to see you," quickly answered Madam Ledyard.

"Randolph said so?" repeated Arthur, with surprise and incredulity.

"Hush, boy! Do not excite your father at such a time!"

"Sent my son such a message to me?"

"He did, general, and very haughtily too!"

"Let me see him. He could not have understood he could not have been himself," cried Arthur, advancing towards the door.

"Nay, if you leave him you will miss your father's blessing. Randolph sent the message by me. Kneel, my son, and receive your father's dying benediction! You see how low he is; his minutes are already numbered."

Arthur knelt again by the pillow. The dying soldier placed his hand upon his head, and blessed him with a few earnest words of prayer. When he had ended, Arthur embraced him tenderly, and then would have hastened from the room to seek his brother; for his soul was shocked by the report of his conduct, and he would see for himself why he should thus treat his father's dying request."

"Remain with me, Arthur. Would you leave me alone with the dying!"

The young man could not answer. He stood in silence gazing upon his father through his tears. Madam Ledyard went out and returned with the two men.

"Who are these?" asked the general, looking upon them.

"They are the attorney and witness."

"Oh, yes! I promised to make a will!"

"You promised me this morning, dear husband, to make a will, leaving me sole executrix. But such is not the will you now must make." (Here Arthur stole unperceived from the chamber.) "Since the treatment you have just received from Randolph, you should exclude him from all possession in the inheritance."

"He deserves it," answered the general with emphasis. "Had the will been so drawn up, I would have signed it!"

"It is so drawn up!" said the woman, with a look of triumph. I knew well how Randolph would treat you, and I had the will worded in favor of Arthur, the child who has truly been a child to you!"

"Let me see it! gasped the general. "Give me a pen! Support me, Ann! The boy shall be punished! I believe all you have told me! He shall be cut off with a shil shilling!"

The pen was dipped in ink, and placed in his fingers. With a firm hand, and with a boldness that surprised those present, he affixed his signature to the instrument. The pen, as he formed the last letter, dropped from his grasp, his head sank back heavily upon the pillow, and his spirit had fled ere the ink with which he had traced his son's sentence upon the parchment, was dry.

The younger brother, ignorant of this transaction making him sole heir to the exclusion of his brother, had left the chamber when he saw his mother engaged, and hastened to his apartment. He found Randolph up, and anxiously

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waiting for some intelligence from his father; for hearing his brother's step, he had softly opened his door, supposing it to be a servant."

"Do you come from him, Arthur?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes; but "

"And how fares he now? I would hasten to him, but your mother bade me keep away, saying he must not be disturbed."

"When did she say so?" demanded Arthur, with an energy that surprised him.

"Not twenty minutes ago!"

"Did she not call you to his bedside, and did you not send him a message that you would not come?"

"Can it be possible you believe I did?"

"Yet such was the word my mother brought to our father. He sent her for both of us. She returned with me, saying you refused to come."

"It is false! false as . . . But I must be patient with this wicked woman! Arthur, if you will believe *me*, learn that no such message has been brought me from my father, else would I have flown on wings of love and duty to obey it. I was in the hall some twenty minutes ago, when she came through. She saw me, and reproved me for being up and disturbing the house when my father would sleep. I returned to my room, and heard her approach your door, and soon after, partly opening my door, I saw you follow her forth from your room! As I hope to live hereafter, I had no message from my father, and sent him back no such answer!"

As he spoke, he covered his face with his hand, and the tears forced themselves through his fingers. Arthur stood mute with astonishment. He idolized his mother; he believed her the very soul of truth and goodness; he thought her perfect in every thing; and all this was she to *him*! He was wholly blind to her true character. Yet now she seemed to have spoken falsely of Randolph. Which was he to believe, his brother or his mother? Randolph's words rung with the rich metal of truth and honesty. Could it be possible his mother had told that which was false. He hesitated.

"I see you doubt my word, Arthur. Be it so!" said Randolph, bitterly. "But it matters not. You say my father sent for me! I will go to him, and thus give the lie to thy mother's foul report!"

As he spoke, he stalked proudly, and with an air of grief and defiance through the hall, in the direction of his father's chamber.

CHAPTER III. THE WILL.

Randolph, on entering his father's chamber, met the attorney and his companion passing out. The former looked upon him with a smile so significant, that he stared with surprise; but the next moment he forgot the look in the presence of the dead.

"He has departed without bestowing upon me his blessing," he said as he gazed upon the rigid face of his father. "Woman, wicked and evil woman, this is your cruelty. My father sent for me, and you reported to him falsely, that I would not see him. My father," he cried, kneeling by the corpse, and pressing his lips to the icy cheek, "my dear

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father, I knew not that you desired to see me, else I would have been near thee when thy spirit fled. To thee, departed spirit, who art still hovering near, to thee I address myself. Thou knowest all things now, and thou knowest the purity of my filial love, and also thou seest clearly through the wickedness of this woman!"

"What means this mockery of the dead, sir?" cried Madam Ledyard, with ill-suppressed rage. "Rise and quit the room!"

"I shall not, Madam. I have here a right above you all. Here will I remain. But for you, I should have shared my father's love, but you poisoned his mind against me, and exiled me from my home and from his heart. God will judge you!"

The widow shrunk, abashed before the stern reproof of the indignant young man.

"Come, Arthur, come with me, and let us leave him here. His power will be short!"

"Nay, mother, I feel deeply for my dear brother. I will remain with him!"

"Now that his father no longer lives," said the artful woman, "he will have no restraint over his hatred for you. You are rash to remain a moment in his presence!"

"I do not fear Randolph," answered Arthur quietly. "He will do me no harm!"

Madam Ledyard was vexed, but for the present she thought best to forbear.

"After the funeral, when the will is made known, I shall have my revenge," she murmured to herself as she quitted the room.

"Arthur," said Randolph, turning towards him with tearful eyes, "this is a heavy blow to both of us. He was our father, mine as well as yours. Though he loved me little, yet I always loved and respected him. Now that he is no more, let us be to each other in his place!"

"My dear brother!" exclaimed Arthur, embracing him with impulsive affection.

"Arthur," said Randolph, as he raised his brother from his shoulder, on which he had thrown himself, "let me warn you against the tales with which your mother fills your ears. She loves me not, and would have you also hate me. But if she says to you ever, that I do not love you, she says what is false. You are very dear to me. Now that our father is no more, I as your elder brother, feel bound to you by a closer tie. You love your mother, you believe her to be all that is upright and good; but she is good only to you. Be cautious how you heed what she whispers to you of me!"

"I will never believe any thing against you, Randolph. I will quicker suppose my dear mother deceived, than that you should be false. You have my fullest confidence and trust!"

"Thanks, thanks, dear brother. Now do we understand each other. What a sad sight is this lifeless clay. The spirit that ever dwelt in it smiles upon our love, for now it sees my heart, and knows its truth! But let us leave the room to those who come to prepare the dead for the grave!"

On the morning of the third day after the death of General Ledyard, he was placed in the family tomb, and the mourners returned to the mansion. The attorney produced the will at the widow's request, and read it aloud. It made Arthur the sole heir, with a legacy of one hundred dollars to Randolph.

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The surprise of Arthur was no less great than that of Randolph.

"Brother Randolph!" he cried, rushing towards him, "despise me not censure me not, for I knew not of this until this moment. But it shall be void. It shall have no effect whatever. The base will I will destroy with my own hands!"

As he spoke he snatched it from the hands of the attorney, and was preparing to destroy it, when his mother rushed forward and rescued it.

"Are you mad, boy?"

"No mother, but just and honorable!"

Randolph stood silent and pale as a statue. He seemed not to fully comprehend the fatal truth. At length he smiled bitterly, and bowing with haughty defiance to his step-mother, he left the room and the house.

He took his way wildly through the garden, he scarce knew whither. His brain whirled, his blood was on fire with the intensity of his feelings. He reached the water-side, and remained gazing vacantly upon the bay. The sea breeze cooled his brow, and he became more composed. He began to reflect. He saw that this result had been brought about by the subtle acts of his step-mother.

"It is her work. This she has achieved as the finishing stroke to her hatred of me! I see through it all. I understand how it was. My father sent for us both, to see us ere he died. She gave the message only to my brother, and returned to him, saying *I refused to come*. Then my father in his displeasure, cast me off, making my brother his heir! How has that boy stood in the way of my happiness ever since he was born. I could almost hate him as well as his mother! But I will not think evil of him. He loves me. He is gentle, good, brave, and all that a brother could wish in a brother. No, I will not think evil of him! Yet "

"Nay, dear brother," said the low voice of Arthur at his ear; "nay, let no more words fall from your lips. I am indeed, I have been for years your enemy, but most innocently so. For your sake I would willingly die now. I am more grieved than you are at this wicked will. I can hardly forgive my father!"

"Can you forgive your mother? It was by her arts, Arthur, your mother brought this end about. She would not that my father's dying blessing should descend upon my head, and so withheld from me the message which she conveyed to you. To him you said she reported that I haughtily refused to come. Displeased at this, he made you his sole heir. It is your mother's act!"

"Can it be possible my mother could do this thing?" he asked with deep sorrow.

"Your mother is the only one to blame. Upon her head "

"Nay, spare her. It is not possible she can have been so wicked!"

"Do you doubt my word, Arthur? I repeat to thee she bore me no message, and I sent back no such answer as she poured into my father's ears. But let this pass. God will judge her! I never more enter that house. It is yours and hers! I shall go forth upon the world to carve my own fortunes. I refuse to touch the pitiful legacy that has been named in the will. Why should a brave man despair, though he be a beggar. It is true the war is ended, but all the paths of life are not fenced up. Some one will I find open to me. So, farewell, brother!"

"Do not leave me brother!" cried Arthur, clinging to him. "Forgive all that I have innocently done to cause this!"

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"You have done nothing, brother. But I cannot remain. I shall go. There is my boat chafing at her moorings, awaiting me to embark in her. I shall obey the call. I will commit my destiny to the winds, and whithersoever they blow shall my prow be set!"

"I cannot have you leave me, brother," cried Arthur, in deep distress. "The whole patrimony shall be your own. I ask nothing but your love!"

Randolph made no reply, but paced in silence the green sward upon the eminence upon which they stood. It was at this moment that our story opened! It was in vain that Arthur now proceeded to urge upon Randolph the acceptance of one half of their patrimony. He positively refused, and with a feeling of reckless despair, cried,

"Do not speak to me more, brother. Do not stay me with thy grasp, else I shall begin to say bitter words even to you; for dark thoughts and an evil mind against you is fast coming upon me. I fly from you, lest I hate you and strike you!"

Thus speaking, the wretched young man tore himself from his brother's nervous hold with such vehemence, that Arthur reeled and fell upon the ground. He lay for several minutes partially insensible. He was about to rise to his feet to pursue and entreat his brother to remain, when he heard his mother's shriek, and the next moment was folded in her arms, as she knelt beside him upon the ground.

"Has he slain you? Oh, my child, do you live? Where are you wounded?"

"No one has wounded me. Where is Randolph. Let me rise, mother. I would call to my brother, and entreat him not to leave me!"

"Your brother is an assassin! He has fled! I saw him from the portico when he struck you down. My limbs would hardly bring me to the spot. I could not utter a cry to give the alarm to pursue him as he fled down the precipice! But he shall not escape!"

"Mother, Randolph has not harmed me!" cried Arthur firmly and almost indignantly. "If you name such a suspicion again, I shall cease to love you. Do not hold me!"

"Has he not wounded you?"

"No, I fell. I was alone to blame!"

"You would kiss his hand if he should strike a dagger to your heart, I believe!"

Arthur released himself from his mother, and hastened to the verge of the bank, in the hope of seeing Randolph, and of being able to prevail upon him to return.

"You need not make the effort to cause me to believe that young man did not strike you down," said Madam Ledyard, as she saw Randolph seated in the stern of his pleasure boat, the sails hoisted to the winds, flying down the bay. "Why has he escaped?"

"Mother, he escapes from no one! He is in despair! Your weak love for me has broken my noble brother's heart! He flies, that he may forever shut out from his eyes scenes where he has suffered so much sorrow! Ask your own heart, my mother, why he flies. Be sure it is not for guilt. I would have detained him! I offered him the half I offered him the whole of the patrimony which you have so wickedly obtained for me, if he would remain, and let me share his beloved presence; but he would accept nothing at my hands. He answered that he should have received justice from my father and from you, and not charity from me. Nay, he even spoke harshly to me, and

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did say that if he did not fly soon, he should hate me as one of the authors of his misery. I am grieved and angry, mother, that you should have done what you have done! Much rather would I have become a beggar, than that the bright sky of Randolph's love for me should be darkened by a single cloud!"

"Do you reproach me, boy? Have I not done all for your sake? Have I "

"Do not speak of it! You have made me as well as Randolph the victim of your weak and guilty affection for me. I pity my brother. I reproach both you and my father. May God forgive him! Through you, mother, he was banished from the endearments of home, that I might have the sole love of my father. He has been made all his life a sacrifice for me; yet he has never hated me. His noble heart has always overflowed with love and tenderness towards me. It has been your wicked aim to supplant him by me. The idea of making me the sole heir, I fear, has been from the first in your mind. Oh, that I had known all this! But it is now too late to retrieve the past. Though I have unintentionally injured my brother, I feel that I have nothing to reproach myself for in unkindness towards him. Never did I speak a harsh word to him. Noble Randolph!" continued Arthur, gazing with eyes full of tears after the swiftly departing boat, "for me you have been sacrificed, and you have not reproached me. For your sake I refuse to benefit by my father's unjust will. I will use no portion of the estate that is rightfully your own. I too will try my fortunes in the wide world; for I wish my lot to be no better, no happier than yours!"

"Do you mean what you are thus saying?" cried Madam Ledyard, with a pale cheek and a heavy conscience smiting her for what she had done; "do you mean to say you will not touch the property?"

"Yes, firmly and solemnly, and I appeal to God above, and to my brother now in view, in testimony of the truth of my words. Mother, I have ceased to respect you. My eyes are open to your guilt. You have for twenty years been playing a great game of crime. It was not love for me so much as wicked ambition, that has led you on in this career. You have succeeded in your wishes! But how? True, your son is the heir of the estates you coveted for him, and the true heir is flying from home. But your son not only refuses to share an estate thus wickedly come by, and the fruits of your guilty ambition fall to the ground and perish. This is God's judgment upon you!"

Madam Ledyard stood before him, transfixed with mingled grief, rage, and disappointment. There was no penitence in the tearful eye; no sorrow in the pale cheek; no remorse in the trembling lip. These effects were caused by darker and sterner emotions. She saw by the firmness of the tone in which the young man spoke, and by the resolute expression of his indignant eyes, that he was sincere in his determination. She approached him, grasped his wrist with one hand, and pressed the other strongly upon his shoulder, while her eyes sought his.

"Arthur, do you refuse to accept what I have worked all my life to place in your hands?"

"I do most positively!"

"You refuse then at your peril!"

"Do not menace me, mother. I feel that I am superior to you, because I am innocent. You have degraded yourself by your crimes. You have forfeited the respect which I owe you. Do not menace me, for I am above your menaces!" Rather kneel and seek forgiveness of God!"

"And this is my reward!" she cried bitterly. "Oh, Arthur, do not reject the wealth and power that is now yours. Have pity upon me. Do not cast aside what I have sold my soul to obtain for you!"

"Shall I use the price of my brother's life of my mother's soul!" he said with indignant scorn. "Leave me, mother! I would stand here and gaze on my brother's form, so long as it is in sight. Do not disturb me in this only happiness left me!"

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The ambitious, and now wretched mother stood back abashed and reproved. She had began to reap the bitter fruits of her duplicity. She saw all her hopes dashed at a single blow. She felt that she had calculated without the consent of him who was the object of all her aims. That he would refuse to take possession of the estate, she had no suspicion. His refusal came upon her like a thunder-clap. She would have threatened, but she beheld in the beautiful and gentle youth, to her surprise, a spirit awakened, which she knew not slumbered in his bosom. She saw that his breast was the home of truth and honor, and that her evil temptations found there no resting-place.

She remained silent a few moments, reflecting what course she should adopt to regain her influence over him. He stood, in the meanwhile, gazing after the departing boat, at intervals waving his handkerchief, which signal, to his great joy, was answered by Randolph. At length the little bark passed out of sight, a league distant, by turning the southern bend of Staten Island. During all this time, Madam Ledyard remained silent, waiting till his attention should be again given to her. He turned towards her with looks full of grief.

"Mother, there has departed one I love better than any other being on earth. I would that he had taken me with him, for I cannot well bear a separation from him!"

"Your love for your brother is misplaced. It is well for you he is gone. I know he would have sought your life!"

"Not a word of that, Madam! I would trust him aye, as quickly as I would yourself!"

"Oh, Arthur, do not look upon me so coldly," said the artful woman; "if you will forgive me, I will try and atone for what I have done!"

"Are you sorry for it?" he said severely.

"With all my heart. I did what I did only for your good. Forgive me, for it was from love for you, and a desire to see you rich and happy!"

"Riches bring not happiness to any! But I forgive you!"

"Thanks, my dear son; now my heart is relieved. We are friends once more, as mother and child should be. It was all my fondness for you!"

"I would rather you should have hated me than loved me thus wickedly. But it is past. Randolph will no more return. I shall follow him ere many days; for this is no longer my home!"

"Whose then?"

"Randolph's!"

"Well, we will not talk of this now. Let us return to the house, my dear child. But first promise me that you will not leave me without my knowledge!"

"This I promise. My intention is to go to the city, and there establish myself in some honorable calling. I shall go as a poor youth, and trust to God and my own industry!"

Thus speaking, he once more looked down the bay, waved an affectionate adieu towards the point where he had last seen his brother's boat, and then slowly and thoughtfully retraced his steps to the house. His mother followed him in silence. She saw that it would be indiscret then to urge him to change his mind, and left him undisturbed, trusting some favorable opportunity would yet enable her to effect her object.

CHAPTER IV. THE GUN-BRIG.

We have said that our story opened shortly after the close of the last war with Great Britain. With the end of the contest between the two belligerent nations, did not terminate the evils which are the fruits of war. It is true, the respective fleets of the combatting nations, ceased longer to engage in combat, and either sailed peacefully upon the ocean in idle cruising, or returned to their ports. But there were armed vessels which had taken part in the contest, which did not belong to the legitimate service of the country. These were privateers or letters of marque. Numerous commissions of this kind had been issued by the United States government, and the vessels sailing under them had done essential service to the country.

The close of the war found many of these free cruisers in commission. The majority of them returned to port, and ceased preying upon the commerce of the late foe. Some few of them, however, had been too long pursuing the adventurous career of privateering, readily to obey the voice of peace. The life they had led for three years, had fascinated them with its wild attractions. Money had been easily acquired, and the excitement of the battle and the chase had rendered excitement a passion. Thus it happened that for some weeks after the peace had been ratified, and hostile operations between the lawful fleets of the two nations had ceased, the public ear was startled, by the rumor that several peaceable merchant-ships, not only of England, but of the United States, had been boarded and plundered off the coast by vessels, still claiming to be privateers. As soon as this intelligence reached Washington, four vessels of war were despatched from as many ports, to capture and destroy these lawless cruisers, that dared openly to despise the proclamation of peace. One of these sailed from Boston, one from New York, one from Baltimore, and another from Norfolk. Two of them were brigs of war, the others corvettes of eighteen and twenty guns.

This force was soon sweeping the coast from Florida to the New England capes, and four of the bucaniering privateers were captured and brought into port. This prompt action on the part of the government, soon cleared the American seas of these bold pirates, who had thus assumed the national flag to cover their deeds of rapine. The vessels of war returned to their several ports, and the merchant-vessel once more fearlessly unfurled her canvass to the breeze.

The season of security, however, was but brief. The last brig of war had not been ten days anchored in port, ere a Boston barque put into Newport, Rhode Island, reporting that she had been boarded the evening before, off Block Island, by an armed schooner, filled with men, and plundered of all the most valuable portion of her cargo. This intelligence renewed the former excitement, and without waiting orders from the Department, the commanders of the brig of war which was moored in Boston Harbor, and of a sloop of war that lay off the Battery, slipped their cables, and almost at the same hour put to sea.

The sloop took the passage of the East River, passing into the Sound through Hurlgate; while the brig doubled Cape Cod, hoping to fall in with the bucanier in the vicinity of the Island where the barque reported herself to have been plundered.

It was on the morning of the third day after the arrival of the barque in Newport, that the armed brig came in sight of Block Island. The wind was light, and having been so for the last four days, her captain was sanguine that he should fall in with the pirate in the vicinity of the island. He therefore kept a midshipman aloft with a glass to sweep the horizon, while he stood on towards the island with the wind blowing gently from the south-west.

The dark mass of the huge island rose before them in all its sterile grandeur, reflecting the first beams of the rising sun from its higher elevations, while its base lay in a dense mist that was resting upon the sea. The brig under her royals and weather topmast studdensail, her courses hauled a it, and every thing drawing, moved steadily towards the island. The captain with a spy-glass at his eye, watched keenly the inlets of the land as the fog opened, occasionally turning his glass seaward, and then in the direction of the main.

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"The fellow can't have had wind enough to have got far away from this," he said, turning to his first lieutenant who stood near him. "If he is not lying under the west shoulder of the island, I am quite sure he has run up the Sound!"

"It has been almost calm the last three days, and what with the fogs that begin to prevail at this season, she could not have got far away!"

"That is my opinion. Yonder is a fishing-boat just emerging from the bank of fog that encircles the island. Keep her away a point, and bring the boat to! The fisherman will be able to give us some intelligence!"

The brig was steered in the direction of the fishing boat, and a gun brought it to.

"Fisherman ahoy!"

"What do you want, hey?" replied a sonorous voice in reply, from the throat of an old weather-beaten man, who looked as if he had been born upon the salt sea, and cradled upon its stormy billows.

"Have you seen anything of a large schooner, with long raking masts and a red head painted on her bends?"

"There was such a craft hailed me and bought fish of me yesterday afternoon. I reckon she was a privateer!"

"It is the very same, my man!" answered the captain joyfully. "But there are no privateers now, the war is at an end!"

"That's true, or ought to be, capting, sure enough. But the schooner had the 'Merican flag up, and was full of men, and had as many as six guns, if not more!"

"She was a pirate. Can you tell me which way she was standing?"

"Pirate or no, her skipper paid me in silver for my fish, and when my main-boom knocked my tarpaulin overboard, he bade one of his men toss me this one, which is worth two of mine! He was stan'nen' at the time to the nor'-west, with the wind son'."

"Up the Sound?"

"Belike he was; but as a fog was drivin in from sea just then, he hadn't made sail from me more nor five minutes, afore he was wrapped up in it from deck to truck, so I couldn't see him!"

"Did you see the vessel cruising here before yesterday?"

"Yes. She lay on the other side of the island, two leagues off shore, pretty much all day, about four days ago; at least it was a craft that looked mazing like her!"

"Thank you, my good man. Luff a little under the stern, and I will be as liberal for your news, as this bucanier was for your fish!"

Thus speaking, the captain of the armed brig took from his purse a sovereign, and as the little fishing vessel luffed up across the brig's wake, tossed it into the bottom of it. The old man lifted his tarpaulin, exposing a head of thick grisly hair, and bowing, picked up the coin, and once more put away on his course towards his fishing ground.

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All was now excitement and action on board the brig. Her course was altered three points, so as to pass the island to leeward, and she moved through the water with freer and swifter motion; for before she had been steering so as to weather the island.

"If the wind would only haul to the south, we should then get two more knots with the aid of studdensail a-wing," said the captain; "but we can't expect too many blessings at once. It is enough for this morning, to know that our game has not escaped us by running to the east or south! If he is gone into the Sound, he is ours!"

The bank of fog which had hung about the island, now slowly climbed up its sides and sailed off upon an under current of air, forming a low canopy of light cloud above the sea. The whole shore of the island now become visible, and was rapidly and closely scanned by three spy-glasses, in as many hands.

"He is not in shore there," said the officer of the deck emphatically.

"He may be on the other side of the island," observed the quarter-master. A fleet of liners might be hid there, and we not see 'em unless we sailed round!"

"We shall be in range to the north of the island in half an hour, so that we can take in the whole western shore at a glance," observed the captain; "but it is my opinion that the bold rogue has ventured his keel up the Sound, for the purpose of showing himself to the good Connecticut folk, and laughing at Uncle Sam's cruisers. The fog still lays on the water ahead, or else is slowly moving itself landward."

"By ten o'clock we shall have a clear horizon," said the first lieutenant, "and if he is in the Sound, we shall either see him or hear of him before night! We are going five knots full, and no doubt when the fog gets into the sky, we shall have an increase of breeze!"

"Heaven grant it!"

"Sail ho!" shouted the look-out from the mast-head.

"Where away?" demanded the captain, in a voice full of animation.

"To the westward, a point and a half off the weather bow!"

The captain sprung into the weather main rigging, and ascending rapidly a dozen rattlings, levelled his glass.

"I can see nothing but the fog bank that lays on the water a league ahead!" he responded in a tone of vexation.

"I can see her masts striking above the fog," shouted the midshipman in the foretopgallant cross-trees.

"Keep hold of her then. What does she look like?"

"I can only see her two sticks; and they may be either the royal-masts of a brig, or the slender top-masts of a schooner!"

"Do you see any royal yard?"

"Nothing but the tops of the masts. Now the fog rolls up and hides them, sir!"

"Keep the bearings, quarter-master. One point and a half off the weather bow. Luff as much, and see if we can make her! I will go aloft and take a look!"

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In a few seconds the young and ambitious captain of the brig of war, stood by the side of the middy upon the fore-topgallant cross-trees. For the diameter of four miles around him, the sea was clear from fog; but a light bank of mist lay upon the water two or three miles distant, wholly concealing the main land and Fisher's Island, which were but five and seven miles distant ahead. Seaward the atmosphere was clear, and to the south lay Block Island, still overshadowed by the bright cloud which had risen above it from its base. The fisherman's skiff was just visible in the eastern board, riding at her anchor, and westward, near the head of the island, were moored two or three coasting shallops. The sea of fog that lay above the watery sea ahead of the brig, was about seventy feet in height, and seemed to be slowly moving towards the main land before the south-westerly wind which wafted the vessel on. Its surface, as viewed from the altitude at which the captain stood, was undulating and restless like the billowy ocean; now curling upward in fantastic wreaths like smoke, now tossing and eddying in feathery streamers, as the fickle wind sported with it at its will. Sometimes masses of the misty vapor would heave themselves into the air above the general surface in cloudy pinnacles, till the breeze would break them and scatter them, dissolving in air as they flew. It was by one of these lifts of the mist, that the masts of the vessel which the midshipman had discovered, had been suddenly concealed from his sight. As the captain appeared on the cross-trees, the masts re-appeared again. With his unaided eye, he saw by their unusual rake, that they were the pencil-like topmasts of a privateer-schooner, as all the clipper-built craft of that day were termed.

"It is our man!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm. "Mr. Waters, keep the brig's head a point more to windward," he shouted to the deck below. "Pipe all hands to quarters. There is no mistake now but that we will have this kingfisher in our own net before another half hour!"

The orders he had given were obeyed with that animation which evinced an eager desire to combat with the enemy. The commander kept his glass at his eye for a few moments after he had given these orders, and closely watched the two topmasts. The schooner to which they belonged, seemed to be about a mile within the bosom of the fog, and to be slowly forging to the eastward. After a few moments longer observation he was satisfied that she was approaching on the opposite tack to that on which the brig was running. This conviction assured him that he should not fail to fall in with him; and in order that he should not lose him by going into the fog, he gave the order, to the surprise of his officers, to shorten sail.

"The fog is moving away from us, sir, almost as fast as we sail," said the middy, "and if you shorten sail, sir, we shall be fully exposed to the schooner when she comes out of it; and as we are not within gun-shot of her, she may get away from us!"

"You are right, Frank, for once in your life. Hold on below till further orders!"

The schooner kept standing on towards the fog, the verge of which was now half a mile distant. The captain had now lost sight of the masts altogether, and the mist seemed to be rising from the sea. He descended to the deck, and, without a word to any one, threw himself over the side, at the gangway, and dropped by the man-rope close to the surface of the water. As he expected, he could see under the fog, which had risen at least two feet from the water, and was still steadily ascending. A mile distant he beheld with perfect distinctness the lower portion of the dark hull of the schooner. He now regained the deck, and taking the bearings of the vessel, crowded all sail, and in five minutes afterwards entered the region of sea-cloud. The fog lay upon the decks and filled densely the atmosphere. Nothing was visible but the white vapor around. A man stationed over the side so as to see underneath the fog, every minute reported the position of the schooner.

The captain now joined him, and saw that she was within reach of shot; but as he was not able to see higher than her gunwales, he did not like to fire, lest he should be doing mischief to a friend. So he waited impatiently the slow rising of the mist as it became more and more rarified by the sun's rays.

The brig, nevertheless, kept standing on her way, steering a direct course for the unconscious vessel.

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"She is armed, I can see that much!" cried the captain of the brig. "In two minutes more her hull will be visible. Keep away a little. That is it! so, steady as you are. We shall be alongside of her in six minutes. She seems to be steering obliquely across our bows! stand by them with that weather-bow gun. Now silence every sound! steady as you are, helmsman. I can now plainly see her decks and her men! she is crowded with heads. It is the schooner we are in search of! Elevate the piece a little and fire at a venture!"

The roar of the twelve-pounder broke suddenly the stillness of the morning. The captain and his officers watched through the open ports the effect of the shot upon the movements of the enemy. But the schooner was at the same instant enveloped in the smoke of her own guns, and one after another in rapid succession three balls whistled through the misty air above the heads of those on the gun-brig's deck.

"They are as wide awake as we are!" exclaimed the captain: "when we supposed we were creeping down upon them unseen, they have been watching us under the curtain of fog just as we have been watching them. They have aimed their iron billiard-balls well, for every one of them passed within twenty feet of the deck. They were at the least eighteens! stand by your guns, men, and be ready to give her a broadside!"

The lint-locks flashed above the heads of the men who held them. All waited for the word.

"Luff a little!" shouted the captain.

"Luff it is, sir!" responded the helmsman.

"Steady, as you are!"

"Steady!"

"Fire, boys!"

The brig reeled under the recussion of the simultaneous discharge of all her larboard guns, and her captain, leaning over the gun in the after port closely watched the effect upon the schooner, which, when last seen, was not half a mile distant. It was some moments before the smoke of the powder blew aside; and then he saw, to his chagrin, that the fog had heavily settled again upon the water. He could discern no object a hundred fathoms distance.

"Confound my luck!" he cried with vexation; "the concussion of the air and the weight of the smoke together have settled the fog and hid the fellow completely. But we will stand on till we hear her `speak' again, and so tell us her whereabouts; keep still every one and listen for the least noise from her!"

The schooner did not "*speak*" again. In vain they listened. No gun replied to the broadside; no sound of creaking yard or rattling rope betrayed to their ears the position of the invisible schooner.

CHAPTER V. THE SCHOONER OF THE MIST.

For several minutes the gun-brig stood on the same steady course running by the bearings of the compass towards the spot where the schooner had last been seen, Not a syllable was spoken on her decks, that the least noise from the schooner might be caught by them. Ten minutes twenty minutes! the brig stood on, and yet nothing was seen or heard of the stranger. All around them in a dense mass hung the fog, and in height overtopping the top-gallant yard so that the lookouts aloft were unable to make out anything in the dense vapor in which the brig was enshrouded.

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"That fellow must have brought this fog about us for his own benefit," exclaimed the captain of the brig with an air of supreme vexation. We have been running twenty minutes by the watch dead for him, and as we go four knots and he was not half a mile distant when last seen, we have shot past him, and, no doubt, left him a mile astern! Ready about! we will try him on the other tack, and if we don't fall foul of him, we shall, at least, make our way out of this infernal fog bank!"

The brig was put about and lay her course S. S. E., making from three to four knots. In less than ten minutes she emerged from the mist into the clear sky and bright sunshine, with the blue sea visible southward to the horizon, and Block Island crouched in sullen majesty a league to windward off the starboard quarter.

Every eye was rapidly surveying the sea around in expectation of discovering the schooner. Nothing like a sail was visible, but the minute bark of the fisherman they had spoken two hours before rocking lightly on the undulating waves, and the three shallows which lay moored under the head of the island. The fog bank still hung in a cloud low upon its crest.

"Mr. Waters," said the captain of the gun-brig as soon as he satisfied himself that the schooner was not in sight, "this fellow has fairly given us the go-by! He is hiding still in the fog bank, and laughs at us. But the game won't be long in his own hands. It is to the main land about four or five miles. The fog is steadily advancing towards it. The schooner will probably keep under it as long as he can run safely, but the land will bring him up in less than two hours; for the fog moves from two to three miles an hour and will in that time leave the sea clear and rise over the land. The schooner will then have to show herself, and the game will then be up! My plan is to tack again and stand in after the fog and be ready to attack the schooner as soon as she gets from under cover."

"It will be an odd chase, sir!" answered the lieutenant, laughing.

"Yes, to chase a fog bank! but we must do it. It isn't half so bad as chasing the Flying Dutchman. Can you judge about where the schooner is likely to be under that confounded mist?"

"I should think, sir, she ought to bear about north by west."

"So I was thinking. We will tack and steer that course. Ready about!"

Once more the gun-brig tacked and stood in towards the retreating line of fog, which rose boldly like a wall of white vapor eighty feet above the sea and extending for miles east and west, parallel with the Connecticut shore, and wholly concealing it. It was slowly but steadily moving landward before the wind.

Under shortened sail so as not to run into the mist, the brig now stood on towards it, keeping about a cable's length in the clear atmosphere outside of it. A man was placed in the fore-chains with the lead, to report the depth of water as they advanced shoreward, and a light messenger boy was sent to the main truck to keep a look out for the topmasts of the schooner, while men were stationed upon the fore and main-topgallant yards. Another man, swung by a rope over the side, kept his head close to the surface of the water to report the least lifting of the fog. Every means that skill and a determination to come up with the enemy could devise was resorted to, and all on board felt sanguine of success.

The watch at length told the captain that they had been running after the fog forty-five minutes, and the log informed him that the distance run was three miles. The lead also gave only twelve fathoms of depth of water.

"Twelve fathoms makes us within a mile of the shore, sir," said the lieutenant looking at the chart.

"Yes, and I hear the boom of the breakers. If that fellow is in that fog bank he goes ashore, as true as fate. I will stand on a few minutes longer.

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"*Quar ter less sev en!*" sung the leadsman in a clear tone. The brig had, by degrees, forged ahead and got almost within the fog. The captain quickly gave orders to shorten sail.

"Breakers ahead!" cried at the same moment the look-out from the bows.

"Helm-a-lee! jam her down hard!" shouted the captain, springing himself to the aid of the helmsman.

The brig came promptly up to the wind, and just in time to leave under her lee counter a large rock which formed the spur of a ledge, over which the billows were breaking with a combing spray.

"It takes a good pilot to follow a fog in a stern chase ashore," said the young commander of the gun-brig as he looked over the side and saw the perils he had escaped, and which he was rapidly leaving astern. "This is a hair's-breadth luck for us. The schooner can't have kept on if she has she is a phantom. Heave her to!"

The officer of the deck promptly obeyed the order, and the gun-brig having got an offing, with her main-topsail aback, remained stationary. They now watched the fog which, slowly creeping to the land, lifted as it reached it, and began to sail over the rocks and trees skyward. The whole line of beach with its ledges in front, and the base of its banks and headlands, lay outstretched before them in the cheerful sunbeams. The commander of the brig and his officers gazed in consternation and with chargin east and west along the now clearly visible main. The schooner was nowhere visible.

"The fellow must have been sunk by our broadside," cried the former with an oath of the most positive tone. "Aloft there! do you see anything of this jack-o-lantern?"

"Sail ho!" cried the shrill voice of the little messenger boy, who was perched like a monkey upon the main truck.

"Where away, my lttle manikin?"

"Over the top o'the island, sir. I can just see her main-topmast!"

"Bravo, my lad! you shall have a middy's warrant if we catch her."

The brig was now got under sail again, and the wind being free abeam, she lay her course for the northern point of Fisher's Island, which was west of them about two and a half miles.

"I see how it is, Mr. Waters: the fellow, all the time when we thought he was running in with the fog, was cutting through it westward athwart hause; and so under cover of it, has given us the slip. Ho, fore-top-gallant yard there! do you discover her sticks yet?"

"Not yet, sir!" called back the middy stationed there.

"I see 'em still, sir," answered the messenger boy: "she is at anchor, I guess."

"He is cool enough to come to anchor, knowing our presence," said Mr. Waters, taking a survey of the profile of the head of the island, to see if he could discern the masts over-topping them. "We are too low to see them from the deck. In half an hour we shall double the head-land and pounce upon her, and all I ask then is fair play."

In about twenty minutes the masts of the vessel were made out from the deck, not a mile distant over the island. Each instant the gun-brig opened upon her position, and her top-sail yards soon became visible. The captain with his glass was standing upon the heel of the brig's bow-sprit, closely watching her as she began to show herself. All at once he dashed his hand against the spy-glass and uttered a strong expression of intense disappointment.

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"It is a fool's chase, gentlemen," he cried to his officers as he walked aft. "This is an ordinary coasting schooner, and is no more like our cruiser in the mist than a Dutch milk-maid is like a belle!"

The gun-brig rapidly turned the north end of the island, and what they had been so sanguine was the chase, showed herself to be a large topsail schooner with a poop-deck, anchored near the land, and loaded with crates of hay. The brig bore down towards her to hail her.

"Ho, the schooner!"

"Aye, aye, captain!" responded the skipper, jumping upon his traffrail.

"How long have you been laying here?"

"Since last night. My vessel started a plank, and I put in here to ground her at high-water, and repair it!"

"Have you seen anything of an armed schooner?"

"No, I reckon not!"

"Have you seen any schooner in these waters this morning?"

"No, only mine!"

"Very well," returned the vexed captain, as the brig passed on her course. "Now, gentlemen," he added, turning to his officers, "can you tell me what can have become of the chase? I must acknowledge I am fairly done up!"

"It *is* possible, she may have been sunk by our broad-side," observed the first officer.

"Hardly probable. We should have heard her men's cries, or seen spars afloat! I don't know what to make of her. If I hadn't heard her guns, and the whiz of her shot over our heads, I should be inclined to believe that my eyes had deceived me, and I was cheated by an illusion!"

"It is a very strange affair, sir!"

"It is possible, sir," said the junior lieutenant, "she may have steered east instead of west, and so kept in the fog till she got too far for us to see her!"

"That is what I think, gentlemen. But as I know of no break in the coast eastward, into which she could have run after the fog left her, and as she could not have got more than four or five miles distant, I am surprised we did not see her!"

"There is an inlet, sir, about five miles east of where we like to have struck," said the boatswain, who was aft performing some duty of his station, touching his hat as he spoke.

"Ah, do you know this?"

"Yes, sir. I was born not ten miles from where we are now, sir, and know all the coast as well as I do the seams in my hand!"

"Look to the chart, Mr. Waters!"

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The chart was examined, and a narrow inlet discovered laid down upon it, running two or three miles into the land.

"Is this deep enough, boatswain, for a vessel of the schooner's size?"

"Yes, sir, if she don't draw more than seven feet!"

"How far up is there this depth of water?"

"About a mile and a quarter, sir, at flood tide."

"Then there we shall find the schooner," said the captain with joy. "Ready about! If we tack this way much longer, the brig will learn to waltz without a French master!"

The gun-brig once more steered eastwardly. The wind was baffling and veering from the south to S. S. W.; but gave the brig about four and a half knots progress. Every thing was prepared for a conflict, and all was unusual excitement on board, from the gallant commander down to the lob-lolly boy; for the peculiar circumstances of the chase had wetted curiosity, and inspired one and all with a desire to fall in with and capture the trickish schooner.

The brig, after an hour's sailing along the coast, and within a mile of it, opened the mouth of the inlet which the boatswain pointed out. As the tide was ebbing, the captain felt very anxious to reach the inlet while there was water enough; for he naturally supposed the schooner, if she had taken shelter there, had run up some distance, to be out of reach of his guns. His vexation, therefore, was very great when he found on arriving off the mouth of the passage, that the tide was too low to admit his vessel.

"We will lay off here, however, and send a boat up to look for the schooner," he said, giving orders to man the first cutter.

The inlet was a creek about a third of a mile wide at the mouth, and fenced nearly across with fishing barriers of stakes interwoven, so that there was a very narrow passage left for a vessel. Through this the boat pulled up the stream. It contained the commander of the gun-brig, a midshipman, and eight oarsmen only. They pulled up about half a mile, when turning a sharp point, they discovered the schooner quietly moored across the stream. She was a very long and beautiful vessel, with an air singularly bold and warlike. She was in all points, in perfect order, and the very model of a clipper man-of-war-schooner. The captain of the brig, concealed by the thick foliage that overhung his boat, surveyed her for a few moments with a seaman's eye, and with increased admiration.

"She is a perfect beauty," he at length exclaimed, "and I will have her before night, or she shall have me!"

He then noiselessly retraced his course down the creek, and after two hour's absence, once more reached his own deck. It was now past two o'clock. The tide was still ebbing, and it would be near ten at night before the flood would enable the brig to go up the creek. This time was passed in sounding the channel, and making preparations for the attack. In the meanwhile there were apparent no signs that the schooner was aware of the brig's vicinity; although she could be plainly seen from the heights that overhung the creek, by any one who should ascend them.

About an hour before sun-set, a sail was discovered from the mast-head, in the western board. As she approached, she was made out to be a large ship. She even came near enough for the captain of the gun-brig to see that she was a sloop-of-war, with the American colors flying. A closer scrutiny enabled him to make her out as the "Franklin," which had been stationed in the port of New York.

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"The schooner is now fairly trapped," he said, as he made this discovery. "Foster, of the Franklin, has got news of the plunder of the barque as well as ourselves, and has run down through the Sound in search of her. I had quite as lief that I had the taking of the bucanier alone; but let Foster have a share in the affair. Between us this fog—ship shan't escape us!"

"We are likely to have a fog to—night, sir, by the thick haze to the east," said Mr. Waters.

"Yes, no doubt, for they prevail at this season, and it would be rare to have a night without one. But we have the fellow blockaded so snugly that a fog can't help him now. Get up the signals, sir. Let us tell our friend what game we have here!"

The brig set her signals, which were answered by the sloop of war, which was now within three and a half miles. The brig then telegraphed the intelligence of "the enemy in shore," when the corvette, which heretofore was steering south east, altered her course, and bore away for the gun—brig. The sun was just sinking under the horizon, in a skyey sea of gold, when the ship came within speaking distance, under the stern of the brig of war.

"Have you seen this pirating privateer?" hailed her commander through his trumpet.

"Aye, aye; and have him fairly caught. I had news of his being in these waters three days since, and immediately put to sea after him. I fell in with him this morning, but he escaped me in a fog, and run into this creek, where he is moored half a mile up it. Are you cruising after him also?"

"Yes. News of his boarding and plundering a barque reached me from Newport day before yesterday, and I immediately slipped cable and run down the Sound. I am glad you have got him where he can be taken care of. But come aboard, and let us talk over the matter."

The captain of the brig pulled alongside of the ship, and being warmly met by his friend, they returned to his cabin, where over certain choice wines the former related the particulars of the chase.

It was finally decided, as soon as the tide served, that the brig, seconded by the sloop's boats, should sail up the creek, lay along side of the schooner, and either capture her or sink her.

The sun had not been half an hour set, leaving a sparkling sky without a cloud when the wind chopped round to the east and brought rapidly in from the sea a dense column of fog which had been long gathering there. The land, the stars, the water were enveloped. The two vessels became invisible to one another. The mist seemed each moment to grow heavier, and fell like tropical dews upon the deck, wetting them as if a fine rain was falling. The two captains fearing that the schooner would avail herself of this her favorite covert to get to sea, resolved not to wait for the tide, but take the sloop in close to the mouth of the creek so as to guard it, and ascend the inlet in both vessels boats. This was done, and the boats, seven in all, containing one hundred and thirty men, pulled to the point where the schooner was seen moored. They passed the place, rowed a mile beyond till the water shoaled to a fathom, and after a close search of the mid—channel and both banks, returned to their vessels, as satisfied as they were vexed and confounded, that the schooner had in some way managed completely to effect her escape out of the river under the cover of the mist!

CHAPTER VI. THE TWO INTERVIEWS.

We now return to Randolph, whom we last saw in his little boat rapidly disappearing from the eyes of his brother down the Raritan Bay. He had taken leave of Arthur, and hurried from him to his boat, without having formed any definite plan of action. His mind was confused, and his soul agitated by deep and passionate emotions. He felt himself the victim of the wicked devices of one who, instead of being his enemy, should have been in the place of

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a mother to him. Yet from his childhood he had been persecuted by her with singular vindictiveness, and now, through her subtlety and craft, he had, in his manhood, been defrauded not only of his father's affection and dying blessing, but of his patrimony. He felt that he had endured more than his human spirit could patiently bear. His pride forbade him to seek legal redress, by breaking the will, and equally indisposed him from accepting at Arthur's hands the gift of what was rightfully his own. He was sick at heart with the duplicity and wrongs which had been practised upon him, and felt as if the world would henceforward have no charm for him. Fondly loving his unworthy father, his heart was filled with grief that he should have died believing him undeserving either of his blessing or his love. With these bitterly painful reflections, intruded, in spite of himself, cold and hard thoughts against Arthur, although his good sense and generous nature reprov'd them as unjust.

With his bosom as tumultuous as the ocean in a storm, he leaped into his boat his own pleasure boat, in which he had taken with Arthur many a happy sail and hoisting the light canvass, darted away from the beach, trusting he should never set foot upon it more. After he had got half a mile from it, he turned to look back, and beholding his brother waving his handkerchief to him, he returned the signal, while his eyes filled with tears at parting with one so well beloved.

"Fare thee well, brother! I have loved you as myself nay, as one dearer than self. But perchance we shall see each other no more! I leave with you that happiness which will never more visit my bosom. You are rich and good, and all the path of life before you is fair and pleasant. To me the future seems obscured with clouds, and gloomy with impenetrable night. Be happy, brother! Gladly, I know, you would have shared with me that which your wicked mother has wrested from me to bestow upon you; but what thou hast keep as thine, for thine it now is! Were it seventy times bestowed upon me by thee, I should never feel that it was mine. No, I am too proud to be a dependent even upon thee. Thy mother shall never say that I lived an almoner upon her son's bounty! Rather do I choose, as I now do, to wander an exile from home, and carve out with my own hands that fortune, whatever it may be, which is before me. One day, brother, we may meet again under better auspices. But for the present we have need to part. My presence with you would be a constant restraint upon you in the possession of your inheritance. I will not be in your sight to reproach you. Farewell! Farewell!"

Thus speaking, he again waved his hand in reply to Arthur's repeated signals of affection, and then firmly turned his face away, and directed his attention to the management of his little bark. His general design was to sail round to New York, which he could reach, with the wind as it then was, in five or six hours, there dispose of his boat, and take passage in some vessel bound to France, where he resolved to enlist as an adventurer; for France was then the field of military glory.

The light vessel skimmed along with rapid wing over the surface of the sparkling bay, and shortly doubling the southernmost point of Staten Island, passed out of sight of the distant home from which he was exiling himself, or, rather, from which the crimes and injustice of an evil woman had banished him. Tears of manly regret and indignant feeling rushed to his eyes as he looked upon the departing scene of his birth, the theatre of such painful events as had just transpired. But dashing them away with his hand, he cried, with an air of resolute defiance of his evil fate,

"This is no time for tears! Let Fate do her worst! I am prepared for whatever is prepared for me by inexorable destiny, however dark and stern it may prove to be! One thing I have to sustain me, and that is that I am innocent. No man have I wronged. No evil have I ever put my hand to. I am not a criminal escaping from crime, thank God! I am free in heart and spirit! Whatever lies before me, I will maintain my integrity. I will do nothing that shall cause me to blush for myself, or the beautiful and beloved Olive to blush for me. Alas, must I leave her also! Must I depart without bidding her adieu! In the great weight of my griefs and wrongs, I have scarce thought of her who is dearer than all else on earth. I will see her! If she is generous, she will not despise me in my poverty. I will see her and unfold to her all that has passed. By landing near yonder forest-covered point, I shall be within a league of her abode! I will see her ere I depart from these scenes forever!"

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With this mental determination he steered his boat in the direction of a wooded promontory about a mile distant, and soon landed upon a beach upon which grew a clump of low trees. Here he secured his boat, and springing to the land, hastened along the sands until he came to the verge of the woodlands. He found a path by which he entered them, and was soon lost in their depths.

The seat of Colonel Oglethorpe was situated diagonally opposite the villa of Lenafe Manor, upon Staten Island. The two houses, though two miles and a half distant from each other, and on opposite sides of the Raritan Strait, were in sight one of the other. The place where Randolph landed was on the east side of the island, which was here three miles broad, and which he had to cross on foot to reach the villa.

Colonel Oglethorpe was a man of fortune and a widower, with an only daughter. This maiden was about nineteen, and surpassingly fair. She was a brunette, with large oriental eyes and a figure commandingly tall, yet full of grace. She was intelligent, witty, and possessed that peculiar fascination which bewilders, ensnares, and takes captive at will.

She was passionately loved by the ardent Randolph, and silently worshipped by the gentle Arthur. Her preference was for the former, although, if a maiden can possess two hearts, she had one for each of them. Her love for Arthur was, however, more sisterly than passionate; and as such Randolph looked upon it. Neither brother was jealous of the other, for though both loved her, they each loved her after a different manner. Although Randolph would have been miserable to see her Arthur's bride, Arthur could have given her away to him in wedlock without emotion, and loved her afterwards precisely as he loved her before; for his feeling with regard to her was independent of and superior to all ideas of marriage.

Randolph had been betrothed to the lovely Olive Oglethorpe only a few days prior to his father's return from the field; and since then, events had transpired with such rapidity, he had not seen her. His chief feeling of regret at having his patrimony wrested from him was, that it menaced his happiness with her; and this reflection added bitterness to his emotions of grief and indignation. He had too much pride of character to retain her pledged hand now that he was penniless and homeless. He, therefore, now resolved to see her and take leave of her, not merely to say adieu, but to tell her just his position, and restore her that freedom which she had transferred to him when he was regarded as the wealthy heir of General Ledyard. At first, when he fled to his boat to leave his home, his intention was to depart without seeing her, feeling that she would treat him with coldness; and he did not feel in the mood to have his feelings more keenly wounded than they were. But, as he reflected while he sailed down the bay, it occurred to him that it would be the most manly and honorable course for him to see her, state to her his fallen condition, restore her her promise of betrothal, and then fly from her, also, forever.

It cannot be denied that secret hope whispered to the ear of his heart that she might not regard so seriously as he himself did, the change in his fortunes, and would generously refuse to receive back her pledge of affiance.

Olive Oglethorpe was seated at her harp, near an open window that commanded a view of the Raritan straits and the villa of Lenafe Manor, two miles distant on the opposite side, with the town of Perth Amboy farther away to the south. She was alone, and practising a piece of music which, instead of being printed, was exquisitely executed with the pen, as if the composition of an amateur. At the bottom of the last page were the initials, in very small letters, "R. L." She went through the composition, and then pausing for a moment, lifted her eyes towards the view from the open window. As she did so, a glow of pleasure lighted up her beautiful face, and leaving her harp, she quickly went out upon the piazza.

The object that drew her attention was a small skiff that a single oarsman was propelling rapidly across the water from the direction of Lenafe Manor. It was about half a mile off, and the person of the rower was not easily recognizable. She took down a small telescope from a rack in the hall, and opening it, placed it to her eye and directed it upon the approaching boat.

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"It is Arthur, as I thought!" she said to herself: "Randolph would have been in his sail boat! I will go and meet him at the shore.

She delayed an instant to take a sunhat from a large arm-chair in the hall, and then hastened to the water-side, followed by a very large and magnificent Newfoundland dog, who had risen from the mat to attend her, as was his wont. An elegant grey-hound, with the agile motions of a deer, also bounded after her footsteps. Sometimes he would leap far ahead, then turn, like a bird on the wing, and crouch at the feet of his mistress for a glance of admiration or affection; when, receiving it, he would rise and make a graceful bound high over the back of the stately Romeo, as if mocking his graver movements. The Newfoundland, however, paid no regard to the erratic sports of his companion, but kept closely behind the lovely girl with the air of a protector.

The skiff soon reached the green mound of the lawn, and Arthur, leaping to the shore, pressed in silence the hand of the lovely girl. His face was pale and his looks full of sadness.

"What has happened, dear Arthur?" she asked with solicitude. "Why did not Randolph come with you? But why should I ask, when you have but just followed to the tomb your dear father! yet there is an anxiety, not springing from grief for the dead, in your face, that leads me to fear some evil has happened!"

"There has an evil happened. My brother has fled forever from home!"

"Fled?"

"Yes, Olive. But let us walk together here beneath these trees and I will tell you all!"

They turned aside into a path that wound along the shore, and as they walked Arthur related to her all that had transpired at Lenafe Manor. He did not even spare his mother, for his eyes were fully open to her guilty duplicity, but freely told all that she had done, and its fatal consequences upon the happiness of his brother. Olive listened with the deepest interest, with the most painful attention. She truly loved Randolph, and appreciated truly all the noble qualities of his mind and heart. Her bosom bled for him.

"Oh that I had known this all before he fled!" she cried with emotion. Oh that he had come to me and made me a confidant of his griefs and deep wrongs."

"You know his proud spirit. There is no doubt that his sensitiveness at his condition has prevented him from approaching you."

"It should not have done so, Arthur. Randolph ought to have known me well enough to extend to me his confidence at such an hour. Can it be possible that he has gone! *gone* without a word of farewell! gone without giving me an opportunity of sympathising with him. He has acted wrong he has acted foolishly. He has done me injustice. Did I not pity him for his misfortunes, I could be angry with him. And you offered to restore him his patrimony?" she asked impressively.

"Yes, Olive, I even was ready to surrender *all* to him!"

"And he refused?"

"Most firmly!"

"And left you precipitately?"

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"He bade me a hurried farewell and the next moment was upon the water. I would have detained him I clung to him, as I told you, and he threw me off to escape!"

"And your wicked mother dared accuse him of striking you down!"

"God forgive my mother!"

"Nay, I will not say an `Amen' to that prayer. Your mother has been Randolph's evil spirit ever since he was a child! She is the cause of his wretchedness now, and must answer to God's bar for whatever crime or errors his present despair may drive him to!"

"My mother has been very cruel to him!"

"Cruel is no word to express her guilt. But I spare her, Arthur, for your sake. I am glad he still loves you, though to you he has been sacrificed. I am glad he turned not against you! it is so like his noble nature! Where, think you, has he gone?"

"I know not. Doubtless he has steered his boat towards the city, as I saw it disappear in that direction."

"And how long ago?"

"About two hours!"

"He cannot have gone far as yet. The wind does not blow strong. My riding horse is in the stable, and you know he is as fleet as an eagle. Do not delay, Arthur. Come with me to the house and I will order him at once. Ride with the speed of love and pity along the road, the length of the island if need be, till you see his boat upon the water. There are points along the road that will give you views of the bay. If you ride with a free rein you will overtake him ere he gets to the head of the Island. Anywhere you will find fishermen to take you off to him in their wherries. You cannot fail to overtake him say to him that I must see him! command him to return to me!"

"Your wishes and my own are one, dear Olive! In obeying you, I follow the impulses of my own affection!"

In a few moments afterwards Arthur was riding like the wind along the highway that extended from the southern end of the Island to its northern extremity, now winding its way over wooded hills, now traversing pleasant vales, now over-hanging the shores of New York bay. Olive ascended a slight eminence that commanded the road, and followed his course, with prayers for his success, until he was lost to sight. She then turned to descend, when, as she was passing a clump of larch trees, Randolph suddenly stood before her. She was so surprised at his unexpected appearance that she shrieked and retreated from him.

"Nay, hast thou so soon heard the news, and am I a monster in thy sight too," he said in the bitter words that his wounded heart dictated. "Well, I will not detain you long, lady! I have sought thee to say that I give thee back thy troth!"

"Randolph!" said the maiden, recovering her self-possession, and approaching him with a look of sympathy and love, while she laid her hand upon his proudly folded arms: "Randolph, I know all. I feel for you with all my heart!"

"Yes, I know you know all. I saw my brother with you but now. Doubtless he thought ill news grows cold with keeping, and so he hastened hither to tell thee that I am a beggar and he is the heir!"

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"You do Arthur a wrong, Randolph," answered Olive with surprise. "He came to tell me you had gone and to consult with me what to do. He is at this moment flying on the wings of love to endeavor to overtake your boat, which we supposed was steering along the Island towards the city. You have much to make you feel bitterly, Randolph, but you have no right to accuse those who are innocent!"

You speak warmly in the boy's defence! I doubt not he will supplant me in your love, as he has done in my patrimony. Be it so! He is handsomer than I. You love him in a sisterly way, and this is near akin to passion's wilder love. He is rich and "

"No more! I forgive you, Randolph, because you have had much to embitter your soul. But I will not listen to words so unworthy of yourself so unjust to me!"

"Well, then, I will be silent! I am not myself, I feel. I have been deeply wronged. The dwelling upon it maddens my brain. But let that pass. I came here, Olive, to tell thee I was a beggar and to give thee back thy troth! But rumor, swifter-winged, came with the news before me. Take thy troth. I am henceforth nought to thee. Wed with my brother! he loves thee! I did mark his eye's passion as he kissed thy hand and left thee but now!"

The offended maiden's face became flushed with an indignant hue, and she stood for a moment regarding her lover with an expression of intense displeasure.

"Randolph, you show me a dark shade in your character I knew not was in it! This jealousy is unmanly and unworthy of yourself!"

"Well, it may be so, it may not be so. Time will show. Thou and Arthur will yet wed, mark me! That there may be no bar to your happiness, that Randolph the penniless may not mar it, I here give thee back thy pledge!"

As he spoke he placed in her hand a ring. She received it passively, as if she took it not, and with a face as colorless as snow. He did not look upon her, but turning away with a gloomy brow and haughty step, the next moment disappeared in the forest at the foot of the hill from which he had a few minutes before issued.

The maiden remained for several minutes motionless where he parted from her. Her affection had received a shock that almost paralysed her. She could scarcely realise what had passed. It seemed a painful dream. At length her eyes fell upon the ring, which had fallen from her hand to the ground.

"And this is all real! Randolph has been here and gone again! What an interview! He seemed no longer himself. The blow he has received must have unsettled his reason. What cause had he for quarrel with me? He seems to have sought me out to insult me, and to pour forth his bitterness upon me! Miserable himself, he would make me so also! I pity him. I forgive him! How darkly his brow was overcast! How suspiciously he looked upon me! Is it possible he truly believes I despise him! It may be, for one's own heart gives its hue to everything around it. He says Arthur loves me! Is it possible that this is true?"

The maiden was silent. She seemed to be thinking upon something that confused her cheek and brought an expression of gentle joy into her dark eyes. "Is it possible Arthur loves me?" again fell unconsciously from her lips.

CHAPTER VII. THE KEEPER.

The afternoon of the day on which the events related in the foregoing chapter transpired, a schooner, which had been sometime seen from the light-house at Sandy Hook standing in from sea, came to about a mile from the point, with her fore-topsail aback.

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"That is a rakish-looking craft to be out when it aint war-time, sir," said the keeper of the light, as he surveyed her from his lantern. "I shouldn't wonder if she wasn't any better than she should be!"

This remark was addressed to Randolph Ledyard, who stood by his side.

This young man, after quitting Olive Oglethorpe, with whom he had become angry, because he was miserable himself, and whom, from the mere wontonness of a spirit given up to despair, he had accused of inconstancy, had made his way to his boat in a state bordering upon phrenzy. He really believed his suspicions of Olive and his brother, so readily does wretchedness give credence to whatever is likely to make it more wretched; and under the influence of these emotions he let his angry feelings have full wing. He reproached not only her but his brother, and in the bitterness of his soul accused him of being a party with his mother to his own ruin. A secret monition of his conscience told him he was unjust; but silencing it with the loud tones of his despair and grief, he let only his darker emotions take possession of his bosom.

Thus, by the time he regained his boat, he had brought to a head in his bosom the most intense hostility towards Arthur, and the most bitter resentment against Miss Oglethorpe. He hoisted his sail and moved swiftly from the shore. The wind had by this time chopped round to the north and west, and to reach the city he saw he would have to beat all the way, and that it would take till midnight.

"What matters it where I go now. I am satisfied of Olive's duplicity, and of my brother's hypocrisy. What care I what becomes of me! I may as well fling my sail to the wind and let it blow me where it lists! I am reckless, and laugh at reason and prudence! Come, friendly breeze, I commit my bark and myself to thee!"

With this wild resolve, he turned the prow of his boat before the breeze, and went bounding away over the sparkling waves in the direction of Sandy Hook and the open sea.

As he, at length, came abreast of this point still steering with wilful firmness a course fair before the wind, which was blowing him rapidly seaward, he thought he discovered, some distance to the right, and in the direction of the shore, the arm of a man waving above the water. Obeying the impulse of humanity, he kept away towards the object, and as he came nigh, he saw a man struggling amid the waves. The next moment he was alongside of him, and drew him into the boat.

It was the light-house keeper. He informed him, as soon as he was sufficiently restored to speak, that he had started an hour before, in a wherry, to go up to Amboy, when a shark had struck his boat with such force as to break it in two, and leave him without other support than his two oars. From that time he had been making the best use of his strength to regain the Hook.

Randolph steered towards the light-house point with the rescued keeper; and being urged by him to land and partake of some refreshment, he had yielded, and followed him to his house. The consciousness of having saved a fellow-being's life, the gratitude of the man and that of his wife and children, temporarily dissipated his misanthropy. He felt less bitterness at heart than before, but with no less determination to commit his fortunes to chance.

He had been sometime watching the schooner ere it came to off the point, and admiring the grace and swiftness with which she moved, and the beautiful symmetry of her black hull and slender spars.

"She is certainly very war-like looking," answered Randolph to the keeper's remark. "It is likely she is a government vessel. You see she has the American flag flying."

"Yes, I see that, sir; but that craft isn't Uncle Sam's. I've been a sailor, and a man-o'-war's-man too, in my time, and I know a coaster. That are chap, I reckon, wouldn't lay there quite so bold and quiet if a government vessel

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should happen to heave in sight"

"Why, what do you suspect the schooner to be?"

"I rather guess she *has* been a privateer that the government have been sending cruisers out against lately?"

Yes, that is *my* opinion if I was asked it."

"I suppose that all these vessels had been taken."

All but one, so far as we know," answered the keeper, with emphasis.

"And what *one* is that?"

"Why, haven't you heard? Why, they call her the Mist-ship. The papers is full of it. Why, you see, sir, the four armed vessels Uncle Sam sent out after the peace was declared to pick up them chaps as wouldn't stop their privateerin', (for it's no better nor piracy, sir, to privateer after peace is made,) thought they'd got 'em all, and went back to port again. But they hadn't been ten days at their moorings afore in comes a barque to Newport or Providence, or some place on the Sound, reportin' as how she'd been boarded and plundered off Block Island by a armed schooner with a red stripe; and blast my timbers if that craft don't look as if she had one about her bends! I wish I had a glass to see."

"I think you are right. I am quite positive she is striped with red, though at this distance I may imagine it."

"It looks to me 'mazing like a stripe o' red; but let that be as it may, the schooner what boarded the barque had such a stripe, raked amazing, and lay low in the water, carried eight guns, and was filled with men!"

"So this seems to be," observed Randolph, with interest, as he fixed his eyes keenly upon the stationary vessel which was the object of their remarks.

"Well, I don't say whether this chap is the same or not," answered the keeper, shaking his head very slowly, as if altogether inclined to believe that it was the same; "but, howsomnever, as soon as the skippers of a government brig what was layin' in Boston harbor, and of a sloop of eighteen guns, as lay off the Battery up to town, heard this news, they slips to sea. The Bostoner doubles Cape Cod, and the Yorker cuts down the Sound slap through Hurl Gate!"

"What was the result of their prompt movements? I remember seeing in one of the papers, two or three weeks ago, an account of their departure. But I have not learned what success they had."

"What success? Why, they fell in with the schooner and chased her, but she got away from 'em in a fog. They then fell in with her a half dozen times more; now way up the Sound, now off Cape Cod, then again under Block Island and Montauk's Point; but if a fog didn't always help her get off clear, may I be shot! I saw one o' the crew o' the sloop when I was up to Quarantine yesterday, and he told me it was his gospel belief the schooner had the devil for first mate, and that he always called up a fog when the craft wanted to get out of any scrape. But, howsomever, he said he would take his bible oath that the fog smelt strong of brimstone!"

Randolph smiled, and again directed his attention towards the light and beautiful vessel, which lay quietly under her reversed topsail about a mile distant from the light-house.

"And did these two vessels give up the chase?"

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"Yes. After trying a fortnight to catch her, the sloop put back for a lighter and faster craft to take her place, while the brig remained on the cruising ground. You see, this schooner of the Mist out-sailed both, always running three knot to their two. The fastest schooner Uncle Sam has got is going to be sent after her, or else has already put to sea. But, I'll be willing to swear, that's the vessel they have been chasin'; and that while they are poking about in the Sound, and about Cape Cod, she has danced this way laughing at them. But there's one objection, sir, to *her* bein' the Cruiser of the Mist," said the keeper, gravely.

"What is that?"

"The seaman as sailed in the sloop on her cruise, told me she was never seed except in a fog, or close aboard of one!"

"Then there is very clear proof that this is the schooner of the Mist," said Randolph, quickly, at the same time smiling at the coincidence. "Look southwardly, and tell me whether that is not a bank of fog advancing along the coast parallel with it, and extending its wing a league or more seaward!"

"Blast my eyes, you are right, sir! There's no mistakin' her now," answered the keeper, looking a little superstitious.

"Yet this is not altogether conclusive," answered Randolph. "At this season, fogs prevail every afternoon. It is nothing remarkable to see this one now."

"Nothing to see the fog, but something to see the schooner here, sir. It aint usual to see such a craft as this in these waters. I don't believe she'd ha' been here if the fog want close by. That's my positive belief."

"It is certainly very singular," remarked Randolph.

He now surveyed the schooner with increasing interest. The more closely he observed her, the better satisfied he was of the truth of the keeper's suspicions. There was about her an air at once lawless and daring. Her aspect was thoroughly bucaniering.

"I wish the sloop—o'—war up to town was four leagues nearer this craft than she is," said the keeper, emphatically. "But I dare say, if she was, the schooner would run into the fog—bank to the south'ard, and get off as she al'ays does."

"There can be no harm in boarding her, to see what she is," said Randolph.

"Boarding her! I'd as lief put my head into a shark's mouth, as I would have done, and couldn't help it, if it hadn't been for you, sir."

"Have you ever a fisherman's suit?"

"Yes, I have."

"Tarpaulin, jacket and trowsers, and all?"

"Yes. But what then, sir?"

"I am resolved to see what this craft is. I will run nigh her as a fisherman, in one of the little wherries I see hauled up on the beach. If I don't return, you may have my boat for yours, and my clothes for your fishing suit!"

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The keeper regarded him for an instant with surprise.

"You don't mean to say you would like to go on board that ere ugly customer?"

"Yes. Lend me your boat and clothes! If I go as I am, they may regard me as a spy. As a fisherman I shall excite no suspicion, and they will not trouble me."

The keeper at length yielded. Randolph then wrote a few words upon a card, and gave it to him, saying he would repay him for his life that he had saved by taking it at once over to Colonel Oglethorpe's. The keeper promised to do so, affixing it to the lining of his hat.

Randolph was not long in transforming himself outwardly into a rough-looking fisherman, for the apparel of the keeper was of the roughest kind. He darkened his face and hands with earth-water to destroy their freshness, and wet his fine dark locks with sea-water to dishevel and give them a neglected look. In less than half an hour after conceiving the idea, he was in the fishing skiff, with lines and bait, and pulling out from the light-house, his course eagerly watched by the keeper, who admired his courage, while he trembled for his safety.

The young man, after getting half a mile from the shore, cast his lines, and fished for about ten minutes with a professional deliberation that would have deceived the most suspecting observer. He then pulled up his lines, and resuming his oars, rowed further out, gradually nearing the schooner, until he came within cable's length of her, when he began to pull rapidly past, as if not wishing to remain in her neighborhood. He saw that she was crowded with men, and heavily armed. Although her length was full one hundred feet, she was not more than five feet out of the water. She crouched upon the surface like a watching leopard. He saw plainly enough now the red stripe which marked her identity with the schooner which had plundered the barque. This discovery confirmed him in his determination not to quit her until he had boarded her and discovered her true character.

His real motive in thus venturing was hardly known to himself. It was the prompting of a restless desire of adventure, to which his spirit in its present mood was readily open. He had got just abeam of the schooner's quarter, when a person hailed him from her quarter deck.

"Skiff, ahoy!"

"What say?" he answered, in a voice and manner characteristic of the profession he assumed.

"Come aboard, I would speak with you!"

"I am going out fishing, sir!"

"Come alongside, I say, if you don't want me to send a boat and fetch you," repeated the man, in a stern tone.

Randolph desired nothing better than to comply, and turning the head of his skiff towards the schooner, he pulled up under her gangway.

"Come aboard, my man," said another officer, who came to the gangway.

Randolph obeyed, and found himself on the deck of an armed vessel frowning with batteries, and crowded with men in blue shirts and white canvass trowsers. On the quarter deck were two or three men in uniforms resembling that of the American navy. The officer who spoke to him last wore a laced cap and a blue round-about with the anchor button. He was not more than seven or eight and twenty, had a handsome face, and a look of singular resolution.

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"Do you belong on the Hook, my man?" he asked him, in the decided tone of a man accustomed to command with peremptory authority.

"I live above, sir, towards Amboy."

"So much the better. I suppose you know the water about here well?"

"Yes, tolerably."

"Could you pilot my schooner to Amboy in the night, and thence down between Staten Island and the Jersey Main to New York harbor?"

"I should rather not undertake it, sir. Is this an United States vessel?"

"Don't you see her colors?" answered the officer, sternly. "Answer me if you can pilot me!"

"Yes, sir!"

"That is prompt. You are just the man I want on board. Have you been up to town within a day or two?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know if the sloop-of-war Franklin is in port?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"Have you heard of the schooner Wasp sailing lately?"

"I heard of an armed schooner that left yesterday down the Sound."

"Ah, then she is off, as I expected, Ellis," said the officer, turning to the officer who had first hailed Randolph, a young, hard-featured man, who stood near him. "We shall have all our own way. But we will stand up the Bay an hour or so, to see whether anything is moving above, and then, as night comes on, return and run up to Amboy. What we do must be done to night! Young man, you must be content to have your boat cast adrift, and remain on board till morning. I need your services. Fill away again. We shan't have to send into the Hook to steal a pilot, now that heaven has sent us one!"

The schooner's topsail once more filled to the wind, and the vessel, with her fore and main sheet close hauled aft, began to move up the bay in the direction of the city. She kept on parallel with the eastern shores of Staten Island for several miles, and then the young officer, who was the commander of the schooner, went aloft with a glass to survey the harbor. It was just as the sun was setting. After a little while he descended to the deck.

"The Franklin lays at her anchor wholly unsuspecting. We can now have the whole bay in our own hands," he said, to the officer he had called Ellis.

"Shall we tack ship?"

"Yes; put about now, and let us try and reach the Hook again before the fog sweeps in from sea. It has been my good friend on occasion, but I don't care to have it come upon us before we get up to Amboy. You look as if you would say something, fisherman!"

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"I was about to ask if this is not the vessel that the Franklin has been cruising after?"

"Well, suppose it is, what then? You would refuse to pilot us, I suppose. But if you love life you will do as you are bid!"

"No, I should the more gladly pilot her. I have heard of your skill in escaping your pursuers, and I admire your courage!"

"The devil you do! So, you are a good friend to us, then?"

"You could never find better. To tell you the truth, I knew what you were before I left the shore, and pulled off to you to join your vessel!"

"Ah, this is a good fellow, after all," said the officer, laughing, and turning to his juniors on the deck. "So we are safe in trusting him."

"You can trust me with safety, sir!"

"I am glad of it. The service I am on is but come into my cabin, I have a question or so to ask you about those who dwell in this region."

Randolph followed him into the cabin. He had conceived a suspicion, from some words that were dropped by the other officers, that the schooner was bound on a freebooting expedition up Raritan Bay, and that some villa was particularly the object of plunder. He thought that Lenafe Manor and Colonel Oglethorpe's house might be the end of the expedition, and he resolved, if tact and art could do it, to possess himself of the confidence of the commander and get the secret.

CHAPTER VIII. THE PILOT.

The cabin, into which Randolph followed the captain of the schooner, was finished handsomely with polished oak panels, and combined elegance and luxury with the warlike paraphernalia of pistols and cutlasses, arranged in crescents and circles stars of swords, and standing-racks of blunderbusses and small arms.

The commander of the schooner himself was a young man, a little undersized, with an accomplished address, and the air of a man who knew the world.

"You say you are a friend to my vessel," he said, as he threw himself upon a settee, while Randolph, not being invited to sit, stood before him.

"Yes!"

"You live near Perth Amboy?"

"Yes sir!"

"Do you know General Ledyard?"

"I knew him," answered Randolph, without betraying any emotion of surprise: "but he lives no longer!"

"Ah! is he dead?"

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"Three days since!"

"So! that is quite as well. He has left a widow?"

"Yes!"

"I am told he was rich, and that he possesses a deal of plate, besides keeping all his money at his house in gold and silver."

"So I have heard people say!"

"He is dead, then!" said the captain, musingly. "Do you know Colonel Oglethorpe?"

"I know he lives on the Island, not far from Amboy."

"He has a fair daughter, I am told."

Randolph started with such emotion that the young captain half rose, and regarded him with a look of surprise.

"Yes, I have seen her;" he promptly answered, seeing that he had nearly subjected himself, perfect as he acted his part, to suspicion.

"She is passing rich, as well as fair!"

"I have heard the Colonel was rich."

"He is doubly so in possessing this sweet daughter and his gold!"

Randolph's eyes flashed; for he did not feel like permitting any other man to speak of the maiden whom he had so madly loved, albeit he had so lately parted from her in angry displeasure. It was with difficulty he could command his feelings.

"Have you seen her?"

"Have I, indeed! aye, I have had the honor of being a rejected suitor!"

"You?"

"Why, man, you need not speak so loud, as if you were talking to a fellow-fisherman. Yes, I have seen her. We met three years ago, in the city, at the opera, for I went to operas then, and was in society; but," added the bucanier in a light tone, "I used other men's names after I had worn my own out, and so I took to privateering. I got to be captain of this craft just as the war closed, and not being in the mood to give up my command ere I had got something by it, I continued at sea; and because I have boarded a few vessels, and borrowed what I needed, the pother has been raised about my ears that you have heard of. Vessels worth bringing to are scarce of late, and hearing that General Ledyard's villa lay near the sea, and knowing that my sweet haughty beauty, Miss Oglethorpe, dwelt near by, I took it in my head to leave my pursuers behind me, and pay a visit both for beauty and booty!"

Randolph could hardly restrain his fiery spirit. He conceived at once, on the spot, the most deadly hostility for the captain who dared to think of, and speak lightly of a maiden once so dear to him. He vowed revenge. His motive in deciding to board the schooner, though at first scarcely defined, assumed, as he rowed towards her, a definite

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aim. He resolved that he would become the instrument of her capture, and thereby achieve a reputation that should place him in the path to fame and honor; for the reckless feelings which had at first agitated his soul had been gradually subdued and removed by the moral influence which his benevolent act in rescuing the drowning keeper reflected back upon his heart. A nobler feeling took possession of his soul; and the sight of the freebooting schooner, when he beheld her from the lantern of the light-house, instead of presenting to his mind a welcome field for lawless adventure, as it would have done a few hours before, inspired him with the brave and noble resolution to attempt the achievement of her capture. For this end he assumed the disguise which he now wore, and fearlessly threw himself into the midst of those whom he determined to betray on the first opportunity. Little, however, did he anticipate that on board that vessel he should hear the name of Olive Oglethorpe, or listen to a project for plundering Lenafe Manor. He now saw the necessity of preserving strictly his disguise, towards which not the least suspicion had yet been directed. He seemed to be, to all on board, the fisherman he assumed to be. The necessity of coolness and self-possession kept him so constantly watchful that he had no time to dwell, as heretofore, upon his own wrongs. He could think only of the singular events with which he had now so strangely become associated.

"I will punish the arrogance of this man!" thought he to himself, "and at the same time do my country service. I will remain by him, and on board his vessel till both are in the power of those who seek them. I will contribute to her capture, or perish in the attempt!"

"You are thoughtful, fisherman," said the corsair, regarding him closely: "what are you thinking of?"

"Whether it would be full tide at the time you would wish to be at Lenafe Manor."

"I am glad you are regarding my interests instead of your own. I want to be up with Amboy as soon after dark as may be; for I do not care about having my movements observed!"

"The fog will soon be in from sea to help you."

"Can you pilot the schooner up to Amboy under a fog? You see it will be dark in half an hour, long as these autumn twilights are. The sun is already down. With the night and the fog we shall be secret enough running up, but will it be possible?"

"I have sailed in Raritan Bay till I can go anywhere in the night, so that I can see a compass!"

"Good! Then all is favorable. Do you know the most retired path to Lenafe Manor from the water-side?"

"Yes. I can guide you."

"And also to the villa of Colonel Oglethorpe?"

"Yes, captain!"

"You are a treasure. Half the trouble is taken off my hands; for, to tell you the truth, I have never been at either of the places, and have only the directions of others. Be faithful and serviceable, my good man, and you shall be well rewarded, but deceive me and your death is as certain as your treachery!"

"Do not doubt me. I am already half a bucanier!"

"So you seem. But I am called on deck. Come up also, and remain aft, for I don't care to have you mix with the men, besides we shall soon need your services."

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They went on deck, Randolph following the captain, with the air of an inferior, though it was with difficulty he could bend his proud carriage to the subservient demeanor demanded of him.

The rich glow of twilight filled the sky and illumined the landscape still with the brightness of day. The wind was just rippling the surface of the water, which was the color of mingled topaz and gold, and every wave, reflecting the crimson clouds of the west, as it broke, seemed to scatter rubies upon the surface. The deep green of the shores of Staten Island, which lay to the right as they sailed southwardly along them, contrasted beautifully with the pure cerulean of the heavens bending above. South, about a league distant, rose the light-house of Sandy Hook, like a column of alabaster marking the eastern limits of the new world. Seaward, hung low upon the bosom of the deep, the evening mist, which, at the declining of the sun at this season, was wont to fling its vapory mantle over land and water. It seemed at rest, but was slowly moving towards the main, and was distant from the schooner only about a mile and a half.

"It is a question whether we or the fog get to the mouth of the Raritan Bay first, said the, captain of the schooner to his first officer, Ellis, as he surveyed it. "It is an even chance! But our good fisherman here, says he can pilot us in by compass and lead! So we will let our friend mist embrace us, if it will, for it may do us service, for what we know, as heretofore!"

"One would think you raised mists at your will, captain," said Randolph. "The story is, that when you are chased, you always have one to run under, and that you are never seen, indeed, except in a fog-bank!"

"That is pretty nigh the truth," answered the corsair, laughing. "So they tell such stories of me and my schooner, do they? Well, so much the better. I care not how much they talk, so they never have to say, 'The Cruiser of the Mist' is at last captured! Men shall never have that to say, so long as I tread her deck!"

Randolph smiled slightly, with that feeling of self-confidence which springs from a determined purpose. The schooner stood on, with a light wind from the north, and rapidly approached the light-house. The fog-bank also steadily moved in from sea, till it nearly overhung the Hook. The twilight deepened, and the light of the heavens suddenly blazed up, flinging its fiery scarf out upon the water to the very vessel's side. Yet there was still more day than night. The shores of Jersey, with the spire of Perth Amboy, were distinctly outlined against the bright west. The captain of the schooner stood upon his deck watching the advancing mist, fearing lest it should cover the entrance to the Raritan Bay, which was just before him, ere they could enter it.

"That fog comes in strangely, Ellis," he said, after regarding closely the centre of the misty column, which seemed to advance more rapidly than the rest, and to be more agitated, as if a current of wind was forcing it along.

"Yes, I have been noticing it."

"It will be upon us now in five minutes. But we shall have doubled this point of the island, into the Raritan, in three. Let it come! It will cover our advance like a good friend! But, what ho! That is not all fog! To quarters! to quarters! I am caught in my own meshes!"

Every eye was turned upon the advancing mist, and slowly became visible, sail by sail emerging from its vapory mass, a tall pyramid of canvass. It came so suddenly into view out of the cloud, as if it had been of it, that every one was struck with surprise and wonder. It was light enough for the corsair captain to recognise the gun-brig which he supposed he had left watching for him off Block Island. He was, however, cool and self-possessed. His rapid orders were given with spirit and decision. The schooner was instantly kept away three points, so as to bring her broad-side to bear, while her ports were thrown open, her guns run out, and every man stood at his post ready for battle. It was a moment of intense expectation. The two vessels, moving different ways, came nearer and nearer every instant.

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The brig had evidently, from the sudden confusion on board, come upon the schooner unexpectedly. The drum rolled loudly to quarters, and the voices of her officers could be heard giving their quick and startling orders. The two vessels were not a third of a mile from each other when the brig emerged from the mist, under which she had come into the bay in pursuit of her foe, and before the latter could throw wide her ports, and run out her guns, they were abeam of each other. The schooner, with the men at her guns and matches a-light, moved steadily by, without a sound heard on board, and, slowly entering the cloud of mist, out of which the brig had come, was the next moment lost to sight from the latter.

"Here is the devil's luck, and no mistake," exclaimed the commander of the brig, as the schooner's main-boom disappeared from his eyes in the fog. "Who would have thought of finding him here. If the fog-king isn't his particular crony, I hope I may never catch the infernal schooner. Ready, about! We have got another fog chase for our amusement! Three minutes more, and I would have had my broad-side ready; but the men at their suppers, and confound my luck! The fellow had his men at his guns, and went by as if he disdained to waste powder on us!"

The brig was put about, and had hardly got steering way on her, when the mist also enveloped her.

"It won't do to poke about here, with Sandy Hook a-lee, and land all about us," said the captain, with deep chagrin. "We have nothing to do but to anchor, to keep from sticking the brig's nose ashore! May he go ashore keel dry! But wishes won't harm him. His craft is insured in the fire office down below! Did you ever see anything like it, Mr. Waters?"

"We seem to have brought the fog in with us for his special benefit!"

"That is what vexes me. Who would have supposed he was just where he was? From the account of the coaster we spoke this afternoon, I supposed she had run up to the top of New York Bay! But I might have known, if I had reflected a moment, that the confounded craft would never be found out of hail of a fog-bank! Down anchor, and lay here and whistle through our fingers till morning! I wouldn't wonder, gentlemen, if the fellow was lying to within three cable's length, one side or the other, of us!"

"We were rightly informed, sir," said Mr. Waters, who was scarcely less annoyed than his commander.

"Yes, the skipper told us truly in saying he saw such a schooner making for New York Bay. But what satisfaction is it to have him here in a fog so thick that you can make ground window-glass of it? I suppose we shall have to lay here till an hour or two after sun-rise."

"The fog seldom breaks away before then, unless it rains, or the wind blows heavily."

"Patience then. Doubtless she is standing right out to sea. We will bide our time."

Thus speaking, the disappointed commander of the brig lighted a cigar as a comforter.

The schooner, in the meanwhile, after standing on for a few minutes, came gently to the wind, and directed her course through the cloud that enshrouded her, N. W. by W., directly for the head-land of Perth Amboy, the bearings of which had been taken by compass a moment before the brig hove in sight.

"You will now stand by the helmsman and con the schooner closely, man," said the captain. "One of you get into the fore-chains and keep the lead going, and report in a whisper to the officer. Make no splashing in the water as you cast the lead! The fog is my good angel, you see, after all!" added the captain to Randolph.

"Yes, I see that it is. You made a narrow escape!"

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"My escapes are always pretty close ones! The brig, I suppose, will poke about astern till she anchors or runs ashore. I trust to you to pilot me safely!"

"I will do so," answered Randolph, who, although he knew nothing of the sea, was perfectly familiar with the bay, in which he had sailed and fished so often. It is true, neither light-house nor land, star nor sea, were visible, yet he was familiar with the depth of water, and knew that his present course would bring him opposite the town.

At length the leadsman reported a depth of water which Randolph well knew was not half a mile from the bluff on which he had last parted from Arthur. The tide had taken the schooner northwardly, and brought him some distance from the point for which the vessel laid her course. He reported to the corsair the position of his vessel, who immediately anchored, and despatched a boat in the direction of the land. In twenty minutes it returned, confirming Randolph's report.

"You have piloted well, and not deceived me, my man. I have full confidence in you now. I will take you as my guide to the villa."

"I will guide you there," said Randolph, after a moment's hesitation.

His situation was now a peculiar one. He had piloted the schooner to an anchorage opposite the home from which he was an exile. The object of the expedition, he had so far favored, was to plunder it. But whether he ought to suffer and forward it, he had not yet determined. He had no love for his step-mother, that he should prevent it; nay, he could not help feeling a momentary triumph, as he reflected, that he had it in his power to punish her duplicity and avarice, by depriving her of those possessions, to bestow which upon her son she had criminated herself and ruined his own prospects in life. For some time he hesitated what to do. Finally he decided that he would be the guide, and appear before his step-mother as an avenger. He thought not of Arthur, for he felt that Arthur was his greatest enemy, whether innocently so or not.

"Yes, my mother-in-law shall feel that I am not utterly insignificant, that she has not wholly crushed me. She shall suffer, and justly too! But I must save Olive from this lawless corsair. It is for her sake I have attached myself to him, that I have done what I have. While he thinks I must serve him, I shall most defeat his purposes. It is for this I am at his side."

Two boats were now manned, and left the schooner with muffled oars. In the leading one was the corsair captain and Randolph. The boat landed at the spot where, that morning, he had embarked, as he believed, never to tread upon its shores again.

CHAPTER IX. THE LANDING.

The party, headed by the corsair, and guided by Randolph, after reaching the top of the bank, took its way along a path, through the gardens, that led to the east front of the house. It was retired and little frequented.

"You seem to know the way well!"

"Yes, I have-taken fish up to the house this way," answered Randolph evasively, in allusion to the fruits of his own pastime.

"Have you ever met the sons of General Ledyard?"

"Yes, I have seen them."

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"I am told the younger is remarkable only for his beauty, and the partiality shown him by his parents. The elder I have met!"

"Met!"

"Yes. It was in the night, however, and we scarcely saw one another's faces. It was in the lobby passage leading from the theatre. He was escorting this same Miss Oglethorpe to her carriage. I had invited her to the theatre the same evening, and she refused me. I was enraged at seeing her with another. I therefore thrust myself between them, and separated them, passing my arm around her, and touching her cheek with my lip in mere wantonness. Ledyard struck me. I returned the blow the crowd pressed upon us, and so we parted. We have not met since. I am told he is betrothed to the maiden. She shall be mine ere she is his, nevertheless. An half hour here will be all we shall need, and an hour more will bring us to the house of Colonel Oglethorpe!"

It was fortunate that the darkness of the night concealed the fiery expression of Randolph's countenance at hearing the words that had fallen upon his ear. The man he had most wished to meet for two years past was within the reach of his clenched hand. But he restrained himself. He commanded his vengeance; but his heart bounded with triumphant joy.

"This man and I ne'er part, both living," he said within his soul. "We are thrice mortal foes. Let him be my tool for bringing judgment upon this wicked woman, and then I hold his destiny in my hands!"

They approached the dwelling. A single light burned in the drawing-room. The corsair bade his men stand in the shadow of a tree that overhung the steps of the house, while he followed Randolph to the door.

"I would have thee ask at the door if they would buy fish!" said the pirate. "This will let us have entrance."

Randolph knocked, and the door was opened by a footman in deep mourning.

"Let me first enter! Wait without and follow me in when I give the signal," said Randolph in a low tone. "I can prepare the way for you."

"Be it so. I confide in your cleverness, my man. I would enter peaceably, if possible; for I don't wish to raise an alarm, else I may not be able to pay my visit to the Colonel's, to which this is only secondary. I come here to please my men. I go there to gratify myself!"

Randolph made no reply. He passed through the hall, having said to the footman that he had a message for her from her son. Before the servant could deliver the message, Randolph had passed him and stood in the presence of the woman who had wronged him. She met him, and seeing, as she supposed, a fisherman only, she started back with an exclamation of disappointment.

"I had hoped it was Arthur!"

"He brings news of him, Madam," said the footman.

"What of him! Bring you evil news? He has been gone since before noon! What of him?"

"He is well. I saw him at Colonel Oglethorpe's!"

"Thank God! I feared he had fallen a victim to that fiend his elder brother!"

"Madam, you say what you do not believe!" cried Randolph in his own voice, which rung indignantly.

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"Who are you? am I mocked? Help!"

"You know me. I am glad you do. I am your victim. You know, Madam, that I never harbored thought of evil against you. You conspired my ruin. Yours is at the door! Know that your dwelling is surrounded by a band of freebooters from the 'Schooner of the Mist,' which is anchored before it!"

"Robber! was I not right?"

"No, Madam! I am no robber. Accident gave me knowledge of their intention. I have accompanied them, and am party to what I could not help, to protect you from their violence, though God knows I owe you no love or favor. If you would be spared captivity betray no knowledge of me. Nay, no imprecations! you merit all! Besides, what they take is mine, not thine! I give my consent freely, so you are punished for your avarice. Give me those keys at your girdle!

"Will you suffer me to be slain?" cried the wretched woman in terror, with which was mingled hatred against him.

"No. Be passive and I will protect you. I can delay the event no longer."

He advanced into the hall and called to the captain of the schooner to advance.

"The lady is informed, captain, of your intentions. She will be passive. Here are the keys which I have obtained from her. Come with me and I will show you what they open. This is the side-board. This a safe where plate is kept. This unlocks a chest of silver. This gives access to bags of gold."

"Bring in only such men as are wanted to take out the treasures," said the corsair to his lieutenant, "and let the rest see that the servants do not escape to give the alarm in the town. You know the premises well, fisherman!"

"Yes, I have lived here in the house!"

"Oh, ah! I see how your knowledge comes. That is the lady in mourning who is wringing her hands there?"

"Yes!"

"I wonder where the young men are?"

"I told you they were away!"

"Ah, true! I shouldn't care to have Mr. Randolph, (that is his name, I believe,) at home; for I should like to cross blades with him. I hate every man who once crosses me in my love!"

Randolph made no reply. He bit his lip almost through to control his feelings.

"I will leave you now to secure your booty," said Randolph: "I must take care for myself!"

"Be on hand when we are ready to depart. You are an intelligent and good fellow, and I can't spare you. We want you at the Colonel's too."

"Be sure I shall not fail you *there*," answered Randolph, in a marked tone as he left the room where the corsair and his men were at work removing the plate and money from the place where they were deposited into sacks.

"That fisherman, Ellis, is a useful fellow. He seems above his degree in intelligence!"

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"At any rate, he seems quite at home here. He and the old lady are quarreling."

"I dare say he is asking her for her finger rings," said Ellis, laughing.

"Let him have the spoil for his services then. We are reaping a sufficient harvest here!"

The second interview between Randolph and his step-mother, which they alluded to and overheard, was a mutually recriminating one. He boldly charged her with her crimes, and she in return accused him of bringing upon her the crew of the schooner. He disdained to reply to this charge, and turning the key upon her, as she was accusing him of the murder of Arthur, he hastened to the room in which the servants were guarded by four of the band. He approached one of them, and in a low voice desired him to follow him. The man tremblingly obeyed. When they had got outside of the door, where they were alone together, Randolph said to him in his natural tone,

"Parker, you are the only one of the household that was ever friendly to me!"

"Is this Mr. Randolph?"

"Hist. Not a word. I am here to do good, not evil. The captain of this band knows me only as a fisherman. By accident I got knowledge of their coming here, and joined them to prevent more mischief. You are the coachman, and know the fleetest horse, and also how to ride fast. Saddle one, and gallop with all haste to the point of land below Elizabethtown. You can reach it in less than two hours. You will find at anchor there the Revenue Cutter 'Sea Gull,' at least she was there yesterday. Board her, and tell the captain that the pirate schooner, the 'Cruiser of the Mist,' is anchored off Amboy, where I will see that she is delayed until morning. Tell him to make sail at once, with as many volunteers as he can get to increase his crew, and there is a chance that the schooner may fall into his hands, with what aid we can give him here. Now mount and spur!"

The man immediately hurried to the stables, and in five minutes was on the road.

Arthur Ledyard had been overtaken in his ride up the island by a servant despatched after him by Olive, as soon as she could sufficiently reflect after Randolph's abrupt departure from her. Arthur returned on the wings of fraternal affection to find his brother gone, and Olive under strong excitement. She related to him all that had passed, repeating Randolph's words. He was surprised and grieved.

"My poor, poor brother!"

"Nay, your mad brother! He is not worthy a thought. I am deeply angry with him. He treated me with insult the most bitter. I can never forgive him!"

"But, Olive, consider what Randolph has undergone! how "

"Not a word in his defence. He never loved me truly. I have been deceived in supposing I loved him. I will forget him. This affair has brought out his real character. How could I have deluded my heart. He flattered me, and I was proud of his praise. But I feel that I never have entertained towards him the tenderness, dear Arthur, with which you have inspired me. I thought I only loved you as a sister loves a fond brother. But your brother has unwittingly taught me where the needle of my heart points. You have my heart, Arthur! Henceforward let the unworthy and fiery Randolph be forgotten!"

"Nay, my brother loves you, Olive. He was overwhelmed with his heart's bitterness when he last saw you. The cloud upon his spirits cast a shadow over all things around him. He loves you, and in his happier hour "

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"I will not listen!" answered the impetuous girl. "I have cast him from my heart. You alone, dear Arthur, shall reign there!"

"Never, dearest Olive, as the usurper of my brother. I have supplanted him in his birth-right. I cannot do so in his affections also!"

"What I give is not his never was his. Arthur, do not you also make me wretched! Shall I sue to you for your love?"

"No no! What am I to do! I do most fondly love you, Olive! but so long as my brother held a claim upon your heart's treasures, I was sweetly content only to worship you afar off. I should wound the deepest feelings of my nature, I should falsify my being, if I said I loved you not. Were my brother freely to surrender thee "

"Nay nay, Arthur! Has he not flung me aside as an idle plaything? If he loved me, he would not have doubted me on so slight a cause. He has no claim upon my hand or heart! Both are yours!"

She extended her hand towards him as she spoke. He caught it, and pressed it to his lips with passionate fervor. Her words had revealed to him the fervor and character of his own regard for her a regard that only fraternal affection and reverence had kept hitherto in its bud.

"Good Arthur!"

"Nay, dear as this moment is to me, Olive, I would rather that Randolph's name fell thus from thy lips in place of mine that this happiness were his!"

She was about to make a reproachful reply to this noble sentiment, when the footsteps of a servant advancing checked her words.

"Here is the keeper of the light-house, who would see Mr. Ledyard."

At the same instant the keeper, who was close behind the footman, presented himself at the door of the parlor.

"What would you with me?" asked Arthur, advancing a step, with thoughts of news, perhaps, from Randolph.

"Here is a line for you, sir. It was given me by a young man who saved my life to-day. I have rowed hard to bring it here, for I promised him that I would!"

Arthur took the card from him, and hastily read:

"Dear Arthur,

"The pirate schooner known as 'The Cruiser of the Mist,' is at this moment off Sandy Hook laying to! Ride to the head of the island with all haste, and take a boat to the sloop-of-war Franklin. Tell the captain, if he gets underweigh at once, he may capture her! Delay not a moment, if you love your country or your brother,

Randolph."

"This is exciting news! Will you order me a fresh horse from your stables, Olive?"

"What is the news? What must take you away?"

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He handed her the card.

"Who gave you this?" she quickly asked the keeper.

"A noble young man, to whom I owe my life."

"How?"

"He was in a boat saw me strugglin in the water when mine had sunk beneath me, and saved me!"

"Is he at Sandy Hook?" asked Arthur.

"I left him going to board the schooner!"

"What, the Cruiser?"

"Yes. He would go!"

"It is strange. But I dare say he had a purpose in it. I will obey his request, Olive. The capture of this schooner has been long desired. Shall I have a horse?"

"When will you return?"

"Within six or seven hours."

"The stable is at your command. I would my father were at home! He promised to be here by noon."

"It is not long past. He is probably detained at Brunswick."

"The horse is at the door, sir," said the footman.

"Then farewell, Olive. By nine o'clock I shall be here again."

"Do not linger."

"Your love will give me wings!"

With these words the handsome youth sprung into his saddle, and once more turned his horse's head towards the north end of the island. On reaching Richmond, it occurred to him that the shortest process would be to cross to the Telegraph Fort on the east of the island, and have his news telegraphed to the sloop-of-war. This he saw would save at least an hour and a half's time.

On reaching the telegraph station, he threw himself from his horse and made known to the director his wish. The intelligence was rapidly conveyed to the ship-of-war; and waiting there until, through the spy-glass, he saw the Franklin get underweigh, Arthur remounted his horse and hastened back the road he had come. It was near sunset when he left the station, and late when he once more regained the mansion of Colonel Oglethorpe, happy that he had so successfully executed his brother's wish.

The messenger, whom Randolph despatched from the villa for the Cutter, reached that vessel about eleven at night, after having followed her to a place three miles further up from her former anchorage. The captain received the intelligence he brought with an exclamation of joy. Although his vessel was less than ninety tons burden, and

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carried but four "twelves," with a crew of less than thirty men, he resolved to get underweigh without delay. Several sloops were anchored near, from which, as soon as the news was sent on board of them, came in all forty brave men, burning to take part in the capture of the vessel that had defied so long a sloop-of-war and a large gun-brig. The wind being fair, but light, the Cutter in less than an hour after the news reached her, was standing through the Raritan Strait in the direction of the enemy.

"You say, sir, that you have no participation in this robbery of my house?" said Madam Ledyard, when Randolph once more entered her presence.

"I do repeat it, madam. You look troubled about the loss of so much plate and money. I enjoy your distress. Look upon these honest pirates as God's messengers, sent to administer retributive justice to you. You sinned for gold, and they take your gold from you! I am happy, madam!"

"Do you not heed the loss of so much money that might be your own, but which now never can be?"

"Not a bit, madam. I never expected to possess it before these good plunderers came. I therefore am no loser. You are the loser, both in soul and silver! Hark! how the coin rings as they pour it out! I dare say each sound pierces your heart like a dagger. I hope it does! You seem to feel. I am glad of it. I should lose half my revenge were you indifferent!"

Fiend! would you add taunts to robbery?"

"Nay, I do but enjoy your rage and grief, no more!"

"You are a pirate! You brought them here! You will share the gold!"

"No, not a stiver of it! I let them steal so that they may be caught in the act, and with the booty in possession. I am their foe! I am planning their destruction. And that I may be more certain their condemnation, I let them rob! You do not believe me. You will see, tomorrow, if I speak truth or not!"

"And shall I have all back if they are taken?" she cried, with avaricious thirst.

"Nay, not a penny or pound's weight. It was never thine! I shall keep it myself, methinks!"

"Would you rob your brother Arthur of his just means?"

"My brother Arthur has robbed me," responded Randolph, bitterly, "but I forgive him!"

"Of what has he robbed you?"

"A golden heart! But no matter! He has robbed me of a treasure I valued more than all thine ill-begotten hoards these men are taking away! I said it was a golden heart! Nay, it was a diamond! Nay, adamant! Perhaps, so pure and cold it was, 'twas only a heart of ice after all!"

"You talk like a madman!"

"And if I am not a madman, it is not your fault, madam!"

"He, fisherman! we wait you!"

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"I am called, you see! Adieu! No more covet gold that is so easily taken from thee! Repent, madam, and get treasures where thieves will not break through nor steal! Farewell!"

Thus speaking, Randolph left the room. He heard a shriek from her, and a heavy fall, as he went out after the corsair; but his heart was hardened towards her, and bidding the liberated servants see to their mistress, he passed out and quitted the house.

CHAPTER X. THE MAIDEN AND THE BROTHERS.

The freebooting party reached the schooner in safety, though with some delay, as it was difficult, in the darkness and fog, to find her position. The booty which had been obtained was disposed of in the cabins, and the corsair then gave orders to man his gig.

"Don't you weigh anchor and stand up opposite the house of Colonel Oglethorpe, sir?" asked Randolph.

"No, I think I will pull there in my boat, leaving my vessel here."

"It is a long pull, sir," said Randolph, who was desirous of getting the schooner as far up the narrow strait, between the island and the main, as possible, thus less ening her chance of getting fairly to sea again before the arrival of the vessels to which he had sent information. And having no intelligence yet, that either of his messages had been delivered, or that the vessels were at the places to which he sent, he felt the necessity of bringing the schooner as far from sea as he could, in order that, if the whole enterprise of her capture should at last fall upon him individually, he might effect it with more facility.

"The distance, you say, is about a mile and a half?"

"Yes. The current too is strong, while with this wind you could lay your course!"

"But I should have to drop anchor and weigh a second time. No. I will go in my gig!"

"Be it so, then. You will be no less in my power," said Randolph to himself.

"You will accompany me, fisherman! Your services I can't do without!"

"I will go, and do what I can, sir."

"You shall not go unrewarded. If I succeed to-night in what I go upon, you shall to-morrow be made rich enough to buy you a fishing craft."

"Thank you, sir!"

The boat soon after put off from the schooner, and Randolph took the coxswain's place at the helm. A small lantern cast its rays upon a pocket compass, by which he steered direct for the house of the Colonel. The night was not only obscured by fog, but dark with overhanging clouds. Nothing was visible but the boat and themselves. During the row Randolph was silent. His breast glowed with the most intense hostility towards the corsair. He despised him not only for his lawless profession, but for daring to lift his thoughts to the woman whom he himself loved; for Randolph still loved, and madly loved, the beautiful, dark-eyed girl, whom he had, in his bitterness, so haughtily treated. Resolutions of vengeance against him for the past, and for what he was now meditating against her, filled his soul. But he waited his time for action. He desired the destiny of the man to be fully matured. He wished to show the world, her, his brother even his step-mother that he was honorable and

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true as a man and a citizen, notwithstanding the wrongs which had almost driven him to despair and recklessness.

The boat at length touched the shore, and Randolph sprung to land. He was followed by the corsair, who ordered six men to take their pistols and attend him.

"The men might accidentally discharge one of them, and this would give the alarm," said Randolph. "There are but two men—servants in the house. They will need no weapons!"

"You are right. Leave your pistols in the boat. I don't want any fighting or blood—shed. An alarm would be fatal to us; for, in the darkness and fog, we could not stir the schooner from where she is."

The men laid their pistols down and prepared to move on. Randolph glided back to the boat, under cover of the impenetrable darkness, and hastily securing a brace of the pistols, rejoined them.

"Ho, fisherman!" said the corsair. "I feared we had lost you in the dark! How shall we be able to move? I can't see path nor tree! Who has the lantern?"

"I have the lantern," answered Randolph, opening it and going on ahead.

The mansion of Colonel Oglethorpe stood upon an elevated table of land about three hundred yards from the water. It was embosomed in oaks and larches, and approached from the shore by a gravelled walk bordered by evergreens. Up this avenue the party took their noiseless way. The hour was a little before eleven, yet a light, as they approached the house, was faintly visible through the mist.

"There is the house," said Randolph, stopping suddenly. "What is your purpose, captain, in coming here?"

"Why, you are a free, frank fellow, and seem to know the world, fisherman as you are," said the corsair, laughing, "so I will tell you. I mean to surprise the maiden, and carry her on board the schooner. The first port we come to after, I shall make her my bride!"

"This is quite a new way of getting a wife!"

"Yes, somewhat. But I have both love and revenge to gratify. I love her, and would wed her, will she nill she! She hates me, and I would wed her to punish her contumacy. So, let us on! Which is the best way of getting into the house?"

"Follow me, and I will guide you," answered Randolph, in a low tone.

The house stood upon a raised basement of stone, in which were the underground apartments of the mansion. They were massive stone rooms, with heavy arches supporting the floors above, and used as store houses, ice—house, and receptacles for coal. There was a door beneath the portico, which led into these subterranean chambers, and another at their extremity, which communicated with the house above.

"Remain here for a moment, and I will effect an entrance which shall not disturb any one," said Randolph, stopping by the steps of the portico. "If we apply to the front door, the servants, seeing you, may escape, and a musket fired by one of them would give the alarm. Do not move till I come back."

"There is little likelihood that we will, for the darkness can be cut," answered the corsair, as Randolph passed round the house with the lantern.

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He hastened to the rear, and lifting one of the windows opening into the library, he entered. All was still within the house. Perfectly familiar with the localities, he crossed the room, and opened the door leading into the hall. He traversed it in the direction of the drawing-room, from which the light had gleamed through the fog. The door was ajar, and a light streamed through the opening. He heard voices. Noiseless he advanced. He looked in, and beheld Olive Oglethorpe seated upon an ottoman. Her harp had fallen forgotten by her side. At her feet knelt Arthur, her hand clasped in his, and gazing up into her face with the most passionate fervor. The joy and worship of love shone in his eyes and glowed upon his cheek. She was bending her eyes upon him, with a sweet tenderness of affection in them that the heart only can give expression to.

Words passed between them, low and burning, and thrilling with passionate devotion. Randolph saw and heard, and all the bitterness of his soul came back upon him like a storm-cloud that returns upon the changing wind. He saw all his suspicions confirmed, and his soul was on fire. His first impulse was to bound forward, strike his brother to the earth, and charge her with her treachery to him. But he restrained his feelings. Haughty scorn took their place. He felt suddenly like overwhelming both, not with the vengeance of a fiery hand, but of noble deeds.

"Be it so! Let him love her! He has my birth-right, let him have my bride also. I will not slay him! I will not harm him! I will take a higher revenge! What I have now discovered shall not change my first purpose. They are in my power. All I have to do is to retire from the scenes and let this corsair and his party come forward and act out my vengeance. But I will save her! They shall know I am noble still!"

Thus speaking, Randolph retired noiselessly from the door, and after traversing quickly three or four rooms, he came to a door, which he threw open. The cold rush of damp air that came up, told that it let into the arched chambers beneath the villa. He descended and traversed the chilly, paved passage that led to the outlet underneath the portico. It was barred heavily on the inside, and locked with a huge padlock. The key hung up by the side of it. He unlocked it and removed the iron bar, and threw open the door.

The corsair and his party started back at seeing him suddenly show himself with the lantern.

"I have been in the house and the way is open by passing through this passage," said Randolph.

"Come, men, enter after me, but make no noise," said the captain of the schooner, in a suppressed tone. "Why, what a prison-like hole! These look like dungeons on each side!"

"The house was erected in old times, when men built for centuries," answered Randolph, as he closed the strong oaken door, and replaced the heavy bars across it.

"Do you lock it? we want a way to retreat!"

"You will go out by the upper way!" answered Randolph, as he locked the bar and thrust the key of the padlock into his pocket. "Now follow me, captain, and I will show you the lady. Let your men remain here until you call to them. The noise they will make in going through the house will alarm her. I have seen her. She is in the drawing-room."

"Bravo, fisherman! I will go with you alone first. Remain here, lads, and when you hear me call, be at my side; though I fancy we shall have no fighting to night!"

Randolph went forward, closely followed by the corsair. They reached the upper floor, and Randolph then led the way to the hall.

"Now, if you will promise, captain, not to disturb her yet, but merely look in upon her, it is all I ask for showing you up!"

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"I promise for five minutes, provided I can gaze on her unseen for that time."

"Softly! now look in."

"What a heavenly face! I never thought her the half so fair! I could hug you, my man, for getting me this blessing! But what Adonis is this? Here is fighting to do!"

Randolph made no reply. Leaving him gazing upon her, he hastened back to the door which led into the subterranean rooms, and, softly closing it, he turned the key. Then, for better security, he placed against it a heavy book-case, and other articles of furniture. Having thoroughly barricaded it he returned, saying,

"Remain there, my men! at least you are safe! Now I will take care of my friend in a manner worthy of himself!"

"Are the five minutes out, fisherman?" asked the corsair as he came back.

"Yes. Enter and tell her what you came for, but touch her not, for I can't see a woman rudely treated!"

"The deuce you can't. I think I shall follow the bent of my humor, good fellow. Don't try to command me, because I have given you some license of familiar speech."

As he spoke, he entered the drawing-room. Randolph, with flashing eyes, entered with him. On beholding this sudden entrance, Olive rose, and uttered an exclamation of surprise and alarm. Arthur sprung to his feet, and fixed upon the corsair a look of haughty inquiry.

"What means this intrusion? Who are ye?"

"Ask the lady, who trembles as she recognises me," answered the corsair.

Arthur turned to Olive who had recognised him, and nearly fainted with terror; for well she knew that he had come to visit her for no good. Rumor had said that he had taken to lawless deeds since she last saw him, and her fears partook of the most painful character.

"Do you know this person, Olive?" asked Arthur.

"Nay, I do not wish to know him. What do you here, sir?" she demanded with sudden energy, which displeasure and fear combined, inspired.

"I come, fair maiden, to ask you, with all due courtesy, to become the bride of "The corsair of the Mist!"

"The pirate captain!" cried Arthur.

"Yes, if so please you, handsome sir. I am captain of a schooner that sails under any flag that suits the hour. I have come to ask this lady to be my companion on the bright blue wave. Once I sued to her and was scorned. Now I come as a conqueror, not a slave!"

"Protect me, Arthur!"

"With my life!" cried the youth, clasping her in the embrace of one arm, while, with his weaponless hand outstretched, he stood between her and the corsair.

"So! I see I must use weapons here," he cried, drawing his dirk. "Stand back, my fine young fellow!"

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"Hold!" cried Randolph, striking the weapon from his hand and levelling a pistol at his breast.

"What is this? treachery? am I betrayed, villain?"

"God be praised, we have a friend here!" exclaimed Olive.

"It is Randolph's voice; nay, it *is* he!" cried Arthur in amazement.

"Yes, you are betrayed, and by the man you have most reason to fear!" answered Randolph, in his natural voice and manner. "I am no fisherman! I am Randolph Ledyard! I have assumed this disguise to betray you. I have stuck by you closely that I might save her whom you would have destroyed! I am her avenger and my own!"

"Ho! my men, ho! to the rescue!" shouted the infuriated corsair.

"You need not call! your men are secured below as safely as in the dungeons of the Bastile. You are in my power. If you love life you will yield without further resistance."

"Never to *thee!*" cried the corsair, suddenly springing forward and striking the pistol from his hand. The next instant he was flying through the hall. Randolph pursued, and came up with him as he was endeavoring to open the front door. He presented the muzzle of a pistol before his eyes.

"Surrender on the instant or you die!"

The corsair glared upon him with savage vindictiveness, and with an execration that would have well become the lips of a fiend, he flung his dagger to the floor and folded his arms upon his chest in fierce and haughty token of submission.

"Arthur, bind him, while I stand sentry over him till you secure him," said Randolph.

The young man cut down the bell-cord, and with it firmly bound his arms behind him, and Randolph, taking the end, passed it through an iron ring of the door, and strongly secured him. He then re-entered the drawing-room. Olive sat, pale and trembling, upon a sofa. Arthur approached her and assured her that the danger was passed. Randolph stood near and silently gazed on both. They both were confused by the intensity of his looks.

"Olive," he said in a sad tone, "I trust you will not think me, after this, so bad as you believed me! I loved you I thought you loved me! You did, perhaps, till I became poor, and was banished my father's house! I then sought you, and the sight of me caused you to shriek and recoil as if a serpent had crossed your path. I knew then you loved me no more. So I gave you back your troth, and left you left you to love my brother! Nay, speak not! do not add falsehood to what has been! I know your heart is his, and that he loves you as I did nay, as I still would, did I feel that you were worthy. I have witnessed your interview to-night. I saw him at your feet, I heard your words of love! Nay, not a word, Arthur. Fate has given all mine to thee! I came hither to save you, Olive, as you heard me say to the corsair. I have shown you both that, though wronged, I have the nobleness of soul to forgive. In serving you, I am avenged upon you!"

"Randolph! I do confess my injustice to you!" cried Arthur, throwing himself at his feet.

"Not a word! Rise, Arthur! Love her and bless her! I will love my country henceforward only! But this is no time for words. Action is demanded. I leave in your charge and trust this pirate chief. There are six of his men below. They are secure. But you had best send the servants for some of your neighbors to arm and come over to the villa. I have other duties. Did you receive my message?"

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"Yes, and bore it to the telegraph station. I waited and saw the Franklin get under weigh."

"Then the schooner cannot escape. Olive, farewell! I give thee to my brother, for without thee he would not fulfil his destiny, which builds him up on the ruin of my own!"

With these words he turned from her and passed into the hall. The maiden would have spoken, but her voice failed her. She extended her hands towards him, and half rose, but they fell by her side, and she sunk back again like one lifeless.

"What mean you to do with me, traitor?" demanded the corsair, as Randolph passed him.

"Hold you prisoner till your vessel is also in my hands, and then take you prisoner in her to town! I wish to borrow the ring on your hand! Nay, not a word. I will have it. I hold your life cheap, and do not tempt me too far."

The prisoner suffered him to remove from his finger a ring set with a cornelian. Randolph then quitted the house, after leaving his pistol with Arthur to stand guard over the bound corsair.

CONCLUSION.

The lieutenant of the schooner, Ellis, was impatiently walking the deck. The captain and his party had been gone two hours and a half. At length the dash of oars reached his ear, and a voice hailed,

"Ho, the schooner where away?"

"It is the fisherman!" he cried. "Pull this way!"

"Aye, aye!"

The next moment he saw a boat approaching, the fog having lighted a little, as it often does, towards midnight.

"Well, what success? Where is the captain?"

"He is on shore. He wants you to man both boats, take command of them, and pull towards the south side of the island, where there is a house filled with rich booty. He crosses over by the land, and will join you there! Here is his ring in token that he sent me!"

"More booty, lads!" cried Ellis. "This is a rich night for us! Man the boats. How many men?"

"He told you to take all but ten, as there may be resistance!"

"So much the better. How far is the place?"

"Three miles to the east. You will pull straight in for the island, and then keeping the shores in sight, row round until you discover a light which the captain will hold out!"

"And you?"

"I am to remain here, to pilot the schooner, when the tide rises, round to the place!"

"Then we shall not have to pull back?"

CONCLUSION.

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"The schooner will be off there to take you on board!"

"So much the better!"

In less than fifteen minutes the two boats left the schooner, and were soon lost to the eyes of Randolph in the mist and darkness.

"Thus far is my plan successful," he said, as the last dip of their oars fell upon his ear. "I have now not a dozen of the pirates on board, and these are the least resolute of the men. The schooner is all but in my hands! But I must act with discretion and coolness. The fog is not so dense as it was, and I shall be able to steer out of this strait into the bay. I will try it! The wind is in the west, and favorable. I may fall in with the Franklin down the bay, or the gun-brig, and then the schooner's fate is as fixed as her captain's!"

Two mornings afterwards, the following paragraph appeared in one of the city papers:

"We congratulate the public upon the capture, at last, of the pirate schooner 'Sea-Wing,' better known as 'The Cruiser of the Mist.' After a long time defying the efforts of a sloop-of-war and a gun-brig, that have been cruising after her, she was captured yesterday morning in a most singular manner, and last evening brought up and anchored off the battery, under the guns of the corvette Franklin.

"It appears that she had the boldness, on the night of the seventh, to run into Raritan Bay, as usual under cover of a fog, and land a party to plunder the villas belonging to the late General Ledyard and Colonel Oglethorpe. A son of General Ledyard, who was out fishing in the garb of a fisherman, having seen the schooner, was hailed and brought on board. He at once suspected her character, and preserved his incognito. He pretended to be a friend to her, and promised to pilot her up the bay. The pirate, supposing him to be a fisherman, gave his schooner in charge to him. Young Ledyard did pilot her to a position near his father's house, and then landed with them. He immediately privately despatched a messenger on horseback to the Revenue Cutter, then lying near Elizabethtown point, and another to give information to the Franklin. From this villa he went also to Colonel Oglethorpe's, acting as guide; and by a masterly stratagem secured, in the cellar of the house, the party of six men whom the pirate had taken with him. He then made their captain prisoner, and bound him with the assistance of his brother, who chanced to be there. Thence he returned on board with the captain's signet, and showing it to the lieutenant in command, he directed him, as from the pirate himself, to proceed with both boats, and all the men but enough to manage the schooner, to a point round Staten Island, where he was to await him, and direct them to other booty.

"The lieutenant obeyed, and left the schooner with the men, leaving young Ledyard on board, who had represented to him that when the tide rose he was to pilot the vessel round and wait for them.

"After the departure of these boats, leaving only ten men on board, Ledyard gave orders to weigh anchor. The fog, which prevails at this season, was still dense, but being familiar with the depth of water, he kept a man in the chains heaving the lead. In this manner, this resolute young man piloted the schooner, not only out of the strait, but down the bay until the light at Sandy Hook was visible looming through the mist. Here he took the bearings, by compass, of the channel up New York Bay, and began to steer in the direction of the town. As the wind favored, and there was little need of altering tack or sheet, he sent six of the men below, saying they might sleep until the schooner came to the point where the captain and boats were. After they had gone below, he sent the other four, an old man and three boys, aft, and unperceived by them secured the hatches, and imprisoned the men below. He now boldly made known to the rest his purpose to take possession of the schooner, and told them if they aided him they should be pardoned for their crimes, but if they resisted he should shoot them upon the spot. His intrepidity had the desired effect. They promised submission, and cheerfully obeyed his orders.

"The morning now broke, and this bold young man found himself still twelve miles from town. The wind now died away, and the tide set seaward. The men below began loudly to demand their release, and it required the

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most perfect coolness and courage on his part to maintain his perilous position. He was slowly drifting down the bay with the ebb, and the mist all around him, when the wind again breezing up, he discovered all at once the Franklin's royals overtopping the fog. The sloop did not see him, and was moving majestically by, when he hailed, and being under steerage way, bore towards her.

"The surprise and confusion on board the corvette is represented to have been intense, on discovering all at once, as if rising from the sea, the pirate vessel close aboard of them. All hands were called to quarters, and preparations made for sinking her, when the schooner lay up alongside, and Ledyard leaped on board, armed to the teeth. His first words, 'The schooner is your prize,' suspended the uplifted cutlasses that were drawn to receive him. In a few brief words he made known what he had achieved; and the sight of the empty deck of the schooner, with the roars of the men confined forward, confirmed his statement.

"The schooner was immediately taken possession of, with all her booty taken from General Ledyard's, and young Ledyard volunteering to guide a party to the point where the pirate-boats were, these barges were captured after short resistance. The captain and the men taken at the villa were then brought on board the Franklin, and the two vessels, followed by the gun-brig 'Chaser,' and the cutter 'Preble,' which were too late in at the 'death,' made sail for town.

"It is understood that Mr. Ledyard will have a lieutenant's commission presented him in the navy, and a present of a sword from the Board of Commerce. His daring and skill, and presence of mind, have rarely been equalled in any enterprise on record, and he deserves all the honor his country can bestow."

All we have to add is, that Randolph did receive both a commission and a sword, and took service in the navy, in which he arrived to the highest distinction. Arthur never wedded Olive Oglethorpe. Reverence for his brother's love for her made her sacred in his heart; nor did he share the patrimony. Olive Oglethorpe died a few years since in the convent at Georgetown.

Thus end we our romance, which, if not "over true," is not the fault of the romancer; for, if these things foregoing never were, they might have been. Fiction is the register of the probable and possible, as history is of the positive and actual.

THE END.

An edition of The cruiser of the mist (1845). The Cruiser of the Mist. by J. H. Ingraham. 0 Ratings. "On one of those brilliant mornings peculiar to the early autumnal days, when the atmosphere is like crystal in transparency, and the skies are turgid with their deepest blue, two persons stood together upon an eminence that commanded the Bay of Raritan and a wide expanse of the ocean horizon to the eastward." MIST is a traditional pocket cruiser built in plywood and epoxy materials. She has accommodations for two adults and two children. A vee berth forward and large quarter berth is provided to port. She is stable and has a self-bailing cockpit making her an able boat for her size. She has a well proportioned gaff rig to go with her traditional appearance that is easy to set up from a trailer. Build her and enjoy many hours on the water. Glue and screw construction is 1/2" plywood and epoxy over straight frames. Plans include: materials, line, construction, and sail plan. A full size frame plan Two weeks have passed since the now-infamous 'Mist Incident'. A combined rescue force is assembled to infiltrate the mist, search for survivors, and try and eliminate the mist itself. It wasn't hard to find it, all of them having read up on the layout of the bunker beforehand. An intersection led off into a storage room or ventilation control but the four cruisers didn't hesitate; grimaces on their faces as they approached the broken metal door. A slow push made it creak open, the sound seeming to echo in the stifling silence and making them all wince, but with only minor reluctance they stepped into the narrow hallway beyond, and began to descend the stairs down into the bunker's depths. David's car (an International Scout in the novella, a 1968 Toyota Land Cruiser in the film) is, as its name suggests, the vehicle belonging to David Drayton, and used by him and his group to navigate unattacked through the Mist. David Drayton, his son, Billy, and their neighbour, Brent Norton, use the car to drive to the Grocery Store. It is then left abandoned for two days when the Mist appears and engulfs the town.