

‘The Man With the Iron Mask’

Towards the end of the seventeenth century there occurred one of the most extraordinary events which ever result from the iniquity of diplomatic machinations, – an event which has given rise to some of the most remarkable hypotheses ever adduced to elucidate an affair apparently involved in almost impenetrable darkness, and which has ever since formed no mean subject for the discursive pen of the historian.

On a beautiful evening, towards the end of the seventeenth century, as before stated, the fond adieux of two faithful lovers were exchanged upon the shore of Scio, one of the islands of Greece. A small boat touched the strand: and at a short distance from the shore was a beautiful vessel corresponding in description to the brig of the present day, and then ‘lying to’, apparently waiting for the return of the bark before noticed. With one hand upon the prow of his boat, and with the other fast locked in that of a lovely girl, a young Greek, of about five-and-twenty, stood upon the beach, strenuously endeavouring to console his companion, who wept bitterly at the necessity of separation. That lovely girl was also of Greek extraction, as the faultless profile, the dark blue eyes, the complexion, the figure, and the garb, declared. Her age was not above nineteen; but the genial warmth of the climate had caused all the voluptuous beauties of womanhood to develop themselves with the attractions of maturity.

‘Wherefore art thou so sad, Irene?’ exclaimed the Greek sailor, with a glance of unfeigned attraction at his beautiful companion. ‘Dost thou doubt my love? Thinkest thou that yonder isles, which I am about to visit, will show eyes more tender than thine, or boast a countenance which can have more charms for me than that on which I am now gazing?’

‘Oh! Manuel,’ returned the maiden, ‘thou knowest that I do not doubt thine attachment towards me; but would’st thou have me quit the shore with a light heart, when I see thee go forth upon that wide expanse of waters which is so fraught with peril?’

‘My skill defies the tempest, and my knowledge the shoals, the quicksands and the rocks,’ answered Manuel with a glance of pride towards his beautiful vessel which lay at a little distance.

‘You may dare the perils of the deep; and the whistling wind and the flashing lightning may awaken no alarms in your gallant breast,’ replied Irene. ‘But the memory of that dread day when your vessel was driven upon the rocks which I see from hence, and when, timid and trembling girl as I was, I hastened with the household of the Patriarch of our nation, to the sea-shore –’

‘And many and many a time have I blest the hour of danger and shipwreck, since it first revealed thee, Irene, the sweetest flower of this island, to my view,’ interrupted Manuel, gaily.

‘And it is because your love is so grateful to my soul,’ answered the maiden, blushing at this compliment, while a partial smile of satisfaction played upon her beautiful lips, ‘that I tremble at every peril which might suddenly deprive me of that solace – that charm of existence ! The other Greek girls of the island envy my bright destinies, because I am the Patriarch’s niece, who he loves as if I were his own child; and they imagine that I shall one day wed a noble of our nation, but they know not that every little gust of wind, and every ripple of the ocean, make me tremble for the safety of my brave – my gallant – my own Greek sailor !’

‘And when the commerce, which I now pursue amongst these islands, shall have filled my coffers,’ observed Manuel tenderly, ‘I can present myself to the Patriarch Avedic with enough of that gold which he loves so well to tempt him to overlook my humble birth and confer upon me the hand of his beautiful niece.’

‘And then you will tempt the dangers of the sea no more ?’ said Irene, her eyes now lighted up with the refulgence imparted to them by the star of hope which shines so brightly in the horizon seen by lovers. ‘But,’ she added, again relapsing into a melancholy softness of tone and manner which deeply affected her lover, ‘the perils of the wind and wave are not all which you have to encounter in your wanderings upon the deep. Have you no fear of that terrible corsair, who descends upon our islands by night, pillages the houses, carries off the youths of both sexes to sell them as slaves in the markets of Tunis and Tripoli, and whose power is so redoubtable that nurses breathe his title in the ears of children as a word of terror ?’

‘His vessel is not larger, nor better manned, nor more carefully armed, than mine,’ returned Manuel. ‘Farewell, Irene, – hush these idle fears – dry these beautiful eyes – and stifle the sighs that agitate your bosom. I shall speedily return again; and when thou seest the vessel, with the well-known blue light, cruise off these shores at the hour of sun-set, thou wilt not fail to remember that a faithful lover will hasten to the spot whither his well beloved Irene will as usual repair to meet him. Adieu, dearest girl – adieu !’

‘Farewell, Manuel !’ answered the weeping maiden: ‘I shall not know peace until I see thee again.’

The young Greek captain imprinted a kiss on the brow of the maiden, and hastily leapt into his boat, which he pushed away from the shore. Irene remained on the strand, waving her ‘kerchief to her lover, until she saw his bark touch the vessel that waited for him in the distance.

A month passed away; and during that period fresh tidings of the ravages committed in the adjacent islands by the corsair-ship which was at that period the terror of the Aegean sea reached Scio from time to time. The Greek Patriarch, who had lately made this island the place of his residence, in consequence of the danger to which he was exposed at Constantinople by the intrigue of the Armenian Catholics and the Jesuits, who were powerfully assisted in their machinations by Ferriol, Marquis of Argental, the French ambassador at the Ottoman Porte, – the

Greek Patriarch became uneasy at the depredations and outrages committed by this pirate; and, as the Ottoman cruisers, the captains of which were all more or less piratically inclined themselves, failed or neglected to capture the robber, he was at length determined to adopt measures to accomplish this aim. Fortune seemed to favour the wishes of Avedic; for, about the period of which mention is now made, a sailor deserted from the pirate's ship, and hastened to Scio to throw himself at the feet of the Patriarch.

'The unlawful traffic in human beings which the captain whom I have so long served, pursues,' said the deserter, 'is hateful to the Greek sailors of his crew. The base Mussulmans who serve under him delight in a trade which is not forbidden by the laws of their Impostor-Prophet Mahommed; but the Christian revolts at such a means of enriching himself.'

'My son,' answered the Patriarch, in a mild and assuring tone, 'heaven will pardon thee thy past misdeeds, if thou wilt but exert thyself to place thy late master in our power.'

'Heaven may pardon me,' said the deserter; 'but will man?'

'Can'st thou point out any means by which we may ensure this depredator of the Archipelago?' demanded Avedic.

'I can,' replied the sailor.

'Then, by the Most High, I swear that not only shall thy person be safe now and henceforth, and that past offences shall be forgiven thee, but also I pledge myself to count thee down five thousand lion-ducats on the day that the corsair is in my power!'

'Then be the wishes on thine holiness at once gratified,' answered the sailor. 'Six days hence does the captain of the formidable pirate-vessel intend to make a descent upon the western coast of this island. The rich granaries and numerous flocks of the wealthy Greek farmers of that district are the temptation. The ship will be moored a short distance from the land; and the captain, with a portion of his crew, will put off in the barge to attempt the enterprise. Need I say more?'

'I shall be prepared to receive him,' returned Avedic.

The day before the one on which the pirate meditated his descent upon the island, Avedic procured a body of troops from the Sandjakbeg, or Ottoman governor of Scio, for an especial purpose. These troops were despatched to the spot where the incursion was to take place, and were stationed in one of the farm-houses which the pirates intended to attack. The Patriarch communicated the object of this precaution to the Greek farmers of the district, and desired them, as an additional guarantee of safety, to drive their flocks to an inland fortress, which stood upon a small lake, and was thence denominated the Castle of the Waters. The farmers profited by this

suggestion, and not only lodged their flocks in the Castle of the Waters, but also placed their families and most valuable moveable possessions in that fort.

On the same day the beautiful Irene was seated at the window of her apartment in the Patriarch's mansion, anxiously watching a white sail which she had seen in the horizon since day-break. It however remained stationary during the whole day; and it was not until the shades of evening cast their veil over the surface of the ocean that the suspense of the Greek maiden was relieved. It was then that she saw the well-known beacon-light upon the stern of the gallant vessel belonging to her lover; and with a beating heart, she hastened towards the shore to welcome his return.

In a couple of hours after the appearance of the blue light upon the ocean, Irene was embraced in the arms of the brave Greek.

'Faithful to the signal art thou, Irene, as am I to the adored one of my soul !' exclaimed Manuel.

'The wished for moment has returned again – the moment of our meeting !' said Irene; 'but, alas ! the instant of our separation will come back also ! I dare not ask you when you sail again ?'

'Thou knowest, beloved one,' answered Manuel, 'that it is incumbent upon me to use dispatch in prosecuting these commercial enterprises which alone can place me in a condition to demand thy hand; and every day I lose in idleness is a further procrastination of the happy hour that will make you mine.'

'And yet it is so sweet to be with those we love !' murmured the maiden, in that dulcet tone which vibrated like the sound of a harp to the inward soul of the Greek sailor.

'I expect that one more cruise amongst the islands of the Archipelago will accomplish all my wishes,' said the lover. 'A few weeks, Irene, shall alone elapse, ere I seek the presence of your proud uncle, and demand your hand in marriage. And I will come, attended by slaves bearing such costly gifts, and with so gorgeous a display of wealth, that he shall not refuse my suit. Oh ! that will be a happy day, Irene: would to God, it were arrived !'

'You speak with more of bitterness than anxiety,' said Irene, alarmed at the strange emphasis which marked her lover's language. 'Nay – squeeze not my hand so hard: I fear that some presentiment of evil agitates your mind; and, did not the shades of night obscure the moon, haply I might see my alarms confirmed by your countenance.'

'No, Irene – no – you are mistaken,' answered her lover, in a hurried tone. 'My sincere – my ardent affection makes me impatient to remove all barriers to our union; and not till *then* can I be completely happy.'

‘And will my love ensure your felicity?’ demanded the charming Greek maiden. ‘Shall you not sigh after that ocean which you adore, with all its excitement of change and danger? Or can you consent to dwell in peace and tranquility with one who will be never wearied of testifying her affection for you?’

‘Oh! paint not yet the sweets of domestic life, dear girl, or I shall never dare to tempt the dangers of the ocean more! Once again, Irene, must I say adieu to thee for a season – for a few weeks: and then will I return, never more to leave thee.’

‘You sail again to night?’ cried Irene, in an agitated tone of voice, while she clung more closely to her lover, as they walked upon the shore.

‘To-night I sail again,’ answered Manuel; ‘but I leave not the vicinity of the island for a day or two.’

‘By all the love you bear for me, Manuel – by your hopes of our union – and by the heaven that now hears my supplication,’ ejaculated the maiden, speaking rapidly and with alarming earnestness of manner, ‘depart not yet from these shores but remain – Oh! remain within the precincts of this bay at least for eight and forty hours.’

‘Wherefore this strange request?’ asked Manuel, in unfeigned astonishment.

‘I have happy tidings to communicate to you, Manuel,’ replied Irene: ‘the terrible pirate who has so long infested these seas, will tomorrow night be in my uncle’s power!’

‘Ah!’ exclaimed Manuel.

‘Oh! all is well devised – well planned; and he cannot escape us,’ pursued Irene; ‘and then my beloved Manuel will rove upon the ocean, with at least one chance of peril removed from his path.’

‘But is the stratagem so admirably arranged that the corsair must fall into its snare?’ asked the young captain, glancing rapidly around him, and placing his right hand upon a pistol in his girdle.

‘Nay, judge for yourself, incredulous one!’ exclaimed Irene, with a playfulness of manner which bore testimony to her joy at the probability of the pirate’s capture – a joy that was, however, principally experienced on her lover’s account: ‘the scheme is as follows. A sailor has deserted from the corsair’s ship, and given my uncle information of an intended descent tomorrow night upon the western coast, in the vicinity of the rich Greek farmers’ dwellings. In sooth, the predatory horde will receive a warm greeting! A hundred Turkish Azabs already occupy the principal farm-house, and all the wealth of the Greeks themselves has been transported to the Castle of the Waters.’

‘Admirably arranged !’ ejaculated Manuel. ‘But the deserted sailor – where is he ?’

‘He is at present detailed in my uncle’s dwelling. A large reward will be his, if the stratagem succeed.’

‘And the thanks of all the Greeks will be due to their revered Patriarch,’ added Manuel. ‘But the hour waxes late, Irene; and we part once more.’

‘Part – oh ! that word *part*, which is introduced into every language to prepare us to murmur of that *death* with pangs of mitigated acuteness – the monosyllable that is the half-way house between life and the grave, – Oh ! wherefore should we part when thus we love so tenderly ? Alas ! the sincerest love is but an oasis in a desert, around that charming spot in the heart are dreary waters – anticipation, suspense, and the pangs of absence !’

‘We must part, indeed – but to meet again ! console yourself, Irene – I will but cruise to the north of this island for a day or two – I will respect your wishes, while the danger of the corsair hovers near; and on the evening of the second day from this we will meet again !’

‘That hope consoles me,’ replied the damsel; and the lovers parted once more, with renewed vows and protestations of eternal fidelity.

Turn we now to the farm-house on the western coast of the island, where the detachment of soldiers was stationed. The captain of this corps recommended his men to remain in the utmost tranquility within the walls of the spacious tenement, and to allow the horde of pirates to enter the premises ere an attack should be made. A bloodless victory, he said, would be thus obtained; and the culprits might be sent alive to the Ottoman Porte, to be treated according to the good pleasure of the Sultan and the Grand Vizier. The obedience of the soldiers to these directions was ensured by the hopes of the plunder of the vessel, which were held out to them, it being the intention of the captain to seize the barge in which the pirates were to land, and despatch a force to possess itself of the ship.

The morning dawned; and but a few hours were to elapse ere the descent was to be made. A vessel, resembling the corsair, had already been descried on the north-western side of the island; and no doubt remained in the minds of the soldiers that the deserted sailor had put them in possession of the proper information. The captain already dreamed of promotion, and saw the chief command of the Janizaries in his perspective; and his soldiers revelled in the idea of plunder and booty. In the meantime Avedic remained at his own dwelling on the other side of the island, anxiously waiting the time when he might flatter himself that, through his wise precautions, the seas were rid of one of the most terrible pirates that had ever infested them; and Irene was seated in her bower, pondering over the sweet things which had fallen, on the previous evening, from the lips of her love.

The call to prayer, 'God is Great !' had just issued, at mid-day, from the lips of the captain of the little band of soldiers stationed at the farm-house, when a wretched object of charity presented itself at the gate of the tenement. Two or three of the soldiers immediately issued forth to ascertain what had conducted the wayward steps of the mendicant thither; but the unfortunate man fell upon the threshold, apparently in the last stage of exhaustion. He was hastily raised upon the shoulders of the Azabs and carried into the dwelling.

'*Inshallah* ! ^[1] the *Giaour* ^[2] is dying !' ejaculated one of the soldiers, as he supported the head of the sufferer, who, in spite of his tattered garments, seemed to be a young man of goodly mien.

'Whose dog is he,' growled the captain, 'that he should drop down upon us, at the moment the Faithful betake themselves to prayer ? You say he is a *Giaour* ! Then, by the sword of the Prophet ! administer a hundred blows of the bastinado upon the soles of his feet, and let us see if that will bring him to life.'

'I know that I am less than the dust in your presence,' said one of the Azabs, addressing himself to the captain; 'but, if your slave might raise up his voice to offer counsel to his master, he would suggest that this dog of a Christian be questioned as to the manner in which he came into this wretched plight.'

'You speak well,' replied the captain. 'Give the infidel a cup of wine, God forgive me ! and that will revive him. Allah ! Allah ! that my poor stomach should also compel me to have recourse to the same potent medicine.'

The captain drew a horn from his girdle, as he uttered these words, and took a long stoup of the wine it contained: he then passed it to his men, who hastened to pour some of the liquid down the throat of the stranger. The draught appeared to revive him: he opened his eyes; and in a short time was enabled to give an account of himself.

'I am one of the Greek subjects of the Vicegerent of God upon earth, the great and glorious Padishah, Ahmed III, whom Allah preserve !' began the stranger.

'The *Giaour* has made his face white before us,' murmured the captain, who was pleased with this acknowledgement of the power of his imperial master. 'In the name of the Prophet proceed !'

'*Couloniz* !'^[3] ejaculated the young Greek. 'Until this morning I was the most miserable of men; but your kindness has relieved my mind of anxiety and trouble. My narrative is short. A few days ago the humble hut in which I dwelt at the southern extremity of the island was beset by pirates, who landed from a vessel moored at a short distance; and in an instant my little possessions were swept away. I was turned out into the wide world, a wanderer and an outcast; and the dwelling in which I was born was burnt to the ground. Oh ! may maledictions alight upon the heads of the

plunderers ! For six days have I wandered about, almost without food and not knowing where to lay my weary head to rest !’

‘*Aypdir* !’^[4] cried the captain, as soon as this narrative was brought to a conclusion. Speak truly, Giaour – were these pirates *Ourumes*^[5] or Moslems ?’

‘They were Greeks,’ was the reply. ‘Alas ! that I should be compelled to tell the sad teler of the disgrace of my fellow-countrymen !’

‘The *Keaffirs* !’^[6] ejaculated the captain, grinding his teeth. ‘But they will shortly be in our power; and I swear to thee, Christian, that thou shall exercise the vengeance that thou deemest most fit to fall upon the head of their chief !’

‘I ask not for vengeance,’ replied the young stranger. ‘All I implore is rest for a short period, until I shall be enabled to continue my journey toward the north of the island, where I have a relation who will afford me refuge and grant me protection.’

‘By my soul, it shall be as you say !’ cried the captain. ‘If you stay with us, you will this night see sport that will arouse your young soul to vengeance against those who have despoiled you. *Inshallah* ! *inshallah* ! the sea-robbers, through whom you have suffered, will be in our power ere tomorrow’s sun gilds the minarets of Stamboul.’

‘God prosper your arms !’ murmured the Greek.

The prayers, which had been interrupted by the arrival of the stranger, were now said by the captain and his *Orta*;^[7] and two or three hours passed away, during which some of the soldiers had recourse to the *tschibouk*,^[8] and others to repose. The captain regaled himself with a pipe and a cup of fragrant coffee. At sun-set, the call to prayers, *Alla Kerim* !,^[9] again assembled the soldiers around their chief in the vast hall of the farm-house where they were stationed; and as soon as the religious ceremonies were again completed, the whole company sate down to partake of the evening meal. The Greek, in order, as he declared, to testify his gratitude to the captain for the kindness he had received at his hands, insisted upon ministering to him in the capacity of a servant; and the officer, who was a weak-minded though a brave man, was pleased with this attention. The Greek served him upon his knees; and when the repast was concluded, hastened to another room in the house, to fetch a basin for the Mussulman chief to perform his ablutions. He then insisted upon making the captain’s coffee with his own hands, and performed these menial functions with a readiness which completely won the heart of the functionary. As soon as the Greek had presented the favourite beverage, brewed from the choice production of Mocha, upon his bended knee to the captain, he hastily rose from his humiliating posture and left the hall.

The Greek hurried rapidly out of the farm-house, and darted into a path leading away from the sea-shore. In a few minutes he looked behind him, and saw lights moving round the premises he

had just left. It was a dark night – as dark as it ever is in that clime of starry heavens; and the cool breeze of the evening fanned his cheek, which was heated with the excitement of the last few hours. When he saw the lights dancing about in the distance, and knew that search was at that moment being made by the Ottoman soldiers after him, a smile of triumph played upon his lips; and he doubled his speed away from the dangerous vicinity.

Suddenly the sounds of approaching footsteps fell upon his ears; and he immediately stopped and listen attentively. The tread of many feet on the beaten road was soon distinguished by his experienced ear; and he hastened to meet those who were advancing towards him. In a few minutes he encountered a band of about fifty men, who appeared to be laden with booty.

‘What ! is the work concluded thus speedily ?’ demanded the Greek of him who marched at the head of the band of corsairs (for such they were).

‘No resistance was offered to us by the panic-struck farmers,’ answered the individual thus appealed to, and who was the lieutenant in command of the detachment of pirates. ‘The moment we reached the gate of the Castle of Waters, we found ourselves the masters of the fortress without striking a blow. There was not even a sentinel posted at the entrance, so confident were the inhabitants that their secret was not discovered, and that we should fall into the ambush laid for us at the farm-house. But, – you – captain, – how has it fared with you ?’

‘My plan has experienced the success which I anticipated,’ was the reply. ‘I introduced myself among the Ottoman soldiers; I found that the information I had received was correct, relative to their numbers; and I saw that they were well armed. By the aid of a well-invented and well-told tale, I immediately excited the sympathy of the whole troop, and was favoured with an account of the captain’s plans and hopes. As I imagined, the soldiers place the utmost reliance upon their chief, and would be powerless without him.’

‘You have then not succeeded –’ began the lieutenant, hastily interrupting his chief.

‘Patience – patience, good Theodoric,’ returned the captain; ‘and you shall hear. The Ottoman commander is not dead – but he is powerless. He treated me with comparative kindness, and I would not take his life. I therefore infused a strong narcotic, instead of a virulent poison, in his coffee; and I feel convinced that it has already produced the desired effect, inasmuch as a sensation seemed to pervade the soldiery shortly after my departure. I saw the light of their torches glancing about in many directions; and care not now to attack them with my handful of gallant Greeks. Is the booty considerable ?’

‘So vast,’ answered the lieutenant, ‘that we did not regret to fulfil your injunction, and forbore from making prisoners.’

‘And if we disperse the soldiery and succeed in taking the captain on board the vessel with us,’ rejoined the corsair chief, ‘we shall secure a princely ransom for his release.’

The captain then seized a scimitar from the hands of one of the pirates, and pacing himself at the head of the band, advanced with a bold and rapid step towards the farm-house he had ere now left. A solemn silence pervaded the pirate-ranks; and the deep silence of the night was only broken by the din of their footsteps, and the ripples of the neighbouring ocean. It was not until the corsair chief set his foot upon the threshold of the farm-house door, that the terrified Mussulmans became aware of their danger.

They then raised the war-cry of ‘*Alla u Akbar !*’ and ‘*Yegdur Alla !*’^[10] but the speed with which they rushed to their arms was less the result of confident valour than that mechanical impulse of an intuitive feeling to protect an existence in danger. The captain of the pirates uttered but one word of encouragement to his men; and the sacks which contained the booty they had acquired at the Castle of the Waters were quickly thrown upon the pavement of the court-yard in front of the farm-house, to allow them to wield their scimitars with additional strength.

The conflict was short; sixty of the Mussulmans soon lay gasping upon the floor of the half in which they were assailed; and the remainder threw down their arms. The prisoners were then bound hand and foot, by the corsair captain’s orders, and left in safety where they were; but the Baschi, or commander of the Mussulman troop, was removed from the cushions where his followers had placed him when they saw him fall into a state of lethargy from which all their endeavours could not rouse him. He was lifted upon the shoulders of three or four of the Greek pirates; the others resumed possession of the booty, to which they added the weapons of the soldiers whom they had just defeated; and the band then withdrew to the barge which awaited its return in a creek at a little distance.

The Greek Patriarch’s rage knew no bound when he heard of the defeat of his scheme, and the successful incursion of the pirates. He could not imagine how they had discovered the secret of the Castle of Waters having been chosen for the depot of the farmers’ valuables, and of the ambush which had been prepared to entrap the invaders. The Greek sailor he had detained was not the author of the evil, because he had no means of communication with his ancient friends; and the whole arrangements had been conducted on a plan of secrecy and expedition which had allowed no chance of their being betrayed. Irene was equally at a loss to account for this extraordinary failure of the stratagem so cunningly devised by her uncle; and she entertained more serious apprehensions than ever on behalf of her lover, who was thus exposed to the power and subtlety of so successful a chief as the corsair captain.

On the evening of the day after the exploit of the pirates, Irene hastened to the place of appointment, agreeably to the directions of her lover on the occasion of the previous interview. The Greek maiden waited not many minutes upon the strand ere the splash of oars fell upon her ears – a boat touched the beach – and the gallant Greek whom she expected leapt upon the shore.

The moon shed her silvery rays upon the joyous countenances of the lovers as they rushed into each other's arms; and the ocean murmured a reply to the billing murmur of their rapturous kisses. One arm of the Greek youth encircled the slender waist of his beautiful mistress; and one of his hands retained hers in its fond grasp. In this manner they walked up and down that part of the shore which was in the immediate vicinity of the boat; and for some time their conversation was of a nature alone interesting to themselves. Lovers are never wearied of avowing and seeking avowals of their mutual affection; and few heroes or heroines of truthful tale or well-planned fiction ever loved to tenderly as those who were thus pacing the wave-worn shore of the Island of Scio. At length Manuel declared that he must again bid farewell to his Irene.

'I know not wherefore,' said the maiden, in a very plaintive voice, 'but my heart entertains a strange foreboding that this is the last time we shall meet on earth, or that some dread misfortune awaits us. I cannot account for this impression, – neither can I subdue it. I am like an individual who, while he is convinced that apparitions from the grave are but childish fables, still trembles to cross the country by night.'

'Hush these idle fears, beloved one !' said the Greek captain, pressing the hand of the maiden to his bosom. 'I promise that this shall be my last sea voyage, and that in a few weeks –' 'Oh, tempt the sea no more !' ejaculated Irene; 'my uncle is kind – he loves me – and he would not decide harshly in a matter where my happiness was so nearly concerned. Throw yourself at his feet – implore him to accord you my hand – and he will not turn a deaf ear to your prayer.'

'Alas ! where and how can I seek him, so that the presence of his pomp and the insignia of his authority shall not remind him of the difference between the haughty Patriarch and the humble Greek captain of a mercantile vessel ?' cried Manuel. 'I should be overwhelmed with the aspect of all his ecclesiastic glory, his wealth, and his power; and my downcast looks and timid address would remind him of the presumptions of which I should be guilty in demanding of him the hand of his niece ! No, dearest Irene, – let me first secure those treasures which will give me confidence in myself, and act as a passport to his favour; and then will I hasten into his presence, fearlessly and with confidence, and make known our love and our plighted vows.'

'Oh, wherefore tempt the perils of the sea again,' persisted Irene, 'while thou canst seek an opportunity of presenting thyself to Avedic at a time when he is alone—divested of all the emblems of his power – and apart from that pomp which would confound thee ? Dost thou think that his existence is one continued scene of ostentation and grandeur ? Oh ! no – there are moments in his life when the meanest mendicant is not more humble than he. On the summit of yonder hill – that hill which you see dimly in the distance, through the shades of night – is the tomb of my father, the brother whom Avedic so tenderly loved ! Every Sabbath eve does he repair at the hour of sunset, alone and unattended, to that spot; and, casting aside all idea of earthly grandeur, the Patriarch, whom you deem so haughty, kneels down upon the cold sod, to breathe a prayer to Heaven for the rest of the soul of that beloved relative who is no more ! At

such an hour – at such a season as that, you might present yourself to him without dreading his pride, and plead your cause – *our* cause –with success !’

‘Irene, I dare not seek to ally myself to you, until I have secured the wealth which my ambition covets,’ replied Manuel.

‘And to obtain that wealth,’ continued Irene bitterly, ‘you will venture upon that ocean which is ruled by a pirate that dares all the stratagems of the crafty, the strength of the mighty, and the power of the great ? You will tempt that element which this corsair captain alone seems to sway with triumphant rule, – and all this, to obtain an increase of that useless gold, which will not augment our mutual love, nor render you an atom dearer to your faithful Irene ?’

‘All this will I dare,’ replied Manuel, with a smile of triumph; ‘that our terrestrial happiness may not incur the chance of being embittered by the gall of poverty.’

‘Knowest thou not, Manuel,’ continued the young maiden, in a tone of the most earnest persuasion, ‘that this pirate-chief, whom I so much dread, has triumphed over the designs of mine uncle, as a crafty man frustrates the device of a child ? He discovered all – his troops pillaged the Castle of the Waters; and he, under an impenetrable disguise, succeeded in impregnating with a powerful narcotic the cup of the captain of the troops that lay in ambush. That officer was carried away by his followers; and this morning was a letter conveyed by some unknown means to my uncle, demanding a ransom of twenty thousand ducats for the Ottoman Baschi. The Turkish Governor of the island is exceeding wroth with Avedic for the failure of the expedition, and the capture of one of his best officers; and my uncle sees no alternative but to comply with the corsair chief’s demand.’

‘By the honour of our race,’ said Manuel, after a moment’s reflection, ‘your uncle will not consent to pay this ignominious ransom, without exercising ingenuity once more to ensnare him who so venturously demands it ?’

‘You have judged Avedic rightly,’ replied Irene. ‘The corsair chieftain’s letter has settled the plan by which the ransom is to be conveyed to him; and the Patriarch intends to turn that measure to advantage. With all the corsair’s craft, he will not escape us *now*. His letter, couched in peremptory tone, informs Avedic that he shall cruise to-morrow morning off the northern point of the island, and that a boat, rowed by two men, may there convey to him the ransom, and receive the Ottoman captain in exchange; at the moment Avedic is employing shipwrights so mysteriously to change the appearance of a boat, that the wooden horse of our ancestors did not prove more fatal to the Trojans than shall this vessel to the pirates’ ship ! The boat is furnished with a false deck, beneath which twenty well-armed warriors can lie concealed. It will appear to contain two rowers only; and when it touches the ship’s side, one will ascend to the desk of the pirate and tender the ransom. Then, when the Ottoman captain shall have been released from

bondage, the false deck of the boat will suddenly vomit forth a gallant band, that in the moment of surprise will not fail to capture the formidable corsair, well manned though the latter be.'

'A glorious scheme !' ejaculated Manuel, in a joyful tone; 'and one that cannot fail of success.'

'God send it may turn out aright, and relieve the seas from that intrepid pirate !' cried Irene.

'Once more must I now leave thee, dearest girl,' said Manuel, after a long pause. 'A few weeks shall alone elapse, ere I return to fulfil my promises and claim thee as mine own.'

Irene in vain expostulated with her gallant lover; she saw that he was resolved to dare again the dangers of the Aegean wave; and she was compelled to bid him a melancholy farewell. The lovers parted on the spot where they had so often met and parted before; and the Greek damsel thought not of returning into her uncle's halls until the splash of the lover's oars no longer broke the silence of the night.

From the moment Avedic had received the letter, to which his niece had alluded, a number of experienced shipwrights had been employed in altering a large boat in such a way as to provide it with a deep recess, covered with a false bottom. In that vacuum twenty men could be safely rowed away. The toils of these artizans were completed at day-break; and, when all the necessary preparations had been made, the boat proceeded to the northern extremity of the island. Anxious to behold the success of his plans, Avedic himself repaired, by land, to a height commanding a view of the ocean where the drama which he had devised was to be enacted. At a distance lay the pirate-vessel; and Avedic anxiously watched his boat, as it drew nearer and nearer towards that formidable cruiser.

The boat approached the ship's side, and at length it touched the floating dwelling of the pirates. One of the men who manned the boat threw several bags of money upon the deck of the corsair, where they were received by the sailors; and then, as soon as this portion of his task was complete, he leapt up the vessel's side to claim the Ottoman captain. No sooner did his feet touch the deck of the corsair than a shrill whistle echoed around, and in a moment a massive stone was raised by ropes to the extremity of the main-yard of the ship. Avedic's emissary stood aghast, first glancing towards the huge piece of rock which swung in the air, and then turning towards the pirate-sailors who held the end of the ropes by which they had raised it aloft. Suddenly the mass fell with a hideous din upon the boat below; the ship rose and fell upon the waves stirred up by the abrupt commotion; and, in another moment, the calm sea rippled over the spot where Avedic's warriors lay entombed in the dark abyss below. The man, who remained on the deck of the pirate-vessel, stood stupefied – uncertain how to act; but, in a few minutes, he was recalled to the full exercise of his senses by the rapid preparations that were making for his death. A noose was slipped, by rude hands, round his neck; a dreadful scream of horror emanated from his lips; – but that cry was not repeated; for ere he had time to implore for mercy he was swinging in the

air; and, about the same instant, the Ottoman captain was hoisted to the other arm of the same yard.

As soon as this terrible deed of vengeance was completed, with all its dread details, the pirate-sailors set up a shout, or rather a yell of triumph, so loud and long that it reached the ears of Avedic, who had been a horrified witness of this dismal tragedy. The corsair then hoisted a blood-red flag to his mast-head; and, a light breeze springing up at the moment, the ship veered about and was soon lost in the distance.

It was impossible to keep secret the particulars of this last adventure with the corsair; and the whole island was plunged into the deepest consternation when it was made known. Widows and orphans cursed the policy of Avedic, whose measures had thus deprived them of the support and comforts of existence. The Sanjakbeg sent a full account of these events to the Grand Vizier, Tschorli Ali; Avedic himself was overwhelmed with shame and astonishment at the detection of all his plans by the pirate-captain; Irene knew not how to account for this extraordinary termination of an artful and well-concerted plot; and the Greek portion of the inhabitants of Scio did not hesitate to avow their belief that the formidable pirate had entered into a compact with the enemy of mankind, by virtue of which he had secured to himself the dominion of the ocean. No vessel dared to venture alone upon the waters of the Aegean sea; and all trade was carried out by little fleets of merchantmen, protected by convoys. The commerce of that part of the Mediterranean was nearly ruined; and even the Venetians and the Genoese trembled at the name of this redoubtable corsair. Nor did this last incident tend to allay the apprehension of the lovely Irene, with respect to the safety of Manuel.

Emboldened by his successes, the captain of the corsairs lost much of the prudence which had originally characterized all his proceedings; and, in a moment of idle boasting, he declared to his men that so little was he a prey to fear, and so confident was he of their valour, that he would even undertake to sail through the fleet of the Kapitan-Pacha himself. This perilous and useless exploit was attempted; but it proved the downfall of the gallant pirate. On board of the fleet were some sailors whose keen eyes immediately recognised the vessel that had ravaged the coasts of adjacent islands; signals were made to the various ships of the Ottoman fleet; and the Greek brig was hemmed in by the formidable squadron. The pirates, with their usual daring courage, attempted the most desperate resistance; but they were boarded on all sides, and the few that did not perish in the engagement were taken prisoners.

At the head of the captives was the captain himself; and the Ottoman Grand Admiral immediately set sail with his prize for Gallipoli, whence he despatched the corsairs to Constantinople. The prisoners were thrown into the Castle of the Seven Towers; and all the booty found in their ship was laid at the feet of the Sultan. Under the impression that they had more wealth concealed in some of their haunts or caverns on the coasts of the Aegean islands, the Grand Vizier, instead of ordering them to be executed, decreed that they might purchase their

lives and freedom for a ransom of a hundred thousand ducats, to be paid within a period of two months from the date of this decision. In case of failure in accomplishing this aim, the pirates were too be then put to death.

The captain of the corsairs deeply regretted the rashness which had plunged him into so serious a dilemma; and nothing but death seemed to await him and his comrades. He had neither a chance nor a hope of obtaining the enormous sum fixed for their ransom; all the treasures which he possessed had been captured with his vessel; and he had no other resource left. He did not dread death himself; but he wept bitterly when he thought of the fate which awaited so many gallant faithful seamen, – a fate prepared by his own folly ! There were, moreover, other considerations that induced him to cling to existence; but, at the same time, he felt that his courage would not fail him when he should be called upon to walk forth to the gibbet.

Time passed away; and at length the day before the fatal one which had been fixed upon for the payment of the ransom or the execution of the prisoners arrived. The pirate captain possessed not a ducat; where was he then to find a hundred thousand ? In the afternoon, a *tschaousch*, or messenger, from the Grand Vizier, arrived at the Castle of the Seven Towers, to ascertain if the ransom would be paid. Upon receiving a reply in the negative, the *tschaousch* ordered the captives to prepare for death on the following morning.

Scarcely had the *tschaousch* left the cell in which the corsair chief was confined, when another individual sought admittance to the same place. The new visitor to the condemned Greek was a man of middle age, and who spoke the prisoner's native language with a strong foreign accent. He was clad in the costume then in vogue in the western parts of Europe, and seemed to be a personage of some rank or consequence, by the manner in which he was treated by the gaoler, who conducted him into the presence of the captain of the pirates.

'Corsair, thou art to die to-morrow !' said the stranger, as he seated himself on a large block of wood near the prisoner's straw.

'Such announcement is not doubtless the only business that brought thee hither ?' was the reply.

'To-morrow,' continued the visitor, not heeding this remark, 'you will be dragged forth to the gibbet, amidst the execrations of the multitude; and your head will long display a ghastly countenance to the few individuals that will dare approach the lance upon which it will be fixed at the sultan's gate.'

The corsair made a sign of impatience; for, dauntless as was his courage, he cared not to hear a detailed account of the particulars of his anticipated punishment.

‘Dread must be the ideas when death hovers so near us,’ said the stranger; then suddenly turning towards the prisoner, he exclaimed in a hurried tone, ‘what would’st thou not do for the man who, in his strait, were to give thee reasonable hope?’

‘I would love him as a brother were that hope founded upon truth – and execrate him as a demon, were it based on lies,’ answered the pirate.

‘And if the means of evading a terrible death were pointed out to you,’ resumed the other, ‘would not gratitude place you at the service of him to whom you would be indebted for the salvation of your existence, and an escape from this dungeon?’

‘The man who would procure my release, and that of my brave companions, might dispose of the life which he would restore to me,’ was the reply.

‘What reliance could be placed upon the promise of a corsair?’ demanded the stranger; ‘what guarantee do you offer for the fulfilment of your pledge?’

‘There are two kinds of security with which men deal,’ rejoined the pirate. ‘The one is that offered by the custody of the body; and the other is an obligation which an honourable sentiment imposes even upon a corsair!’

‘And the latter is better than the former,’ murmured the other; then, after a short pause, he added, ‘The means of release and safety are in your power; but a great service is required of you in return for the exertions made to save you. It would be useless to declare that motives of pure philanthropy have now brought me hither: you know that I am but laying out, at the interest which it suits me to reap, the money demanded for your ransom.’

‘Name your conditions,’ said the corsair. ‘If I choose to accept them, an affirmative reply shall be given: if I reject them, there is no chance that your secrets will be betrayed;’ and as he uttered those words, he laughed bitterly.

‘You are aware,’ began the stranger, drawing nearer towards the pirate chief, and speaking in a low tone, although there was no danger of being overheard, – ‘you are aware that the Marquis of Argental, the French Ambassador, is waging a desperate war against the influence of the Greek Church in the Ottoman Empire. The Patriarch Avedic was raised to his high ecclesiastic seat by means of the influence of the society of Jesus, to the members of which he pledged himself to show all possible favour towards the Catholics. How has he kept his word? He has persecuted the Catholics with the most unmitigated cruelty, from the moment of his elevation to the Patriarchal chair; and Ferriol of Argental has vainly expostulated with the perjured monster. Equally futile are the representations of Ferriol to the Grand Vizier, who protects and defends the Patriarch in his misdeeds. The French families that have been long residing in the islands and the frontier cities of the Aegean Sea, are rapidly quitting habitations where the vengeance of the

Greek ecclesiastic overtakes them; and Ferriol must either adopt some urgent measures to repress his arrogance, or at once write to his government and declare his inability to protect the subjects of King Louis from Greek tyranny.'

'You are doubtless the confidant of the Marquis of Argental,' said the corsair, who listened to this narrative with the most profound attention.

'I am one his oldest and most faithful followers,' answered the Frenchman (for so he was); 'and thus am I charged to carry out the designs of my illustrious master. No alternative remains but to remove Avedic from the seat of that power which he exercises so despotically and with such glaring injustice. Ferriol has demanded his dismissal from the dignity of Patriarch; but the Grand Vizier refuses to listen to such a measure. The French, corsair, are a bold and determined race; and the Marquis of Argental has devised a plot which will forever interfere with the tyranny of Avedic. To snatch him away from the island in which he now resides, -- to bear him to France, and then imprison him in some strong fortress, whence escape is impossible, -- this is the scheme devised by Ferriol. It was necessary to find some daring individual to carry the plot into execution; your hatred for Avedic who has already twice laid snares to entrap you within the scope of his tender mercies, is well known; and your influence on your companions -- your intimate acquaintance with the Island of Scio -- and the courage for which you are so justly renowned have created a belief in the mind of my honourable master that no fitter agent than yourself could be selected for the scheme.'

'The offer is a tempting one !' said the corsair, a ray of joy animating his countenance as the Frenchman thus disclosed the service that would be required of him as the condition of his release.

'You shall once more be placed in command of a gallant bark,' continued the Frenchman; 'and in addition to the payment of your ransom, a large remuneration shall be accorded to you, when your prisoner touches with his feet the shore of Marseilles. It is for you to seek the opportunity to capture your victim; and this will, doubtless prove the most difficult portion of your task, as the Patriarch is far too crafty to wander apart from the guards or the hirelings that attend upon his sacred person.'

'This matter will not prove so difficult as you imagine,' returned the corsair. 'Every sabbath evening at sunset does Avedic repair, unattended and alone, to the summit of a hill on which is the tomb of a well-beloved brother; and there does the proud and haughty ecclesiastic divest himself of the ideas of his grandeur, and humble his head on the marble monument that covers the resting place of his relative. You were right when you supposed I should execute your task with caution and with prudence; you see that Avedic's slightest movements are well known to me.'

‘You still have some hours to decide upon my proposal,’ said the emissary of the French ambassador. ‘shall I return this eve ? Remember – your time is short !’

‘It is so short,’ answered the corsair, ‘that my decisions shall not encroach upon it for leisure to reflect. I accede to your offers, and will execute your master’s wishes with that punctuality and readiness which will receive a fresh impulse from a sentiment of the deepest gratitude.’

‘You agree ?’ exclaimed the Frenchman, delighted at the success of his mission.

‘I agree,’ answered the pirate.

‘And you swear to accomplish the wishes of the Marquis of Argental, your liberator ?’

‘I swear,’ solemnly ejaculated the Greek.

‘And, when the scheme shall have been executed, you will never divulge it to any mortal man ?’

‘To that I swear also; by the honour of my father’s memory – and *he* was no corsair !’

‘By sunset you shall be free,’ said the Frenchman; and with these words he took his departure, leaving the Greek behind him in a strange state of anxiety relative to the performance of this extraordinary promise to pay a hundred thousand ducts for the ransom of himself and his companions.

In the meantime the beautiful Irene was anxiously awaiting the promised return of her lover. Now that she had received the welcome tidings that the terrible pirate, whom she had so much dreaded, had been captured by the fleet of the Grand Admiral, she no longer entertained those constant apprehensions which had once embittered her peace, relative to the safety of Manuel; but still the perils of winds and waves were not so easily triumphed over as the career of a human being by his fellow men. Week after week glided away, and still Manuel returned not to the place of appointment. Irene, however, remembered that he had informed her that this – his last cruise – might probably extend to six weeks; and she soothed her fears with the balm of hope during the lapse of that period. For, when she entered upon the seventh week of his absence, nightly and nightly did she turn away with a sick heart from her casement, because her eyes caught not a glimpse of the blue lights upon the ocean, which were the signal of his return. Thus did another month pass away, – and then another; and then another; and nearly half a year passed away since Manuel and the lovely Greek maiden parted upon the shores of Scio.

The manners of Irene became subject to a considerable change. She grew melancholy and desponding; and, although she had never been remarkable for a very cheerful disposition, her pensive demeanour soon attracted the attention of her uncle. To his questions she however remained silent relative to her lover; and she resolved that her heart should sooner break than she would divulge the secret of her affection for Manuel, until he accorded her his permission to

make know their love. She did not suspect his fidelity; but she became alarmed lest some accident had befallen him; and fervent were the prayers that she put up to heaven for his safe return.

The winter months had passed away; and spring had returned, with its serenity of atmosphere, its flowers, and its verdure; and again was Irene enabled to wander at will upon that shore where so many pleasing reminiscences were conjured up to her imagination. One evening, as she was roving upon the beloved spot, the splash of oars fell upon her ears; she anxiously glanced towards the ocean – but no signal light was there; and she feared that the boat, which was drawing near, would not restore to her the long-lost Manuel. Hope did not, however, entirely desert her; -- nearer and more near drew the boat, – it touched the strand – and in another moment the lovers were clasped in each other's arms.

‘O Manuel, thou hast returned again !’ exclaimed Irene, when the first ebullition of joy was passed. ‘But wherefore hast thou remained away so long ! Was it to try the affection of her who loves thee so tenderly ? Or has danger interfered to keep thee from me ?’

‘Alas ! heavy misfortunes have overtaken me,’ replied Manuel. ‘Scarcely had I parted from thee on the last evening when we stood together on the sands, than I was taken prisoner by a Barbary corsair, and carried to Tunis. All the wealth that I had amassed to ensure prosperity to our union, Irene, was taken from me; and it was but a few weeks ago that I succeeded in escaping with some of the brave fellows who were captured with me. It is true, I have another ship, and am again the captain of a gallant crew; but still am I denuded of those treasures which will alone secure me the favour of the Patriarch.’

‘Ah ! say not so, Manuel !’ cried Irene, who had listened to this narrative with tears and in the deepest suspense. ‘My uncle will not refuse your suit, when he sees that his niece's happiness depends upon its success. This is the sabbath evening – he is now at the tomb of his brother –’

Irene shrieked, for at that moment a report like that of a pistol was heard, and a rocket shot into the air.

‘That is a signal which I full well comprehend, dear girl,’ said Manuel, hastily: it is made by the crew of a boat which I sent on shore, ere I left my ship, to fetch water. I must now hasten back – I must leave thee, Irene – perhaps for ever !’

‘For ever – for ever – oh ! use not words so devoid of hope as these !’ ejaculated the lovely maiden, while tears stole down her cheeks again. ‘Oh ! that I could accompany you in your voyages on the dangerous deep. The whistling of the wind, the roar of the billow, would be like soft music to my ears, so that you were nigh !’

‘Wherefore express a wish which thou wilt not fulfil?’ cried Manuel, hastily. ‘Irene’, he added in an earnest and rapid tone, ‘your uncle will never consent to our union – nay, interrupt me not – I know that he would sooner die than allow his niece to be espoused by me ! The woman that fondly loves, Irene, leaves father – mother – brother – sister – and all kindred for him to whom she is devoted, -- else is her love not sincere ! Wilt thou then refuse to follow the fortunes of the man who would lay down his life for you ? Wilt thou confide thyself to the honour of him who loves thee with an affection so pure and chaste, that he is rather like a child in your presence, to do thy bidding and execute thy will, whereas he could take advantage of the confidence which grant him these stolen interviews, to bear thee away by force ? Consent to accompany me, Irene—my gallant bark shall sail for Morea, and at the first town at which we touch, our hands shall be united according to the ceremonies of our holy creed !’

The maiden leant her head upon the breast of her lover, and made no reply. Sweet were the visions of bliss which filled her imagination, – persuasive was the voice of Manuel, – and yielding was she in that moment when her tenderness was thus appealed to. The young man placed his arm around her waist: they walked a few paces from the shore thus clinging to each other; and, when they stopped, it was at the prow of the boat.

‘Wilt thou bestow this confidence upon thy lover?’ demanded Manuel, in a soft and melancholy tone.

‘I dare not go – and yet my heart tells me I may not refuse,’ whispered Irene.

Not another word was spoken until the boat reached the vessel which lay at a short distance. Manuel assisted his beautiful companion to board, conducted her to a cabin fitted up in the most costly manner, and then left her for a moment to superintend the working of the ship, as it set sail for Morea.

A favourable breeze propelled the gallant bark towards the coast of Greece; and Manuel resolved upon touching at Koron. There, true to his promise, he procured the sanction of the church to his union with the beautiful Irene; and the Patriarch’s niece became the captain’s bride.

After having passed a few days at Koron, Manuel declared that the circumstances compelled him to embark for another cruise; and Irene insisted upon accompanying her husband in his perilous voyages. He implored her to remain with friends at whose residence they had been staying during the few days of the honeymoon, while he should repair to Scio, divulge the secret of their union to her uncle, and implore his forgiveness of his lovely niece; but nothing could induce her to separate from one whom she looked on as her only source of earthly happiness. And when she clung to him so fondly, and raised her melting black eyes to his, he felt that he should be depriving himself of a sincere and tender companion, were he to leave her behind him. She accordingly returned with the gallant Greek husband to the ship, which immediately set sail once more.

The cabin occupied by Irene and Manuel was formed by the elevation of the poop of the vessel; and beneath their place of abode, or in what would be called the gun-room of a modern brig, there was some cause of suspicion or uneasiness to Manuel, which did not escape the affectionate solicitude of Irene. As soon as she became familiar with the various departments of the ship, and the routine of a sailor's life, she perceived that the gun-room was closely guarded, that the door of communication with it was always secured by Manuel himself, and that no one save himself was allowed to enter that division of the vessel. Several times in the night would he rise from his couch, and hasten to ascertain if all were secure in that quarter; and, if ever the slightest noise from thence met his ears, he would turn pale, pace the deck of his cabin with uneasy steps, and appear embarrassed in manner when addressed by his wife.

All these little circumstances – hardly perceptible to the rough sailors – were noticed by Irene; and at length she began to connect in her imagination some unpleasant suspicions – suspicions, however, which she could not rightly define – with the evident mystery of the gun-room. She had a female attendant with her; but the servant could not satisfy her curiosity relative to the subject of her alarms. Irene was of too noble a disposition to attempt to pry into her husband's actions; and, at the same time, the little circumstances above related began to prove a source of uneasiness and disquietude. Several days had elapsed since they had sailed from Koron; and they were still out of sight of land. She began to suspect that Scio was not the immediate point of destination; and this idea did not continue to her consolation. Incapable, however, of adopting any illegitimate means of clearing up the extraordinary doubts and fears which had crept into her mind, and, determined to rely upon the frankness of her husband for an explanation, she sought an opportunity, one morning, to introduce the subject of her thoughts into the conversation.

'Irene,' answered Manuel, 'I am glad that you have thus given me an opportunity of addressing you seriously on a matter of vital importance to all of us. Confident in the sincerity of your affection –'

'Did you ever doubt it?' asked the Greek lady in a reproachful tone; 'and was *that* the cause wherefore I was not allowed to participate in all your secrets?'

'No – oh! no,' answered Manuel. 'but I knew not whether your affections were strong enough to induce you to follow the fortunes of one –'

'Ere we were united,' interrupted Irene; 'my love would have prompted me to follow you to the scaffold, even had the paths which led to it been those of crime; and now – *now* that we are indissolubly united by the minister of heaven – my duty, besides my affection, is an additional link to bind me to you.'

'Be careful, Irene, how you reply upon the as yet untried mount of your affections,' said Manuel. 'You have hitherto known me only as the intrepid Greek sailor, conducting his vessel over the Aegean seas for purposes (as you suppose) of trade, and reckless of the dangers which beset the

traveller upon that trackless waste. You have known me in the character of an honourable aspirant to the favours of that Fortune who has fled from my arms; and you asked not much concerning my pursuits, my origin, or even my name, so long as I testified my love for you ! But, doubtless, the ideas you have formed of my character are elevated and proud; and you would weep to see the delusion suddenly swept away by an avowal more terrible, perhaps, than the sudden bursting of the storm over the before tranquil ocean. What if I were something more – or haply something less – than what I seem ? Would'st thou still love me ?'

'I would – I would,' answered Irene, alarmed at her husband's strange discourse.

'Then know the truth at once,' abruptly replied Manuel, his eyes lighting up with sudden fire, and his proud veins swelling upon his forehead; 'you have heard of the terrible pirate who has long infested the Aegean seas, – you have heard of the plans which the Patriarch devised to ensnare him, – and you know how futile proved those schemes ! Irene – that formidable pirate,' added Manuel in a solemn tone, while his wife listened with the most breathless attention, – 'that formidable pirate is at hand – is near you, – is the commander of this vessel, – is the man to whom you have bound yourself for life – is here !'

'Oh ! no – no – it is impossible !' ejaculated Irene; then falling upon the sofa in the cabin where this dread revelation took place, she wept bitterly. The free vent, which she was thus enabled to give to her tears, consoled and relieved her; and with the characteristic magnanimity of the mind of the Grecian women, she exclaimed 'Manuel, I am content to follow thee through the perils of this life, even though thou art the pirate whose name is formidable to all the cruisers and the islands of the Aegean waves.'

'Console yourself, Irene,' said Manuel, taking her hand and kissing it with respect, gratitude, and love; 'my name shall no longer be dreaded by Greeks and Ottomans, as it has been. The days of rapine and piracy are past; and, now that I possess the choicest treasure which the earth contains, I care not how soon I settle down to an existence of tranquility and repose. But I have still a task to perform – a vow to accomplish – a pledge to redeem. I have to pay, by my conduct, the ransom that was generously advanced to save my life; and painful though the duty be, I dare not fail in the performance of it. My imprisonment in the Castle of the Seven Towers, and the time required to equip this vessel after my release, will account for the long interval that elapsed ere my return to Scio the last time.'

'And the duty to which you have alluded – the redemption of your pledge ?' said Irene hastily.

'We are now on our way to Marseilles, where I have to land a prisoner whom I retain in strict confinement in the cabin below,' answered Manuel.

'And that prisoner ?' exclaimed Irene.

‘You shall see him,’ was the immediate reply. ‘but prepare yourself for a strange surprise.’

‘I am prepared – I am nerved to support or to undergo all that this world can have in store for me,’ rejoined Irene.

Manuel took her by the hand, and led her down to the door of the gun-room. The sailor, who there stood sentinel with a drawn cutlass in his hand, made way for his captain to pass,

‘You shall first enter alone,’ said Manuel: ‘I will follow you shortly.’

As he uttered these words he opened the door, and Irene, obeying a mechanical impulse, immediately entered the cabin. She screamed and would have fallen senseless on the floor, had she not been caught in the arms of Avedic, her uncle.

‘Irene here !’ ejaculated the Patriarch, as he adopted the necessary means to recover her; ‘has she too fallen into the power of this brigand of the ocean ? Oh ! unhappy girl –’

‘Is it a dream ?’ murmured the Greek lady, as she opened her eyes and gazed wildly around her; ‘is it a dream ?—do I hear and see aright ? Or am I labouring under the influence of delusion ?’

‘Calm yourself, Irene,’ said the Patriarch: ‘It is indeed your uncle whom you meet as a prisoner here !’

‘A prisoner !’ ejaculated Irene; ‘Oh ! wherefore does he – does Manuel, retain thee in captivity ? This moment shall your bonds be cast off –’

‘Alas ! thou canst possess no influence with the corsair,’ interrupted Avedic, mournfully.

‘I possess that influence,’ answered Irene, ‘which the affection of the heart –’

‘Stay, imprudent girl !’ cried the Patriarch, placing his hand before the lips of his niece: ‘do not suffer me to believe thee guilty of an unlawful love for the wretch who has dragged us both from our peaceful homes.’

‘Guilt and Irene are unacquainted with each other,’ said the lady, firmly. ‘Uncle’, she added, in a melancholy and tremulous tone, ‘I knew not the character of Manuel when I first loved him; and, when once that passion had become deeply rooted in my bosom, I obeyed its dictates blindly, as other mortals are constrained to do. And now reproach – revile me, uncle, for having acted thus without your knowledge and consent; but oh ! I should feel relieved when the truth is told; – do not look upon me as the abandoned victim of illicit love; for, know that Irene is the corsair’s bride.’

‘Unhappy girl !’ cried the Patriarch; ‘wilt thou bring dishonour upon our spotless family !’

Irene threw herself at her uncle's feet, and wept bitterly, while the Patriarch himself sat wrapped up in the deepest meditation. At that moment the door of the cabin opened; and Manuel stood before them. His first impulse was to rush forward and raise his young bride from her suppliant posture. He then addressed Avedic in the following manner: –

‘I can well divine the cause of this scene. Irene has confessed to you that she is the pirate's wife; and the haughty blood of Avedic spurns the alliance. Be it so: the Patriarch's niece will, however, experience at my hands that affectionate solitude, which does not always accompany the unions that are formed upon principles of mere sordid interests. Irene is now my wife – the partner of my worldly fortunes; and she knows that she will not long have to blush for the reputation of her husband. With regard to yourself, I am pledged to deliver you up to the authorities empowered to receive you at Marseilles, for which port we are steering. Willingly – oh ! willingly would I release the relative of my wife; but I have a solemn vow to fulfil; and, were you her father, I dare not retract.’

‘And by whose directions have you been guilty of this flagrant violation of every law, whether domestic or national ?’ demanded the Patriarch, curbing the rising anger of his breast for the purpose of obtaining the information he required.

‘Ferriol, Marquis of Argental, paid the ransom demanded for my life and liberty,’ answered Manuel; ‘and by his orders are my actions guided.’

‘Ferriol ! Ferriol !’ murmured the Patriarch; and throwing himself upon the sofa in his cabin, he gave way to the terrible reflections aroused within him by the conviction that some dread fate was in store for him.

‘Comfort your uncle, Irene,’ said the corsair; ‘but – remember – the revelations I have made concerning my employers in this transaction are as sacred as our marriage vows.’

Manuel retired as he uttered these words; and Irene hastened to use her utmost endeavours to console the unfortunate Patriarch.

A prosperous wind favoured the rapid progress of the vessel to Marseilles. During the remainder of the voyage, Irene was constant in her endeavours to instill hope and tranquility into the mind of her uncle; and often and often did she fall upon her knees in the presence of her husband, and implore his mercy in favour of the afflicted relative. Manuel was inexorable: he could have laid down his life to afford Irene pleasure; – but he could not forget his honour. All corsair as he was, he was just, after his own fashion !

When they had reached Marseilles, Manuel hastened on shore, and presented letters from Ferriol to the commandant of the garrison. In a few days he intimated to Irene that she must take leave of her uncle, as the authorities were about to fetch him from the vessel. Again did the beautiful

niece of the Patriarch endeavour to soften the heart of her husband: he shed tears, – but he could not be induced to forfeit his solemn pledge. Dreadful was the parting between Irene and the Patriarch; and the indecision of that heroic lady, whether to accompany her husband or her uncle, added to the melancholy interest of the scene. But Manuel bore her, almost lifeless, from the arms of her relative, and consigned her to the care of her female attendant in her own cabin.

Hasty but terrible were the preparations for the landing of Avedic. The commandant of the garrison of Marseilles, attended by two confidential advisers, were alone present in the Patriarch's cabin, besides Manuel, previous to the performance of a ceremony which made even the pirate's blood run cold in his veins.

According to Ferriol's instructions, the commandant had provided an iron mask, which his two soldiers fixed over the countenance of the unfortunate captive, whose entreaties and prayers for mercy proved unavailing, although his anguish wrung tears from the eyes of his persecutors. As soon as the iron mask was fixed by means of a steel band that was made secure behind the victim's head, he was closely muffled in a cloak, and conducted, at the dead hour of night, to a boat which lay alongside and was waiting for him. The commandant placed in Manuel's hands a certificate of having received the prisoner, according to Ferriol's directions; and the boat pushed away from the vessel, bearing with it the unhappy victim of the treacherous policy of the Marquis of Argental. Avedic was not suffered to remain long at Marseilles. The greatest precautions were adopted to prevent a stranger from obtaining a glimpse of him; and in a short time the fortress of Pignerol received the Man with the Iron Mask.

Manuel's ship set sail on its return to Constantinople; and on his arrival in that city, he hastened to present his certificate to the Marquis of Argental. The ambassador was overjoyed at the success of his scheme, and according to promise, would have laden the pirate with wealth and costly gifts; – but Manuel refused all recompense.

'I made a vow to fulfil your commands,' said he, 'in return for the life and freedom which you purchased for me and my gallant crew; and I have not flown from my word.'

Manuel disposed of his ship, divided the produce of the sale between himself and his crew; and then repaired, with Irene, to the island of Scio, where he built a modest dwelling near the very spot on which their stolen interviews had once taken place. His beloved wife did not however long survive their return to the island where she had once passed some happy hours. The fate of her uncle preyed deeply upon her mind; and, as she forbore to breathe her sorrows and their cause to her husband, her sufferings were the more acute, because she was compelled to retain them all in her own bosom. She presented him with one pledge of their mutual affection – a lovely boy; and a few weeks afterwards Manuel followed her cortege to the tomb.

Deprived of the only being he had ever loved, Manuel soon became wearied of a life of inactivity and solitude. He longed to tempt the dangers of the ocean again; and the circumstance of

accidentally meeting with some of his former crew determined him to re-commence the corsair's life of excitement and change. Scarcely was the plan resolved upon, when it was put into execution; for to think and to act with Manuel were the same. Once more did he become the captain of a gallant vessel, manned with a faithful and daring crew; and in order to remove from his path as many chances of misfortune as possible, he ceased to ravage the islands of the Aegean sea or to plunder Ottoman vessels; but his piracies were confined to attacks upon those ships that sailed beneath flags with which the Sublime Porte was at variance. In this manner he amassed a large fortune, and saved his life from any farther experimental sojourns in the Castle of the Seven Towers, with the gibbet in close perspective. He lived to a good old age; and terminated a chequered existence in a splendid mansion which he built at Constantinople. On his death-bed, he confided the secret connected with the Greek Patriarch to his only son, who had entered the service of the waiewode ^[11] of Moldavia; and from that period until the present time has the narrative of Avedic's fate been handed down from father to son, in the family whose wealth and prosperity were founded by Manuel the corsair.

[1] 'Please God'

[2] 'The Christian'

[3] 'I am your slave !'

[4] 'It is shameful !'

[5] 'Greeks'

[6] 'Infidels'

[7] Company

[8] Pipe

[9] 'God is Great'

[10] 'God the Highest', 'There is but one God'

[11] Governor