

"Or he may have fled from the islands, in fear of our father's vengeance," said Brynda.

"If for fear, or faintness of heart," said Minna, looking upwards, "he was capable of flying from the ruin which he had occasioned, I trust he has long ere this sustained the punishment which Heaven reserves for the most base and dastardly of traitors and of cowards. Come, sister, we are ere this expected at the breakfast board."

And they went thither, arm in arm, with much more of confidence than had lately subsisted between them; the little quarrel which had taken place having served the purpose of a *bourasque*, or sudden squall, which dispels mists and vapors, and leaves fair weather behind it.

On their way to the breakfast apartment, they agreed that it was unnecessary, and might be imprudent, to communicate to their father the circumstance of the nocturnal visit, or to let him observe that they now knew more than formerly of the melancholy history of Norna.

#### CHAPTER XXI.

But lost to me, for ever lost those joys,  
Which reason scatters, and which time destroys.  
No more the midnight fairy-train I view,  
All in the merry moonlight tipping dew,  
Even the last lingering fiction of the brain,  
The churchyard ghost, is now at rest again.

THE LIBRARY.

THE moral bard, from whom we borrow the motto of this chapter, has touched a theme with which most readers have some feelings that vibrate unconsciously. Superstition, when not arrayed in her full horrors, but laying a gentle hand only on her suppliant's head, had charms which we fall not to regret, even in those stages of society from which her influence is well-nigh banished by the light of reason and general education. At least, in more ignorant periods, her system of ideal terrors had something in them interesting to minds which had few means of excitement. This is more especially true of those lighter modifications of superstitious feelings and practices which mingle in the amusements of the ruder ages, and are, like the anguries of Hallow-e'en in Scotland, considered partly as matter of merriment, partly as sad and prophetic earnest. And, with similar feelings, people even of tolerable education have, in our times, sought the cell of a fortune-teller, upon a frolic, as it is termed, and yet not always in a disposition absolutely sceptical towards the responses they receive.

When the sisters of Burgh-Westra arrived in the apartment destined for a breakfast as ample as that which we have described on the preceding morning, and had undergone a jocular rebuke from the Udaller for their late attendance, they found the company, most of whom had already breakfasted, engaged in an ancient Norwegian custom, of the character which we have just described.

It seems to have been borrowed from those poems of the Scalds, in which champions and

heroines are so often represented as seeking to know their destiny from some sorceress or prophetic, who, as in the legend called by Gray the Descent of Odin, awakens by the force of Runic rhyme the unwilling revealer of the doom of fate, and compels from her answers, often of dubious import, but which were then believed to express some shadow of the events of futurity.

An old sibyl, Euphane Fea, the housekeeper we have already mentioned, was installed in the recess of a large window, studiously darkened by bear-skins and other miscellaneous drapery, so as to give it something the appearance of a Laplander's hut, and accommodated, like a confessional chair, with an aperture, which permitted the person within to hear with ease whatever questions should be put, though not to see the querist. Here seated, the volupsa, or sibyl, was to listen to the rhythmical inquiries which should be made to her, and return an extemporaneous answer. The drapery was supposed to prevent her from seeing by what individuals she was consulted, and the intended or accidental reference which the answer given under such circumstances bore to the situation of the person by whom the question was asked, often furnished food for laughter, and sometimes, as it happened, for more serious reflection. The sibyl was usually chosen from her possessing the talent of improvisation in the Norse poetry; no unusual accomplishment, where the minds of many were stored with old verses, and where the rules of metrical composition are uncommonly simple. The questions were also put in verse; but as this power of extemporaneous composition, though common, could not be supposed universal, the medium of an interpreter, might be used by any querist, which interpreter, holding the consulter of the oracle by the hand, and standing by the place from which the oracles were issued, had the task of rendering into verse the subject of inquiry.

On the present occasion, Cland Halero was summoned, by the universal voice, to perform the part of interpreter; and, after shaking his head, and muttering some apology for decay of memory and poetical powers, contradicted at once by his own conscious smile of confidence and by the general shout of the company, the light-hearted old man came forward to play his part in the proposed entertainment.

But just as it was about to commence, the arrangement of parts was singularly altered. Norna of the Fitful-head, whom every one excepting the two sisters believed to be at the distance of many miles, suddenly, and without greeting, entered the apartment, walked majestically up to the bearskin tabernacle, and signed to the female who was there seated to abdicate her sanctuary. The old woman came forth, shaking her head, and looking like one overwhelmed with fear; not indeed, were there many in the company who saw with absolute composure the sudden appearance of a person, so well known and so generally dreaded as Norna.

She paused a moment at the entrance of the tent; and, as she raised the skin which formed the entrance, she looked up to the north, as if imploring from that quarter a train of inspiration; then signing to the surprised guests that they might approach in succession the shrine in which she was about to install herself, she entered the tent, and was shrouded from their sight.

But this was a different sport from what the company had meditated, and to most of them seemed to present so much more of earnest than of game, that there was no alacrity shown to consult the oracle. The character and pretensions of Norna seemed, to almost all present, too serious for the part which she had assumed; the men whispered to each other, and the women, according to Cland Halero, realized the description of glorious John Dryden,—

"With horror shudd'ring, on a heap they ran."

The pause was interrupted by the loud manly voice of the Udaller. "Why does the game stand still, my masters? Are you afraid because my kinswoman is to play our volupsa? It is kindly done in her, to do for us what none in the isles can do so well; and we will not balk our sport for it, but rather go on the merrier."

There was still a pause in the company, and Magnus Troil added, "It shall never be said that my kinswoman sat in her bower unbalsed, as if she were some of the old mountain-giantesses, and all from faint heart. I will speak first myself; but the rhyme comes worse from my tongue than when I was a score of years younger. Cland Halero, you must stand by me."

Hand in hand they approached the shrine of the supposed sibyl, and after a moment's consultation together, Halero thus expressed the query of his friend and patron. Now, the Udaller, like many persons of consequence in Zetland, who, as Sir Robert Sibbald has testified for them, had begun thus early to apply both to commerce and navigation, was concerned to some extent in the whale-fishery of the season, and the bard had been directed to put into his halting verse an inquiry concerning its success.

CLAUD HALERO.

"Mother darksome, Mother dread,  
Dweller on the Fitful-head,  
Thou canst see what deads are done  
Under the never-setting sun.  
Look through sleet, and look through frost,  
Look to Greenland's caves and coast,—  
By the iceberg is a sail  
Chasing of the swarthy whale;  
Mother doubtful, Mother dread,  
Tell us, has the good ship sped!"

The jest seemed to turn to earnest, as all, bending their heads around, listened to the voice of Norna, who, without a moment's hesitation, answered from the recesses of the tent in which she was enclosed:—

NORNA.

"The thought of the aged is ever on gear,—  
On his fishing, his furrow, his flock, and his steer;  
But thrive may his fishing, flock, furrow, and herd,  
While the aged for anguish shall tear his gray beard."

There was a momentary pause, during which Triptolemus had time to whisper, "If ten witches and as many warlocks were to swear it, I will never believe that a decent man will either fash his beard or himself about any thing, so long as stock and crop goes as it should do."

But the voice from within the tent resumed its low monotonous tone of recitation, and, interrupting further commentary, proceeded as follows:—

NORNA.

"The ship, well-laden as bark need be,  
Lies deep in the furrow of the Iceland sea;—  
The breeze from Zetland blows fair and soft,  
And gaily the garland \* is fluttering aloft:  
Seven good fishes have spouted their last,  
And their jaw-bones are hanging to yard and mast! †  
Two are for Lerwick, and two for Kirkwall,—  
And three for Burgh-Westra, the choicest of all."

"Now the powers above look down and protect us!" said Bryce Snallsfoot; "for it is mair than woman's wit that has spae'd out that ferly. I saw them at North Ronaldshaw, that had seen the good bark, the Olave of Lerwick, that our worthy patron has such a great share in that she may be called his own in a manner, and they had broomed ‡ the ship, and, as sure as there are stars in heaven, she answered them for seven fish, exact as Norna has telled us in her rhyme."

"Umph—seven fish exactly? and you heard it at North Ronaldshaw?" said Captain Cleveland, "and I suppose told it as a good piece of news when you came hither?"

"It never crossed my tongue, Captain," answered the pedlar; "I have kend mony chapmen, travelling merchants, and such like, neglect their goods to carry clashes and clavers up and down, from one country-side to another; but that is no traffic of mine. I dinna believe I have mentioned the Olave's having made up her cargo to three folks since I crossed to Dunrossness."

"But if one of those three had spoken the news over again, and it is two to one that such a thing happened, the old lady prophesies upon velvet."

Such was the speech of Cleveland, addressed to Magnus Troil, and heard without any applause. The Udaller's respect for his country extended to its superstitions, and so did the interest which he took in his unfortunate kinswoman. If he never rendered a precise assent to her high supernatural pretensions, he was not at least desirous of hearing them disputed by others.

"Norna," he said, "his cousin" (an emphasis on the word), "held no communication with Bryce Snallsfoot, or his acquaintances. He did not pre-

\* The garland is an artificial coronet, composed of ribbons by those young women who take an interest in a whaling vessel or her crew: it is always displayed from the rigging, and preserved with great care during the voyage.

† The best oil exudes from the jaw-bones of the whale, which, for the purpose of collecting it, are suspended to the masts of the vessel.

‡ There is established among whalers a sort of telegraphic signal, in which a certain number of motions, made with a broom express to any other vessel the number of fish which they have caught.

tend to explain how she came by her information; but he had always remarked that Scotsmen, and indeed strangers in general, when they came to Zetland, were ready to find reasons for things which remained sufficiently obscure to those whose ancestors had dwelt there for ages."

Captain Cleveland took the hint, and bowed, without attempting to defend his own scepticism. "And now forward, my brave hearts," said the Udaller; "and may all have as good tidings as I have! Three whales cannot but yield—let me think how many hogsheads—"

There was an obvious reluctance on the part of the guests to be the next in consulting the oracle of the tent.

"Gude news are welcome to some folks, if they came frae the deil himself," said Mistress Baby Yellowley, addressing the Lady Glowrowrum,—for a similarity of disposition in some respects had made a sort of intimacy betwixt them—"but I think, my leddy, that this has ower mickle of rank witchcraft in it, to have the countenance of dounce Christian folks like you and me, my leddy."

"There may be something in what you say, my dame," replied the good Lady Glowrowrum; "but we Hialtlanders are no just like other folks; and this woman, if she be a witch, being the Fowd's friend and near kinswoman, it will be ill taen if we haena our fortunes spaed like a' the rest of them; and sae my nieces may e'en step forward in their turn and nae harm dune. They will hae time to repent, ye ken, in the course of nature, if there be ony thing wrang in it, Mistress Yellowley."

While others remained under similar uncertainty and apprehension, Halcro, who saw by the knitting of the old Udaller's brows, and by a certain impatient shuffle of his right foot, like the motion of a man who with difficulty refrains from stamping, that his patience began to wax rather thin, gallantly declared, that he himself would, in his own person, and not as a procurator for others, put the next query to the Pythoness. He paused a minute—collected his rhymes, and thus addressed her:—

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Mother doubtful, Mother dread,  
Dweller of the Fiftul-head,  
Thou hast conn'd full many a rhyme,  
That lives upon the surge of time:  
Tell me, shall my lays be sung,  
Like Hacon's of the golden tongue,  
Long after Halcro's dead and gone?  
Or, shall Hialtland's minstrel own  
One note to rival glorious John!"

The voice of the sibyl immediately replied from her sanctuary:—

NORNA.

"The infant loves the rattle's noise;  
Age, double childhood, hath its toys;  
But different far the descant rings,  
As strikes a different hand the strings.  
The eagle mounts the polar sky—  
The Imber-goose, unskill'd to fly,  
Must be content to glide along,  
Where seal and sea-dog list his song."

Halcro bit his lip, shrugged his shoulders, and then, instantly recovering his good-humor, and the ready, though slovenly power of extemporaneous composition, with which long habit had invested him, he gallantly rejoined.

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Be mine the Imber-goose to play,  
And haunt lone cave and silent bay—  
The archer's aim so shall I shun—  
So shall I 'scape the levell'd gun—  
Content my verse's tuneless jingle,  
With Thule's sounding tides to mingle,  
While, to the ear of wondering wight,  
Upon the distant headland's height,  
Soften'd by murmur of the sea,  
The rude sounds seem like harmony!"

As the little bard stepped back, with an alert gait, and satisfied air, general applause followed the spirited manner in which he had acquiesced in the doom which levelled him with an Imber-goose. But his resigned and courageous submission did not even yet encourage any other person to consult the redoubted Norna.

"The coward fools!" said the Udaller. "Are you too afraid, Captain Cleveland, to speak to an old woman?—Ask her anything—ask her whether the twelve-gun sloop at Kirkwall be your consort or no."

Cleveland looked at Minna, and probably conceiving that she watched with anxiety his answer to her father's question, he collected himself, after a moment's hesitation.

"I never was afraid of man or woman.—Master Halcro, you have heard the question which our host desires me to ask—put it in my name, and in your own way.—I pretend to as little skill in poetry as I do in witchcraft."

Halcro did not wait to be invited twice, but, grasping Captain Cleveland's hand in his, according to the form which the game prescribed, he put the query which the Udaller had dictated to the stranger in the following words:—

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Mother doubtful, Mother dread,  
Dweller of the Fiftul-head,  
A gallant bark from far abroad,  
Saint Magnus hath her in his road,  
With guns and firelocks not a few—  
A silken and a scarlet crew,  
Deep stored with precious merchandise,  
Of gold, and goods of rare device:  
What interest hath our comrade bold  
In bark and crew, in goods and gold?"

There was a pause of unusual duration ere the oracle would return any answer; and when she replied, it was in a lower, though an equally decided tone, with that which she had hitherto employed:—

NORNA.

"Gold is ruddy, fair, and free,  
Blood is crimson, and dark to see—  
I looked out on Saint Magnus Bay,  
And I saw a falcon that struck her prey,—  
A gobbet of flesh in her beak she bore,  
And talons and singles were dripping with gore;  
Let him that asks after them look on his hand,  
And if there is blood on't, he's one of their band"

NORNA.

"Untouch'd by love, the maiden's breast  
Is like the snow on Rona's crest,  
High seated in the middle sky,  
In bright and barren purity;  
But by the sunbeam gently kiss'd,  
Scarce by the gazing eye 'tis miss'd,  
Ere down the lonely valley stealing,  
Fresh grass and growth its course revealing,  
It cheers the flock, revives the flower,  
And decks some happy shepherd's bowser."

"A comfortable doctrine, and most justly spoken," said the Udaller, seizing the blushing Brenda, as she was endeavoring to escape—"Never think shame for the matter, my girl. To be the mistress of some honest man's house, and the means of maintaining some old Norse name, making neighbors happy, the poor easy, and relieving strangers, is the most creditable lot a young woman can look to, and I heartily wish it to all here. Come, who speaks next?—good husbands are going—Maddie Groatsetter—my pretty Clara, come and have your share."

The Lady Glowrowrum shook her head, and "could not," she said, "altogether approve—"

"Enough said—enough said," replied Magnus; "no compulsion; but the play shall go on till we are tired of it. Here, Minna—I have got you at command. Stand forth, my girl—there are plenty of things to be ashamed of besides old-fashioned and innocent pleasantries.—Come, I will speak for you myself—though I am not sure I can remember rhyme enough for it."

There was a slight color which passed rapidly over Minna's face, but she instantly regained her composure, and stood erect by her father, as one superior to any little jest to which her situation might give rise.

Her father, after some rubbing of his brow, and other mechanical efforts to assist his memory, at length recovered verse sufficient to put the following query, though in less gallant strains than those of Halcro:—

MAGNUS TROLL.

"Mother, speak, and do not tarry,  
Here's a maiden fain would marry.  
Shall she marry, ay or no?  
If she marry, what's her lot?"

A deep sigh was uttered within the tabernacle of the soothsayer, as if she compassionated the subject of the doom which she was obliged to pronounce. She then, as usual, returned her response:—

NORNA.

"Untouch'd by love, the maiden's breast  
Is like the snow on Rona's crest;  
So pure, so free from earthly dye,  
It seems, whilst leaning on the sky,  
Part of the heaven to which 'tis nigh;  
But passion, like the wild March rain,  
May soil the wreath with many a stain.  
We gaze—the lovely vision's gone—  
A torrent fills the bed of stone,  
That, hurrying to destruction's shock,  
Leaps headlong from the lofty rock."

The Udaller heard this reply with high resent

Cleveland smiled scornfully, and held out his hand,—"*Few men have been on the Spanish main as often as I have, without having had to do with the *Guardia Costas* once and again; but there never was aught like a stain on my hand that a wet towel would not wipe away.*"

The Udaller added his voice potential—"There is never peace with Spaniards beyond the Line,—I have heard Captain Tragendeck and honest old Commodore Rummelæer say so an hundred times, and they have both been down in the Bay of Honduras and all thereabouts.—I hate all Spaniards, since they came here and reft the Fair Isle men of their vivers in 1553.\* I have heard my grandfather speak of it; and there is an old Dutch history somewhere about the house, that shows what work they made in the Low Countries long since. There is neither mercy nor faith in them."

"True—true, my old friend," said Cleveland; "they are as jealous of their Indian possessions as an old man of his young bride; and if they can catch you at disadvantage, the mines for your life is the word,—and so we fight them with our colors nailed to the mast."

"That is the way," shouted the Udaller; "the old British jack should never down. When I think of the wooden walls, I almost think myself an Englishman, only it would be becoming too like my Scottish neighbors:—but come, no offence to any here, gentlemen—all are friends, and all are welcome.—Come, Brenda, go on with the play—do you speak next, you have Norse rhymes enough, we all know."

"But none that suit the game we play at, father," said Brenda, drawing back.

"Nonsense!" said her father, pushing her onward, while Halcro seized on her reluctant hand; "never let mistimed modesty mar honest mirth—Speak for Brenda, Halcro—it is your trade to interpret maidens' thoughts."

The poet bowed to the beautiful young woman, with the devotion of a poet and the gallantry of a traveller, and having in a whisper, reminded her that she was in no way responsible for the nonsense he was about to speak, he paused, looked upward, simpered as if he had caught a sudden idea, and at length set off in the following verses:

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Mother doubtful, Mother dread,  
Dweller of the Fiftul-head,  
Well thou know'st it is thy task  
To tell what beauty will not ask—  
Then steep thy words in wine and milk,  
And weave a doom of gold and silk,—  
For we would know, shall Brenda prove  
In love, and happy in her love?"

The prophetess replied almost immediately from behind her curtain:—

\* The Admiral of the Spanish Armada was wrecked on the Fair Isle, half way betwixt the Orkney and Zetland Archipelago. The Duke of Medina Sidonia landed, with some of his people, and pillaged the islanders of their winter stores. These strangers are remembered as having remained on the island by force, and on bad terms with the inhabitants, till spring returned, when they effected their escape.

ment. "By the bones of the Martyr," he said, his brave visage becoming suddenly ruddy, "this is an abuse of courtesy! and, were it any but yourself that had classed my daughter's name and the word destruction together, they had better have left the word unspoken. But, come forth of the tent, thou old galdragon," \* he added, with a smile—"I should have known that thou canst not bring joy any thing that smacks of mirth, God help thee!" His summons received no answer; and, after waiting a moment, he again addressed her—"Nay, never be sullen with me, kinswoman, though I did speak a hasty word—thou knowest I bear malice to no one; least of all to thee—so come forth, and let us shake hands.—Thou mightst have foretold the wreck of my ship and boats, or a bad herring-fishery, and I should have said never a word; but Minna or Brenda, you know, are things which touch me nearer. But come out, shake hands, and there let there be an end on't."

Norna returned no answer whatever to his repeated invocations, and the company began to look upon each other with some surprise, when the Udaller, raising the skin which covered the entrance of the tent, discovered that the interior was empty. The wonder was now general, and not unmingled with fear; for it seemed impossible that Norna could have, in any manner, escaped from the tabernacle in which she was enclosed, without having been discovered by the company. Gone, however, she was, and the Udaller, after a moment's consideration, dropped the skin-curtain again over the entrance of the tent.

"My friends," he said, with a cheerful countenance, "we have long known my kinswoman, and that her ways are not like those of the ordinary folks of this world. But she means well by Hjalfland, and hath the love of a sister for me, and for my house; and no guest of mine needs either to fear evil, or to take offence, at her hand. I have little doubt she will be with us at dinner-time."

"Now, Heaven forbid!" said Mrs. Baby Yellowley—"for, my gude Leddy Glowrowrum, to tell your leddyship the truth, I likena cummers that can come and gae like a glance of the sun, or the whisk of a whirlwind."

"Speak lower, speak lower," said the Lady Glowrowrum, "and be thankful that yon carlin hasna ta'en the house-side away wi' her. The like of her have played warse pranks, and so has she hersell, unless she is the sairer lied on."

Similar murmurs ran through the rest of the company, until the Udaller uplifted his stentorian and imperative voice to put them to silence, and invited, or rather commanded, the attendance of his guests to behold the boats set off for the *haaf* or deep-sea fishing.

"The wind has been high since sunrise," he said, "and had kept the boats in the bay; but now it is favorable, and they would sail immediately."

\* *Galdra Kenna*—The Norse for a sorceress.

This sudden alteration of the weather occasioned sundry nods and winks amongst the guests, who were not indisposed to connect it with Norna's sudden disappearance; but without giving vent to observations which could not but be disagreeable to their host, they followed Lis stately step to the shore, as the herd of deer follows the leading stag, with all manner of respectful observance.\*

\* The author has in the preceding chapter supposed that a very ancient northern custom, used by those who were accounted soothsaying women, might have survived, though in jest rather than earnest, among the Zetlanders, their descendants. The following original account of such a scene will show the ancient importance and consequence of such a prophetic character as was assumed by Norna:—

"These lived in the same territory (Greenland) a woman named Thorbiorga, who was a prophetess, and called the little Vola (or fatal sister), the only one of nine sisters who survived. Thorbiorga during the winter used to frequent the festivities of the season, invited by those who were desirous of learning their own fortune, and the future events which impended. Torquill being a man of consequence in the country, it fell to his lot to inquire how long the death was to endure with which the country was then afflicted; he therefore invited the prophetess to his house, having made liberal preparation, as was the custom, for receiving a guest of such consequence. The seat of the soothsayer was placed in an eminent situation, and covered with pillows filled with the softest eider down. In the evening she arrived, together with a person who had been sent to meet her, and show her the way to Torquill's habitation. She was attired as follows:—She had a sky-blue tunic, having the front ornamented with gems from the top to the bottom; and wore around her throat a necklace of glass beads.\* Her head-gear was of black lambskin, the lining being the fur of a white wild-cat. She leaned on a staff, having a ball at the top.† The staff was ornamented with brass, and the ball or globe with gems or pebbles. She wore a Hunland (or Hungarian) girdle, to which was attached a large pouch, in which she kept her magical implements. Her shoes were of seal-skin, dressed with the hair outside, and secured by long and thick straps, fastened by brazen clasps. She wore gloves of the wild-cat's skin with the fur inmost. As this venerable person entered the hall, all saluted her with due respect. But she only returned the compliments of such as were agreeable to her. Torquill conducted her with reverence to the seat prepared for her, and requested she would purify the apartment and company assembled, by casting her eyes over them. She was by no means sparing of her words. The table being at length covered, such viands were placed before Thorbiorga as suited her character of a soothsayer. These were, a preparation of goat's milk, and a mess composed of the hearts of various animals; the prophetess made use of a brazen spoon, and a pointless knife, the handle of which was composed of a whale's tooth, and ornamented with two rings of brass. The table being removed, Torquill addressed Thorbiorga, requesting her opinion of his house and guests, at the same time intimating the subjects on which he and the company were desirous to consult her.

"Thorbiorga replied, it was impossible for her to answer their inquiries until she had slept a night under her roof. The next morning, therefore, the magical apparatus necessary for her purpose was prepared, and she then inquired, as a necessary part of the ceremony, whether there was any female present who could sing a magical song called '*Vardokur*.' When no songstress such as she desired could be found, Gudrida, the daughter of Torquill, replied, 'I am no sorceress or soothsayer; but my nurse, Haldisen, taught me, when in Iceland, a song called '*Vardokur*.'—Then thou knowest more than I was aware of," said Torquill

\* We may suppose the beads to have been of the potent adæronstone, to which so many virtues were ascribed.

† Like those anciently borne by porters at the gates of distinguished persons, as a badge of office.

## CHAPTER XXII.

There was a laughing devil in his sneer,  
That raised emotions both of rage and fear  
And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,  
Hope withering fled—and Mercy sigh'd farewell.  
THE COBSALE, *Canto* L.

The ling or white fishery is the principal employment of the natives of Zetland, and was formerly that upon which the gentry chiefly depended for their income, and the poor for their subsistence. The fishing season is, therefore, like the harvest of an agricultural country, the busiest and most important, as well as the most animating period of the year.

The fishermen of each district assemble at particular stations, with their boats and crews, and erect upon the shore small huts, composed of shingle, and covered with turf, for their temporary lodging, and skeos, or drying-houses, for the fish; so that the lonely beach at once assumes the appearance of an Indian town. The banks to which they repair for the Haaf fishing, are often many miles distant from the station where the fish is dried; so that they are always twenty or thirty hours absent, frequently longer; and under unfavorable circumstances of wind and tide, they remain at sea, with a very small stock of provisions, and in a boat of a construction which seems extremely slender, for two or three days,

"But as I am a Christian, continued Gudrida, 'I consider these rites as matters which it is unlawful to promote, and the song itself as unlawful.'—'Nevertheless,' answered the soothsayer, 'thou mayest help us in this matter without any harm to thy religion, since the task must remain with Torquill to provide every thing necessary for the present purpose.' Torquill also earnestly entreated Gudrida, till she consented to grant his request. The females then surrounded Thorbiorga, who took her place on a sort of elevated stage; Gudrida then sung the magic song, with a voice so sweet and tuneful, as to excel any thing that had been heard by any present. The soothsayer, delighted with the melody, returned thanks to the singer, and then said, 'Much I have now learned of death and disease approaching the country, and many things are now clear to me which before were hidden as well from me as others. Our present dearth of substance shall not long endure for the present, and plenty will in the spring succeed to scarcity. The contagious diseases also, with which the country has been for some time afflicted, will in a short time take their departure. To thee, Gudrida, I can, in recompense for thy assistance on this occasion, announce a fortune of higher import than any one could have conjectured. You shall be married to a man of name here in Greenland; but you shall not long enjoy that union; for your fate recalls you to Iceland, where you shall become the mother of a numerous and honorable family, which shall be enlightened by a luminous ray of good fortune. So, my daughter, wishing thee health, I bid thee farewell.' The prophetess, having afterwards given answers to all queries which were put to her, either by Torquill or his guests, departed to show her skill at another festival to which she had been invited for that purpose. But all which she had presaged, either concerning the public or individuals, came truly to pass."

The above narrative is taken from the Saga of Erick Randa, as quoted by the learned Bartholine in his curious work. He mentions similar instances, particularly of one Heida, celebrated for her predictions, who attended festivals for the purpose, as a modern Scotsman might say, of *spacing* fortunes, with a gallant tail or retinue, of thirty male and fifteen female attendants.—See *De Causis Contemplata Davis adhuc gentilibus Moris*, lib. iii. cap. 4.

and are sometimes heard of no more. The departure of the fishers, therefore, on this occupation, has in it a character of danger and of suffering, which renders it dignified, and the anxiety of the females who remain on the beach, watching the departure of the lessening boat, or anxiously looking out for its return, gives pathos to the scene.\*

The scene, therefore, was in busy and anxious animation, when the Udaller and his friends appeared on the beach. The various crews of about thirty boats, amounting each to from three to five or six men, were taking leave of their wives and female relatives, and jumping on board their long Norway skiffs, where their lines and tackle lay ready stowed. Magnus was not an idle spectator of the scene; he went from one place to another, inquiring into the state of their provisions for the voyage, and their preparations for the fishing—now and then, with a rough Dutch or Norse oath, abusing them for blockheads, for going to sea with their boats indifferently found, but always ending by ordering from his own stores a gallon of gin, a lipund of meal, or some similar essential addition to their sea-stores. The hardy sailors, on receiving such favors, expressed their thanks in the brief gruff manner which their landlord best approved; but the women were more clamorous in their gratitude, which Magnus was often obliged to silence by cursing all female tongues from Eve's downwards.

At length all were on board and ready, the sails were hoisted, the signal for departure given, the rowers began to pull, and all started from the shore, in strong emulation to get first to the fishing ground, and to have their lines set before the rest; an exploit to which no little consequence was attached by the boat's crew who should be happy enough to perform it.

While they were yet within hearing of the shore, they chanted an ancient Norse ditty, appropriate to the occasion, of which Claud Halcro had executed the following literal translation:—

"Farewell, merry maidens, to song and to laugh,  
For the brave lads of Westra are bound to the Haaf;  
And we must have labor, and hunger, and pain,  
Ere we dance with the maids of Dunrossness again.

\* Dr. Edmonston, the ingenious author of a View of the Ancient and Present State of the Zetland Islands, has placed this part of the subject in an interesting light. "It is truly painful to witness the anxiety and distress which the wives of these poor men suffer on the approach of a storm. Regardless of fatigue, they leave their homes, and fly to the spot where they expect their husbands to land, or ascend the summit of a rock, to look out for them on the bosom of the deep. Should they get the glimpse of a sail, they watch, with trembling solicitude, its alternate rise and disappearance on the waves; and though often tranquilized by the safe arrival of the objects of their search, yet it sometimes is their lot to hail the bark that never can return. Subject to the influence of a variable climate, and engaged on a sea naturally tempestuous, with rapid currents, scarcely a season passes over without the occurrence of some fatal accident or hair-breadth escape."—*View, &c., of the Zetland Islands*, vol. I., p. 238. Many interesting particulars respecting the fisheries and agriculture of Zetland, as well as its antiquities may be found in the work we have quoted.

"For now, in our trim boats of Norway deal,  
We must dance on the waves, with the porpoise and seal;  
The breeze it shall pipe, so it pipe not too high,  
And the gull be our songstress whenever she fits by.

"Sing on, my brave bird, while we follow, like thee,  
By bank, shoal, and quicksand, the swarms of the sea;  
And when twenty-score fishes are straining our line,  
Sing louder, brave bird, for their spoils shall be thine.

"We'll sing while we bait, and we'll sing when we haul,  
For the deeps of the Haaf have enough for us all;  
There is torsk for the gentle, and skate for the carle,  
And there's wealth for bold Magnus, the son of the earl.

"Huzza! my brave comrades, give way for the Haaf,  
We shall sooner come back to the dance and the laugh;  
For life without mirth is a lamp without oil;  
Then, mirth and long life to the bold Magnus Troil!"

The rude words of the song were soon drowned in the ripple of the waves, but the tune continued long to mingle with the sound of wind and sea, and the boats were like so many black specks on the surface of the ocean, diminishing by degrees as they bore far and farther seaward; while the ear could distinguish touches of the human voice, almost drowned amid that of the elements.

The fishermen's wives looked their last after the parting sails, and were now departing slowly, with downcast and anxious looks, towards the huts in which they were to make arrangements for preparing and drying the fish, with which they hoped to see their husbands and friends return deeply laden. Here and there an old sibyl displayed the superior importance of her experience, by predicting, from the appearance of the atmosphere, that the wind would be fair or foul, while others recommended a vow to the Kirk of Saint Ninians, for the safety of their men and boats (an ancient Catholic superstition, not yet wholly abolished), and others, but in a low and timorous tone, regretted to their companions, that Norna of Fitful-head had been suffered to depart in discontent that morning from Burgh-Westra, "and, of all days in the year, that they could have contrived to give her displeasure on the first day of the white-fishing!"

The gentry, guests of Magnus Troil, having whiled away as much time as could be so disposed of, in viewing the little armament set sail, and in conversing with the poor women who had seen their friends embark in it, began now to separate into various groups and parties, which strolled in different directions, as fancy led them, to enjoy what may be called the clair-obscur of a Zetland summer day, which, though without the brilliant sunshine that cheers other countries during the fine season, has a mild and pleasing character of its own, that softens while it saddens landscapes, which, in their own lonely, bare, and monotonous tone, have something in them stern as well as barren.

In one of the loneliest recesses of the coast, where a deep indenture of the rocks gave the tide access to the cavern, or, as it is called, the *Helyer*, of Swartaster, Minna Troil was walking with Captain Cleveland. They had probably chosen that walk, as being little liable to interruption from

others; for, as the force of the tide rendered the place unfit either for fishing or sailing, so it was not the ordinary resort of walkers, on account of its being the supposed habitation of a Mermaid, a race which Norwegian superstition invests with magical, as well as mischievous qualities. Here, therefore, Minna wandered with her lover.

A small spot of milk-white sand, that stretched beneath one of the precipices which walled in the creek on either side, afforded them space for a dry, firm, and pleasant walk of about an hundred yards, terminated at one extremity by a dark stretch of the bay, which, scarce touched by the wind, seemed almost as smooth as glass, and which was seen from between two lofty rocks, the jaws of the creek, or indenture, that approached each other above, as if they wished to meet over the dark tide that separated them. The other end of their promenade was closed by a lofty and almost unscalable precipice, the abode of hundreds of sea-fowl of different kinds, in the bottom of which the huge helyer, or sea-cave, itself yawned, as if for the purpose of swallowing up the advancing tide, which it seemed to receive into an abyss of immeasurable depth and extent. The entrance to this dismal cavern consisted not in a single arch, as usual, but was divided into two, by a huge pillar of natural rock, which, rising out of the sea, and extending to the top of the cavern, seemed to lend its support to the roof, and thus formed a double portal to the helyer, on which the fishermen and peasants had bestowed the rude name of the Devil's Nostrils. In this wild scene, lonely and undisturbed but by the clang of the sea-fowl, Cleveland had already met with Minna Troil more than once; for with her it was a favorite walk, as the objects which it presented agreed peculiarly with the love of the wild, the melancholy, and the wonderful. But now the conversation in which she was earnestly engaged, was such as entirely to withdraw her attention, as well as that of her companion, from the scenery around them.

"You cannot deny it," she said; "you have given way to feelings respecting this young man, which indicate prejudice and violence,—the prejudice unmerited, as far as you are concerned at least, and the violence equally imprudent and unjustifiable."

"I should have thought," replied Cleveland, "that the service I rendered him yesterday might have freed me from such a charge. I do not talk of my own risk, for I have lived in danger, and love it; it is not every one, however, would have ventured so near the furious animal to save one with whom they had no connection."

"It is not every one, indeed, who could have saved him," answered Minna, gravely; "but every one who has courage and generosity would have attempted it. The giddy-brained Claid Halcro would have done as much as you, had his strength been equal to his courage,—my father would have done as much, though having such just cause of resentment against the young man

for his vain and braggart abuse of our hospitality. Do not, therefore, boast of your exploit too much, my good friend, lest you should make me think that it required too great an effort. I know you love not Mordaunt Mertoun, though you exposed your own life to save his."

"Will you allow nothing, then," said Cleveland, "for the long misery I was made to endure from the common and prevailing report, that this beardless bird-hunter stood betwixt me and what I on earth coveted most—the affections of Minna Troil?"

He spoke in a tone at once impassioned and insinuating, and his whole language and manner seemed to express a grace and elegance, which formed the most striking contrast with the speech and gesture of the unpolished seaman, which he usually affected or exhibited. But his apology was unsatisfactory to Minna.

"You have known," she said, "perhaps too soon, and too well, how little you had to fear,—if you indeed feared,—that Mertoun, or any other, had interceded with Minna Troil.—Nay, truce to thanks and protestations; I would accept it as the best proof of gratitude, that you would be reconciled with this youth, or at least avoid every quarrel with him."

"That we should be friends, Minna, is impossible," replied Cleveland; "even the love I bear you, the most powerful emotion that my heart ever knew, cannot work that miracle."

"And why, I pray you?" said Minna; "there have been no evil offices between you, but rather an exchange of mutual services; why can you not be friends?—I have many reasons to wish it."

"And can you, then, forget the slights which he has cast upon Brenda, and on yourself, and on your father's house?"

"I can forgive them all," said Minna;—"can you not say so much, who have in truth received no offence?"

Cleveland looked down, and paused for an instant; then raised his head, and replied, "I might easily deceive you, Minna, and promise you what my soul tells me is an impossibility; but I am forced to use too much deceit with others, and with you I will use none. I cannot be friend to this young man;—there is a natural dislike—an instinctive aversion—something like a principle of repulsion in our mutual nature, which makes us odious to each other. Ask himself—he will tell you he has the same antipathy against me. The obligation he conferred on me was a bridle to my resentment; but I was so galled by the restraint, that I could have gnawed the curb till my lips were bloody."

"You have worn what you are wont to call your iron mask so long, that your features," replied Minna, "retain the impressions of its rigidity even when it is removed."

"You do me injustice, Minna," replied her lover, "and you are angry with me because I deal with you plainly and honestly. Plainly and hon-

estly, however, will I say, that I cannot be Mertoun's friend, but it shall be his own fault, not mine, if I am ever his enemy. I seek not to injure him; but do not ask me to love him. And of this remain satisfied, that it would be vain even if I could do so; for as sure as I attempted any advances towards his confidence, so sure would I be to awaken his disgust and suspicion. Leave us to the exercise of our natural feelings, which, as they will unquestionably keep us as far separate as possible, are most likely to prevent any possible interference with each other.—Does this satisfy you?"

"It must," said Minna, "since you tell me there is no remedy.—And now tell me why you looked so grave when you heard of your consort's arrival,—for that it is she I have no doubt,—in the port of Kirkwall?"

"I fear," replied Cleveland, "the consequences of that vessel's arrival with her crew, as comprehending the ruin of my fondest hopes. I had made some progress in your father's favor, and, with time, might have made more, when hither come Hawkins and the rest to blight my prospects for ever. I told you on what terms we parted. I then commanded a vessel braver and better found than their own, with a crew, who, at my slightest nod, would have faced fiends armed with their own fiery element; but I now stand alone, a single man, destitute of all means to overawe or to restrain them; and they will soon show so plainly the ungovernable license of their habits and dispositions, that ruin to themselves and to me will in all probability be the consequence."

"Do not fear it," said Minna; "my father can never be so unjust as to hold you liable for the offences of others."

"But what will Magnus Troil say to my own demerits, fair Minna?" said Cleveland, smiling.

"My father is a Zetlander, or rather a Norwegian," said Minna, "one of an oppressed race, who will not care whether you fought against the Spaniards, who are the tyrants of the New World, or against the Dutch and English, who have succeeded to their usurped dominions. His own ancestors supported and exercised the freedom of the seas in those gallant barks, whose pennons were the dread of all Europe."

"I fear, nevertheless," said Cleveland, "that the descendant of an ancient Sea-king will scarce acknowledge a fitting acquaintance in a modern rover. I have not disguised from you that I have reason to dread the English laws; and Magnus, though a great enemy to taxes, imposts, scat, wattle, and so forth, has no idea of latitude upon points of a more general character;—he would willingly receive a rope to the yard-arm for the benefit of an unfortunate buccanier."

"Do not suppose so," said Minna; "he himself suffers too much oppression from the tyrannical laws of our proud neighbors of Scotland. I trust he will soon be able to rise in resistance against them. The enemy—such I will call them—are now divided amongst themselves, and every

vessel from their coast brings intelligence of fresh commotions—the Highlands against the Lowlands—the Williamites against the Jacobites—the Whigs against the Tories, and, to sum the whole, the kingdom of England against that of Scotland. What is there, as Claud Halcro well hinted, to prevent our availing ourselves of the quarrels of these robbers, to assert the independence of which we are deprived?"

"To hoist the raven standard on the Castle of Scalloway," said Cleveland, in imitation of her tone and manner, "and proclaim your father Earl Magnus the First!"

"Earl Magnus the Seventh, if it please you," replied Minna; "for six of his ancestors have worn, or were entitled to wear, the coronet before him.—You laugh at my ardor,—but what is there to prevent all this?"

"Nothing will prevent it," replied Cleveland, "because it will never be attempted—Any thing might prevent it, that is equal in strength to the long-boat of a British man-of-war."

"You treat us with scorn, sir," replied Minna; "yet yourself should know what a few resolved men may perform."

"But they must be armed, Minna," replied Cleveland, "and willing to place their lives upon each desperate adventure.—Think not of such visions. Denmark has been cut down into a second-rate kingdom, incapable of exchanging a single broadside with England; Norway is a starving wilderness; and in these islands, the love of independence has been suppressed by a long term of subjection, or shows itself but in a few muttered growls over the bowl and bottle.—And were your men as willing warriors as their ancestors, what could the unarmed crews of a few fishing-boats do against the British navy?—Think no more of it, sweet Minna—it is a dream, and I must term it so, though it makes your eye so bright and your step so noble."

"It is indeed a dream!" said Minna, looking down, "and it ill becomes a daughter of Hialtland to look or to move like a free-woman—Our eye should be on the ground, and our step slow and reluctant, as that of one who obeys a taskmaster."

"There are lands," said Cleveland, "in which the eye may look bright upon groves of the palm and the cocoa, and where the foot may move light as a galley under sail, over fields carpeted with flowers, and savannahs surrounded by aromatic thickets, and where subjection is unknown, except that of the brave to the bravest, and of all to the most beautiful."

Minna paused a moment ere she replied, and then answered, "No, Cleveland. My own rude country has charms for me, even desolate as you think it, and depressed as it surely is, which no other land on earth can offer to me. I endeavor in vain to represent to myself those visions of trees, and of groves, which my eye never saw; but my imagination can conceive no sight in nature more sublime than these waves, when agi-

tated by a storm, or more beautiful, than when they come, as they now do, rolling in calm tranquillity to the shore. Not the fairest scene in a foreign land,—not the brightest sunbeam that ever shone upon the richest landscape, would win my thoughts for a moment from that lofty rock, misty hill, and wide-rolling ocean. Hialtland is the land of my deceased ancestors, and of my living father; and in Hialtland will I live and die."

"Then in Hialtland," answered Cleveland, "will I too live and die. I will not go to Kirkwall,—I will not make my existence known to my comrades, from whom it were else hard for me to escape. Your father loves me, Minna; who knows whether long attention, anxious care, might not bring him to receive me into his family? Who would regard the length of a voyage that was certain to terminate in happiness?"

"Dream not of such an issue," said Minna; "it is impossible. While you live in my father's house—while you receive his assistance, and share his table, you will find him the generous friend, and the hearty host; but touch him on what concerns his name and family, and the frank-hearted Udaller will start up before you the haughty and proud descendant of a Norwegian Jarl. See you,—a moment's suspicion has fallen on Mordant Merton, and he has banished from his favor the youth whom he so lately loved as a son. No one must ally with his house that is not of untainted northern descent."

"And mine may be so, for aught that is known to me upon the subject," said Cleveland.

"How!" said Minna; "have you any reason to believe yourself of Norse descent?"

"I have told you before," replied Cleveland, "that my family is totally unknown to me. I spent my earliest days upon a solitary plantation in the little island of Tortuga, under the charge of my father, then a different person from what he afterwards became. We were plundered by the Spaniards, and reduced to such extremity of poverty, that my father, in desperation, and in thirst of revenge, took up arms, and having become chief of a little band, who were in the same circumstances, became a buccanier, as it is called, and cruised against Spain, with various vicissitudes of good and bad fortune, until, while he interfered to check some violence of his companions, he fell by their hands—no uncommon fate among the captains of these rovers. But whence my father came, or what was the place of his birth, I know not, fair Minna, nor have I ever had a curious thought on the subject."

"He was a Briton, at least, your unfortunate father?" said Minna.

"I have no doubt of it," said Cleveland; "his name, which I have rendered too formidable to be openly spoken, is an English one; and his acquaintance with the English language, and ever with English literature, together with the pains which he took, in better days, to teach me both, plainly spoke him to be an Englishman. If the rude bearing which I display towards others is

not the genuine character of my mind and manners, it is to my father, Minna, that I owe any share of better thoughts and principles, which may render me worthy, in some small degree, of your notice and approbation. And yet it sometimes seems to me, that I have two different characters; for I cannot bring myself to believe, that I, who now walk this lone beach with the lovely Minna Troil, and am permitted to speak to her of the passion which I have cherished, have ever been the daring leader of the bold band whose name was as terrible as a tornado."

"You had not been permitted," said Minna, "to use that bold language towards the daughter of Magnus Troil, had you not been the brave and undaunted leader, who, with so small means, has made his name so formidable. My heart is like that of a maiden of the ancient days, and is to be won, not by fair words, but by gallant deeds."

"Alas! that heart," said Cleveland; "and what is it that I may do—what is it that man can do, to win in it the interest which I desire?"

"Rejoin your friends—pursue your fortunes—leave the rest to destiny," said Minna. "Should you return, the leader of a gallant fleet, who can tell what may befall?"

"And what shall assure me, that, when I return—if return I ever shall—I may not find Minna Troil a bride or a spouse?—No, Minna, I will not trust to destiny the only object worth attaining, which my stormy voyage in life has yet offered me."

"Hear me," said Minna. "I will bind myself to you, if you dare accept such an engagement, by the promise of Odin,\* the most sacred of our northern rites which are yet practised among us, that I will never favor another, until you resign the pretensions which I have given to you.—Will that satisfy you?—for more I cannot—more I will not give."

"Then with that," said Cleveland, after a moment's pause, "I must perforce be satisfied;—but remember, it is yourself that throw me back upon a mode of life which the laws of Britain denounce as criminal, and which the violent passions of the daring men by whom it is pursued, have rendered infamous."

\* Although the Father of Scandinavian mythology has been as a deity long forgotten in the archipelago, which was once a very small part of his realm, yet even at this day his name continues to be occasionally attested as security for a promise.

It is curious to observe, that the rites with which such attestations are still made in Orkney, correspond to those of the ancient Northmen. It appears from several authorities, that in the Norse ritual, when an oath was imposed, he by whom it was pledged, passed his hand, while pronouncing it, through a massive ring of silver kept for that purpose.\* In like manner, two persons, generally lovers, desirous to take the promise of Odin, which they considered as peculiarly binding, joined hands through a circular hole in a sacrificial stone, which lies in the Orkadian Stonehenge, called the Circle of Stennis, of which we shall speak more hereafter. The ceremony is now confined to the troth-plighting of the lower classes, but at an earlier period may be supposed to have influenced a character like Minna in the higher ranks.

\* See the Eyrbyggja Sæga.

"But I," said Minna, "am superior to such prejudices. In warring with England, I see the laws in no other light than as if you were engaged with an enemy, who, in fulness of pride and power, has declared he will give his antagonist no quarter. A brave man will not fight the worse for this;—and, for the manners of your comrades, so that they do not infect your own, why should their evil report attach to you?"

Cleveland gazed at her as she spoke, with a degree of wondering admiration, in which, at the same time, there lurked a smile at her simplicity.

"I could not," he said, "have believed, that such high courage could have been found united with such ignorance of the world, as the world is now wielded. For my manners, they who best know me will readily allow, that I have done my best, at the risk of my popularity, and of my life itself, to mitigate the ferocity of my mates; but how can you teach humanity to men burning with vengeance against the world by whom they are proscribed, or teach them temperance and moderation in enjoying the pleasures which chance throws in their way, to vary a life which would be otherwise one constant scene of peril and hardship?—But this promise, Minna—this promise, which is all I am to receive in guerdon for my faithful attachment—let me at least lose no time in claiming that."

"It must not be rendered here, but in Kirkwall.—We must invoke, to witness the engagement, the Spirit which presides over the ancient Circle of Stennis. But perhaps you fear to name the ancient Father of the Slain too, the Severe, the Terrible?"

Cleveland smiled.

"Do me the justice to think, lovely Minna, that I am little subject to fear real causes of terror; and for those which are visionary, I have no sympathy whatever."

"You believe not in them, then," said Minna, "and are so far better suited to be Brenda's lover than mine."

"I will believe," replied Cleveland, "in whatever you believe. The whole inhabitants of that Valhalla, about which you converse so much with that fiddling, rhyming fool Claud Halcro—all these shall become living and existing things to my credulity. But, Minna, do not ask me to fear any of them."

"Fear! no—not to fear them, surely," replied the maiden; "for, not before Thor or Odin, when they approached in the fulness of their terrors, did the heroes of my dauntless race yield one foot in retreat. Nor do I own them as Deities—a better faith prevents so foul an error. But, in our own conception, they are powerful spirits for good or evil. And when you boast not to fear them, bethink you that you defy an enemy of a kind you have never yet encountered."

"Not in these northern latitudes," said the lover, with a smile, "where hitherto I have seen but angels; but I have faced, in my time, the demons of the Equinoctial Line which we rovers

suppose to be as powerful, and as malignant, as those of the north."

"Have you, then, witnessed those wonders that are beyond the visible world?" said Minna, with some degree of awe.

Cleveland composed his countenance, and replied,—"A short while before my father's death, I came, though then very young, into the command of a sloop, manned with thirty as desperate fellows as ever handled a musket. We cruised for a long while with bad success, taking nothing but wretched small-craft, which were destined to catch turtle, or otherwise loaded with coarse and worthless trumpery. I had much ado to prevent my comrades from avenging upon the crews of those banishing shallows the disappointment which they had occasioned to us. At length we grew desperate, and made a descent on a village, where we were told we should intercept the mules of a certain Spanish governor laden with treasure. We succeeded in carrying the place; but while I endeavored to save the inhabitants from the fury of my followers, the muleteers, with their precious cargo, escaped into the neighboring woods. This filled up the measure of my unpopularity. My people, who had been long discontented, became openly mutinous. I was deposed from my command, in solemn council, and condemned as having too little luck and too much humanity for the profession I had undertaken, to be marooned,\* as the phrase goes, on one of those little sandy, bushy islets, which are called in the West Indies, keys, and which are frequented only by turtle and by sea-fowl. Many of them are supposed to be haunted—some by the demons worshipped by the old inhabitants—some by Caciques and others, whom the Spaniards had put to death by torture, to compel them to discover their hidden treasures, and others by the various spectres in which sailors of all nations have implicit faith.† My place of banishment, called Coffin-key, about two leagues and a half to the southeast of Bermudas, was so infamous as the resort of these supernatural inhabitants, that I believe the wealth of Mexico would not have persuaded the bravest of the scoundrels who put me ashore there, to have spent an hour on the islet alone, even in broad daylight; and when they rowed off, they pulled for the sloop like men that dared not cast their eyes behind them. And there they left me, to subsist as I might, on a speck of unproductive sand, surrounded by the boundless Atlantic, and haunted, as they supposed, by malignant demons."

"And what was the consequence?" said Minna, eagerly.

\* To maroon a seaman signified to abandon him on a desolate coast or island—a piece of cruelty often practised by Pirates and Buccaneers.

† An elder brother, now no more, who was educated in the navy, and had been a midshipman in Rodney's squadron in the West Indies, used to astonish the author's boyhood with tales of those haunted islets. On one of them, called, I believe, Coffin-key, the seamen positively refused to pass the night, and came off every evening while they were engaged in completing the watering of the vessel, returning the following sunrise.

"I supported life," said the adventurer, "at the expense of such sea-fowl, aptly called boobies, as were silly enough to let me approach so near as to knock them down with a stick; and by means of turtle-eggs, when these complaisant birds became better acquainted with the mischievous disposition of the human species, and more shy of course of my advances."

"And the demons of whom you spoke?"—continued Minna.

"I had my secret apprehensions upon their account," said Cleveland: "In open daylight, or in absolute darkness, I did not greatly apprehend their approach; but in the misty dawn of the morning, or when evening was about to fall, I saw, for the first week of my abode on the key, many a dim and undefined spectre, now resembling a Spaniard, with his capa wrapped around him, and his huge sombrero, as large as an umbrella, upon his head,—now a Dutch sailor, with his rough cap and trunk-hose,—and now an Indian Cacique, with his feathery crown and long lance of cane."

"Did you not approach and address them?" said Minna.

"I always approached them," replied the seaman; "but,—I grieve to disappoint your expectations, my fair friend,—whenever I drew near them, the phantom changed into a bush, or a piece of driftwood, or a wreath of mist, or some such cause of deception, until at last I was taught by experience to cheat myself no longer with such visions, and continued a solitary inhabitant of Coffin-key, as little alarmed by visionary terrors, as I ever was in the great cabin of a stout vessel, with a score of companions around me."

"You have cheated me into listening to a tale of nothing," said Minna; "but how long did you continue on the island?"

"Four weeks of wretched existence," said Cleveland, "when I was relieved by the crew of a vessel which came thither a-turtling. Yet my miserable seclusion was not entirely useless to me; for on that spot of barren sand I found, or rather forged, the iron-mask, which has since been my chief security against treason, or mutiny of my followers. It was there I formed the resolution to seem no softer hearted, nor better instructed—no more humane, and no more scrupulous, than those with whom fortune had leagued me. I thought over my former story, and saw that seeming more brave, skilful, and enterprising than others, had gained me command and respect, and that seeming more gently nurtured, and more civilized than they, had made them envy and hate me as a being of another species. I bargained with myself, then, that since I could not lay aside my superiority of intellect and education, I would do my best to disguise, and to sink in the rude seaman, all appearance of better feeling and better accomplishments. I foresaw then what has since happened, that, under the appearance of daring obduracy, I should acquire such an habitual command over my followers, that I might use it for the insurance of discipline, and for re-

lieving the distresses of the wretches who fell under our power. I saw, in short, that, to attain authority, I must assume the external semblance, at least, of those over whom it was to be exercised. The tidings of my father's fate, while it excited me to wrath and to revenge, confirmed the resolution which I had adopted. He also had fallen a victim to his superiority of mind, morals, and manners, above those whom he commanded. They were wont to call him the Gentleman; and, unquestionably, they thought he waited some favorable opportunity to reconcile himself, perhaps at their expense, to those existing forms of society his habits seemed best to suit with, and, even therefore, they murdered him. Nature and justice alike called on me for revenge. I was soon at the head of a new body of the adventurers, who are so numerous in those islands. I sought not after those by whom I had been myself marooned, but after the wretches who had betrayed my father; and on them I took a revenge so severe that it was of itself sufficient to stamp me with the character of that inexorable ferocity which I was desirable to be thought to possess, and which, perhaps, was gradually creeping on my natural disposition in actual earnest. My manner, speech, and conduct, seemed so totally changed, that those who formerly knew me were disposed to ascribe the alteration to my intercourse with the demons who haunted the sands of Coffin-key; nay, there were some, superstitious enough to believe, that I had actually formed a league with them."

"I tremble to hear the rest!" said Minna; "did you not become the monster of courage and cruelty whose character you assumed?"

"If I have escaped being so, it is to you, Minna," replied Cleveland, "that the wonder must be ascribed. It is true, I have always endeavored to distinguish myself rather by acts of adventurous valor, than by schemes of revenge or of plunder, and that at length I could save lives by a rude jest, and sometimes, by the excess of the measures which I myself proposed, could induce those under me to intercede in favor of prisoners; so that the seeming severity of my character has better served the cause of humanity, than had I appeared directly devoted to it."

He ceased, and as Minna replied not a word, both remained silent for a little space, when Cleveland again resumed the discourse:—

"You are silent," he said, "Miss Troil, and I have injured myself in your opinion by the frankness with which I have laid my character before you. I may truly say, that my natural disposition has been controlled, but not altered, by the untoward circumstances in which I am placed."

"I am uncertain," said Minna, after a moment's consideration, "whether you had been thus candid, had you not known I should soon see your comrades, and discover from their conversation and manners, what you would otherwise gladly have concealed."

"You do me injustice, Minna, cruel injustice. From the instant that you knew me to be a sailor

of fortune, an adventurer, a buccanier, or, if you will have the broad word, a PIRATE, what had you to expect less than what I have told you?"

"You speak too truly," said Minna—"all this I might have anticipated, and I know not how I should have expected it otherwise. But it seemed to me that a war on the cruel and superstitious Spaniards had in it something ennobling—something that refined the fierce employment to which you have just now given its true and dreaded name. I thought that the independent warriors of the Western Ocean, raised up, as it were, to punish the wrongs of so many murdered and plundered tribes, must have had something of gallant elevation, like that of the Sons of the North, whose long galleys avenged on so many coasts the oppressions of degenerate Rome. This I thought, and this I dreamed—I grieve that I am awakened and undeceived. Yet I blame you not for the erring of my own fancy.—Farewell; we must now part."

"Say, at least," said Cleveland, "that you do not hold me in horror for having told you the truth."

"I must have time for reflection," said Minna, "time to weigh what you have said, ere I can fully understand my own feelings. Thus much, however, I can say even now, that he who pursues the wicked purpose of plunder, by means of blood and cruelty, and who must veil his remains of natural remorse under an affectation of superior profligacy, is not, and cannot be, the lover whom Minna Troil expected to find in Cleveland; and if she still love him, it must be as a penitent, and not as a hero."

So saying, she extricated herself from his grasp (for he still endeavored to detain her), making an imperative sign to him to forbear from following her.—"She is gone," said Cleveland, looking after her; "wild and fanciful as she is, I expected not this.—She startled not at the name of my perilous course of life, yet seems totally unprepared for the evil which must necessarily attend it; and so all the merit I have gained by my resemblance to a Norse Champion, or King of the Sea, is to be lost at once, because a gang of pirates do not prove to be a choir of saints. I would that Rackam, Hawkins, and the rest, had been at the bottom of the Race of Portland—I would the Pentland Frith had swept them to hell rather than to Orkney! I will not, however, quit the chase of this angel for all that these fiends can do. I will—I must to Orkney before the Udaller makes his voyage thither—our meeting might alarm even his blunt understanding, although, thank Heaven, in this wild country, men know the nature of our trade only by hearsay, through our honest friends the Dutch, who take care never to speak very ill of those they make money by.—Well, if fortune would but stand my friend with this beautiful enthusiast, I would pursue her wheel no farther at sea, but set myself down amongst these rocks, as happy as if they were so many groves of bananas and palmettoes."