

The Water-Witch

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by

James Fenimore Cooper

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	1
CHAPTER I	3
CHAPTER II	13
CHAPTER III	20
CHAPTER IV	28
CHAPTER V	34
CHAPTER VI	43
CHAPTER VII	52
CHAPTER VIII	61
CHAPTER IX	68
CHAPTER X	76
CHAPTER XI	84
CHAPTER XII	94
CHAPTER XIII	103
CHAPTER XIV	113
CHAPTER XV	122
CHAPTER XVI	134
CHAPTER XVII	145
CHAPTER XVIII	156
CHAPTER XIX	168
CHAPTER XX	175
CHAPTER XXI	184
CHAPTER XXII	193

CHAPTER XXIII	198
CHAPTER XXIV	210
CHAPTER XXV	222
CHAPTER XXVI	233
CHAPTER XXVII	245
CHAPTER XXVIII	256
CHAPTER XXIX	268
CHAPTER XXX	279
CHAPTER XXXI	287
CHAPTER XXXII	299
CHAPTER XXXIII	310
CHAPTER XXXIV	320

PREFACE

IT was a bold attempt to lay the scene of a work like this, on the coast of America. We have had our buccaneers on the water, and our witches on the land, but we believe this is the first occasion on which the rule has been reversed. After an experience that has now lasted more than twenty years, the result has shown that the public prefer the original order of things. In other words, the book has proved a comparative failure.

The facts of this country are all so recent, and so familiar, that every innovation on them, by means of the imagination, is coldly received, if it be not absolutely frowned upon. Perhaps it would have been safer to have written a work of this character without a reference to any particular locality. The few local allusions that are introduced are not essential to the plot, and might have been dispensed with without lessening the interest of the tale.

Nevertheless, this is probably the most imaginative book ever written by the author. Its fault is in blending too much of the real with the purely ideal. Half-way measures will not do in matters of this sort; and it is always safer to preserve the identity of a book by a fixed and determinate character, than to make the effort to steer between the true and the false.

Several liberties have been taken with the usages of the colony, with a view to give zest to the descriptions. If the Dutch of this country ever resorted to the common practice of Holland, in giving such names as the "Lust in Rust" to their villas, it has not only passed out of sight, but out of mind. In the other country, as one moves along the canals, he sees names of this character painted on different objects, every mile he advances, and admires the contentment which is satisfied with a summer-house, a pipe, a canal, a meadow that is almost under water, and, indeed, with a country that is what seamen term "awash." But nothing of this sort was ever seen here. The fine natural scenery forbade it; and a villa on the banks of the Hudson was a residence that possessed in itself advantages to set at naught such small contrivances of luxury.

Some persons may object to the manner in which we have sketched the conduct and character of Cornbury. We believe, however, that the truth is not exceeded in anything said of this individual, who would seem to have had neither dignity, self-respect, nor principles. The fact that he remained in this country a prisoner for debt, is historical, his creditors most probably hoping to extort from Anne further concessions in behalf of her worthless relative.

As for the Patroon of Kinderhook, the genus seems about to expire among us. Not only are we to have no more patroons, but the decree has gone forth from the virtuous and infallible voters that there are to be no more estates.

"All the realm shall be in common, and in Cheapside shall my palfrey go to grass."

The collected wisdom of the State has decided that it is true policy to prevent the affluent from investing their money in land! The curse of mediocrity weighs upon us, and its blunders can be repaired only through the hard lessons of experience.

This book was written in Italy, and first printed (in English) in Germany. To the last circumstance is probably owing the great number of typographical errors that are to be found in it. The American compositor, however, quite likely conceiving that he had a right to correct the blunders of a foreigner, has taken the law into his own hands, and exercised a sovereign power over our labors. That our good old-fashioned mode of spelling should receive the modern improvements, was, perhaps, unavoidable; but surely, we never spelt "coamings" (of a hatch), "combings"; "rulloek," "oar-lock," or "row-lock"; or made many other similar "long-shore" blunders that are to be found in the original editions of this book.

Care has been had to do ourselves justice in these particulars, and we think that the book is more improved, in all these respects, in the present edition, than any other work that has passed through our hands.

CHAPTER I

"What, shall this speech be spoke for our excuse,
Or shall we on without apology?"

—*Romeo and Juliet.*

THE fine estuary which penetrates the American coast between the fortieth and forty-first degrees of latitude, is formed by the confluence of the Hudson, the Hackensack, the Passaic, the Raritan, and a multitude of smaller streams; all of which pour their tribute into the ocean within the space named. The islands of Nassau and Staten are happily placed to exclude the tempests of the open sea, while the deep and broad arms of the latter offer every desirable facility for foreign trade and internal intercourse. To this fortunate disposition of land and water, with a temperate climate, a central position, and an immense interior that is now penetrated in every direction either by artificial or by natural streams, the city of New York is indebted for its extraordinary prosperity. Though not wanting in beauty, there are many bays that surpass this in the charms of scenery; but it may be questioned if the world possesses another site that unites so many natural advantages for the growth and support of a widely extended commerce. As if never wearied with her kindness, Nature has placed the Island of Manhattan at the precise point that is most desirable for the position of a town. Millions might inhabit the spot, and yet a ship could load near every door; and while the surface of the land just possesses the inequalities that are required for health and cleanliness, its bosom is filled with the material most needed in construction.

The consequences of so unusual a concurrence of favorable circumstances are well known. A vigorous, healthful, and continued growth, that has no parallel even in the history of this extraordinary and fortunate country, has already raised the insignificant provincial town of the last century to the level of the second-rate cities of the other hemisphere. The New Amsterdam of this continent already rivals its parent of the other; and, so far as human powers may pretend to predict, a few fleeting years will place her on a level with the proudest capitals of Europe.

It would seem that, as Nature has given its periods to the stages of animal life, it has also set limits to all moral and political ascendancy. While the city of the Medici is receding from its crumbling walls, like the human form shrinking into "the lean and slippered pantaloon," the Queen of the Adriatic sleeping on her muddy isles, and Rome itself is only to be traced by fallen temples and buried columns, the youthful vigor of America is fast covering the wilds of the West with the happiest fruits of human industry.

By the Manhattaneses who is familiar with the forest of masts, the miles of wharves, the countless villas, the hundred churches, the castles, the smoking and busy vessels that crowd his bay, the daily increase and the general movement of his native town, the picture we are about to sketch will scarcely be recognized. He who shall come a generation later will probably smile, that subject of admiration should have been found in the existing condition of the city; and yet we shall attempt to carry the recollections of the reader but a century back in the brief history of his country.

As the sun rose on the morning of the 3rd of June 171-, the report of a cannon was heard rolling along the waters of the Hudson. Smoke issued from an embrasure of a small fortress, that stood on the point of land where the river and the bay mingle their waters. The explosion was followed by the appearance of a flag, which, as it rose to the summit of its staff and unfolded itself heavily in the light current of air, showed the blue field and red cross of the English ensign. At the distance of several miles, the dark masts of a ship were to be seen, faintly relieved by the verdant background of the heights of Staten Island. A little cloud floated over this object, and then an answering signal came dull and rumbling to the town. The flag that the cruiser set was not visible in the distance.

At the precise moment that the noise of the first gun was heard, the door of one of the principal dwellings of the town opened, and a man, who might have been its master, appeared on its stoop, as the ill-arranged entrances of the buildings of the place are still termed. He was seemingly prepared for some expedition that was likely to consume the day. A black of middle age followed the burgher to the threshold; and another negro, who had not yet reached the stature of manhood, bore under his arm a small bundle, that probably contained articles of the first necessity to the comfort of his master.

"Thrift, Mr. Euclid, thrift is your true philosopher's stone," commenced, or rather continued, in a rich, full-mouthed Dutch, the proprietor of the dwelling, who had evidently been giving a leave-taking charge to his principal slave, before quitting the house; "thrift hath made many a man rich, but it never yet brought any one to want. It is thrift which has built up the credit of my house, and, though it is said by myself, a broader back and firmer base belong to no merchant in the colonies. You are but the reflection of your master's prosperity, you rogue, and so much the greater need that you look to his interests. If the substance is wasted, what will become of the shadow? When I get delicate you will sicken; when I am a-hungred, you will be famished; when I die you may be—ahem—Euclid, I leave thee in charge with goods and chattels, house and stable, with my character in the neighborhood. I am going to the Lust in Rust, for a mouthful of better air. Plague and fevers! I believe the people will continue to come into this crowded town, until it gets to be as pestilent as Rotterdam in the dog-days. You have now come to years when a man obtains his reflection, boy, and I expect suitable care and discretion about the premises while my back is turned. Now, harkee, sirrah: I am

not entirely pleased with the character of thy company. It is not altogether as respectable as becomes the confidential servant of a man of a certain station in the world. There are thy two cousins, Brom and Kobus, who are no better than a couple of blackguards; and as for the English negro, Diomede—he is a devil's imp! Thou hast the other locks at disposal, and"—drawing with visible reluctance the instrument from his pocket—"here is the key of the stable. Not a hoof is to quit it, but to go to the pump; and see that each animal has its food to a minute. The devil's roysterers! a Manhattan negro takes a Flemish gelding for a gaunt hound that is never out of breath, and away he goes at night, scampering along the highways like a Yankee witch switching through the air on a broomstick; but mark me, Master Euclid, I have eyes in my head, as thou knowest by bitter experience! D'ye remember, ragamuffin, the time when I saw thee, from the Hague, riding the beasts, as if the devil spurred them, along the dyke of Leyden, without remorse as without leave?"

"I alway brieve some make-mischief tell massa dat time," returned the negro sulkily, though not without doubt.

"His own eyes were the tell-tales. If masters had no eyes, a pretty world would the negroes make of it! I have got the measure of every black heel on the island registered in the big book you see me so often looking into, especially on Sundays; and, if either of the tire-legs I have named dares to enter my grounds, let him expect to pay a visit to the city provost. What do the wildcats mean? Do they think that the geldings were bought in Holland, with charges for breaking in, shipment, insurance, freight, and risk of diseases, to have their flesh melted from their ribs like a cook's candle!"

"Ere not'in done in all 'e island, but a color' man do him! He do a mischief, and he do all a work, too! I won'er what color massa t'ink war' Captain Kidd?"

"Black or white, he was a rank rogue; and you see the end he came to. I warrant you, now, that water-thief began his iniquities by riding the neighbors' horses at night. His fate should be a warning to every nigger in the colony. The imps of darkness! The English have no such scarcity of rogues at home, that they could not spare us the pirate to hang up on one of the islands, as a scarecrow to the blacks of Manhattan."

"Well, I t'ink 'e sight do a white man some good, too," returned Euclid, who had all the pertinacity of a spoiled Dutch negro, singularly blended with affection for him in whose service he had been born. "I hear ebbrybody say, 'ere war' but two color' man in he ship, an 'em both war' Guinea-born."

"A modest tongue, thou midnight scamperer! look to my geldings. Here—here are two Dutch florins, three stivers, and a Spanish pistareen for thee; one of the florins is for thy old mother, and with the others thou canst lighten thy heart in the Paus merry-making; if I hear that either of thy rascally cousins, or the English Diomede, has put a leg across beast of mine, it will be the worse for all Africa! Famine and

skeletons! Here have I been seven years trying to fatten the nags, and they still look more like weasels than a pair of solid geldings."

The close of this speech was rather muttered in the distance, and by way of soliloquy, than actually administered to the namesake of the great mathematician. The air of the negro had been a little equivocal during the parting admonition. There was an evident struggle in his mind between an innate love of disobedience and a secret dread of his master's means of information. So long as the latter continued in sight, the black watched his form in doubt; and when it had turned a corner, he stood at a gaze for a moment, with a negro on a neighboring stoop; then both shook their heads significantly, laughed aloud, and retired. That night the confidential servant attended to the interests of his absent master with a fidelity and care which proved he felt his own existence identified with that of a man who claimed so close a right in his person; and just as the clock struck ten, he and the negro last mentioned mounted the sluggish and over-fattened horses, and galloped as hard as foot could be laid to the earth, several miles deeper into the island, to attend a frolic at one of the usual haunts of the people of their color and condition.

Had Alderman Myndert Van Beverout suspected the calamity which was so soon to succeed his absence, it is probable that his mien would have been less composed, as he pursued his way from his own door, on the occasion named. That he had confidence in the virtue of his menaces, however, may be inferred from the tranquillity which immediately took possession of features that were never disturbed without wearing an appearance of unnatural effort. The substantial burgher was a little turned of fifty; and an English wag who had imported from the mother country a love for the humor of his nation, had once, in a conflict of wits before the city council, described him to be a man of alliterations. When called upon to explain away this breach of parliamentary decorum, the punster had got rid of the matter by describing his opponent to be "short, solid, and sturdy in stature; full, flushed, and funny in face; and proud, ponderous, and pragmatical in propensities." But, as is usual, in all sayings of effort, there was more smartness than truth in this description; though, after making a trifling allowance for the coloring of political rivalry, the reader may receive its physical portion as sufficiently descriptive to answer all the necessary purposes of this tale. If we add, that he was a trader of great wealth and shrewdness, and a bachelor, we need say no more in this stage of the narrative.

Notwithstanding the early hour at which this industrious and flourishing merchant quitted his abode, his movement along the narrow streets of his native town was measured and dignified. More than once he stopped to speak to some favorite family-servant, invariably terminating his inquiries after the health of the master, by some facetious observation adapted to the habits and capacity of the slave. From this it would seem, that, while he had so exaggerated notions of domestic discipline, the worthy burgher was far from being one who indulged, by inclination, in the menaces he has been heard to utter. He had just dismissed one of

these loitering negroes, when, on turning a corner, a man of his own color, for the first time that morning, suddenly stood before him. The startled citizen made an involuntary movement to avoid the unexpected interview, and then, perceiving the difficulty of such a step, he submitted, with as good a grace as if it had been one of his own seeking.

"The orb of day—the morning gun—and Mr. Alderman Van Beverout!" exclaimed the individual encountered. "Such is the order of events, at this early hour, on each successive revolution of our earth."

The countenance of the alderman had barely time to recover its composure, ere he was required to answer to this free and somewhat facetious salutation. Uncovering his head, he bowed so ceremoniously as to leave the other no reason to exult in his pleasantry, as he answered,—

"The colony has reason to regret the services of a governor who can quit his bed so soon. That we of business habits stir betimes is quite in reason; but there are those in this town, who would scarce believe their eyes, did they enjoy my present happiness."

"Sir, there are many in this colony who have great reason to distrust their senses, though none can be mistaken in believing they see in Alderman Van Beverout a well-employed man. He that dealeth in the produce of the beaver must have the animal's perseverance and forethought! Now, were I a king-at-arms, there should be a concession made in thy favor, Myndert, of a shield bearing the animal mordant, a mantle of fur, with two Mohawk hunters for supporters, and the motto, 'Industry.'"

"Or what think you, my lord," returned the other, who did not more than half relish the pleasantry of his companion, "of a spotless shield for a clear conscience, with an open hand for a crest, and the motto, 'Frugality and Justice'?"

"I like the open hand, though the conceit is pretending. I see you would intimate that the Van Beverouts have not need, at this late day, to search a herald's office for honors. I remember, now I bethink me, on some occasion to have seen their bearings, a windmill, courant; dyke, coulant; field, vert, sprinkled with black cattle—No! then memory is treacherous; the morning air is pregnant with food for the imagination!"

"Which is not a coin to satisfy a creditor, my lord," said the caustic Myndert.

"Therein has truth been pithily spoken. This is an ill-judged step, Alderman Van Beverout, that lets a gentleman out by night, like the ghost in Hamlet, to flee into the narrow house with the crowing of the cock. The ear of my royal cousin hath been poisoned, worse than was the ear of 'murdered Denmark,' or the partisans of this Mister Hunter would have little cause to triumph."

"Is it not possible to give such pledges to those who have turned the key, as will enable your lordship to apply the antidote?"

The question struck a chord that changed the whole manner of the other. His air, which had borne the character of a genteel trifler, became more grave and dignified; and notwithstanding there was the evidence of a reckless disposition in his features, dress, and carriage, his tall and not ungraceful form, as he walked slowly onwards, by the side of the compact alderman, was not without much of that insinuating ease and blandishment, which long familiarity with good company can give even to the lowest moral worth.

"Your question, worthy sir, manifests great goodness of heart, and corroborates that reputation for generosity the world so freely gives. It is true that the queen has been persuaded to sign the mandate of my recall, and it is certain that Mr. Hunter has the government of the colony; but these are facts that might be reversed, were I once in a position to approach my kinswoman. I do not disclaim certain indiscretions, sir; it would ill become me to deny them, in presence of one whose virtue is as severe as that of Alderman Van Beverout. I have my failings; perhaps, as you have just been pleased to intimate, it would have been better had my motto been frugality; but the open hand, dear sir, is a part of the design you will not deny me, either. If I have weaknesses, my enemies cannot refuse to say that I never yet deserted a friend."

"Not having had occasion to tax your friendship, I shall not be the first to make the charge."

"Your impartiality has come to be a proverb! 'As honest as Alderman Van Beverout,' 'As generous as Alderman Van Beverout,' are terms in each man's mouth; some say 'as rich' (the small blue eye of the burgher twinkled). But honesty, and riches, and generosity, are of little value without influence. Men should have their natural consideration in society. Now is this colony rather Dutch than English, and yet, you see, how few names are found in the list of the council, that have been known in the province half a century! Here are your Alexanders and Heathcotes, your Morris and Kennedys, De Lanceys and Livingstons, filling the council and the legislative halls; but we find few of the Van Rensselaers, Van Courtlandts, Van Schuylers, Stuyvesants, Van Beekmans, and Van Beverouts, in their natural stations. All nations and religions have precedence, in the royal favor, over the children of the Patriarchs. The Bohemian Felipses; the Huguenot De Lanceys, and Bayards, and Jays; the king-hating Morris and Ludlows—in short, all have greater estimation in the eyes of government, than the most ancient Patroon!"

"This has long and truly been the case. I cannot remember when it was otherwise!"

"It may not be denied. But it would little become political discretion to affect precipitancy in the judgment of character. If my own administration can be stigmatized with the same apparent prejudice, it proves the clearer how strong is misrepresentation at home. Time was wanting to enlighten my mind, and that time

has been refused me. In another year, my worthy sir, the council should have been filled with Vans!"

"In such a case, my lord, the unhappy condition in which you are now placed might indeed have been avoided."

"Is it too late to arrest the evil? It is time Anne had been undeceived, and her mind regained. There wanteth nothing to such a consummation of justice, sir, but opportunity. It touches me to the heart, to think that this disgrace should befall one so near the royal blood! 'Tis a spot on the escutcheon of the crown that all loyal subjects, must feel desirous to efface, and so small an effort would effect the object, too, with certain—Mr. Alderman Myndert Van Beverout?"

"My lord, late governor," returned the other, observing that his companion hesitated.

"What think you of this Hanoverian settlement? Shall a German wear the crown of a Plantagenet?"

"It hath been worn by a Hollander."

"Aptly answered! Worn, and worn worthily! There is affinity between the people, and there is reason in that reply. How have I failed in wisdom, in not seeking earlier the aid of thy advice, excellent sir! Ah, Myndert, there is a blessing on the enterprises of all who come of the Low Countries!"

"They are industrious to earn, and slow to squander."

"That expenditure is the ruin of many a worthy subject! And yet accident—chance—fortune—or whatever you may choose to call it, interferes nefariously at times with a gentleman's prosperity. I am an adorer of constancy in friendship, sir, and hold the principle that men should aid each other through this dark vale of life—Mr. Alderman Van Beverout?"

"My Lord Cornbury?"

"I was about to say, that should I quit the Province without expressing part of the regret I feel at not having sooner ascertained the merits of its original owners, and your own in particular, I should do injustice to sensibilities that are only too acute for the peace of him who endures them."

"Is there then hope that your lordship's creditor will relent, or has the earl furnished means to open the prison-door?"

"You use the pleasantest terms, sir!—but I love directness of language above all other qualities. No doubt the prison-door, as you have so clearly expressed it, might be opened, and lucky would be the man who should turn the key. I am pained when I think of the displeasure of the queen, which, sooner or later, will surely visit my luckless persecutors. On the other hand, I find relief in thinking of the favor she will extend to those who have proved my friends in such a strait.

They that wear crowns love not to see disgrace befall the meanest of their blood, for something of the taint may sully even the ermine of majesty. Mr. Alderman?"

"My lord?"

"How fare the Flemish geldings?"

"Bravely, and many thanks, my lord; the rogues are fat as butter! There is hope of a little rest for the innocent, since business calls me to the Lust in Rust. There should be a law, lord governor, to gibbet the black that rides a beast at night."

"I bethought me of some condign punishment for so heartless a crime, but there is little hope for it under the administration of this Mr. Hunter. Yes, sir, were I once more in the presence of my royal cousin, there would quickly be an end to this delusion, and the colony should be once more restored to a healthful state. The men of a generation should cease to lord it over the men of a century. But we must be wary of letting our design, my dear sir, get wind; it is a truly Dutch idea, and the profits, both pecuniary and political, should belong to the gentlemen of that descent—My dear Van Beverout?"

"My good lord?"

"Is the blooming Alida obedient? Trust me, there has no family event occurred during my residence in the colony, in which I have taken a nearer interest than in that desirable connection. The wooing of the young Patroon of Kinderhook is an affair of concern to the province. It is a meritorious youth!"

"With an excellent estate, my lord!"

"And a gravity beyond his years."

"I would give a guarantee, at a risk, that two thirds of his income go to increase the capital, at the beginning of each season!"

"He seems a man to live on air!"

"My old friend, the last Patroon, left noble assets," continued the alderman, rubbing his hands; "besides the manor."

"Which is no paddock!"

"It reaches from the Hudson to the line of Massachusetts. A hundred thousand acres of hill and bottom, and well peopled by frugal Hollanders."

"Respectable in possession, and a mine of gold in reversion! Such men, sir, should be cherished. We owe it to his station to admit him to a share of this our project to undeceive the queen. How superior are the claims of such a gentleman to the empty pretentions of your Captain Ludlow!"

"He has truly a very good and improving estate!"

"These Ludlows, sir, people that fled the realm for plotting against the crown, are offensive to a loyal subject. Indeed, too much of this objection may be imputed to many in the province, that come of English blood. I am sorry to say that they are fomenters of discord, disturbers of the public mind, and captious disputants about prerogatives and vested rights. But there is a repose in the Dutch character which lends it dignity! The descendants of the Hollanders are men to be counted on; where we leave them to-day we see them to-morrow. As we say in politics, sir, we know where to find them. Does it not seem to you particularly offensive that this Captain Ludlow should command the only royal cruiser on the station?"

"I should like it better, my lord, were he to serve in Europe," returned the alderman, glancing a look behind him, and lowering his voice. "There was lately a rumor that his ship was in truth to be sent among the islands."

"Matters are getting very wrong, most worthy sir; and the greater the necessity there should be one at court to undeceive the queen. Innovators should be made to give way to men whose names are historical in the colony."

"'Twould be no worse for her majesty's credit."

"'Twould be another jewel in her crown! Should this Captain Ludlow actually marry your niece, the family would altogether change its character—I have the worst memory—thy mother, Myndert, was a—a—"

"The pious woman was a Van Busser."

"The union of thy sister with the Huguenot then reduces the fair Alida to the quality of a half-blood. The Ludlow connection would destroy the heaven of the race! I think the man is penniless!"

"I cannot say that, my lord, for I would not willingly injure the credit of my worst enemy; but, though wealthy, he is far from having the estate of the young Patroon of Kinderhook."

"He should indeed be sent into the Indies—Myndert?"

"My lord?"

"It would be unjust to my sentiments in favor of Mr. Oloff Van Staats, were we to exclude him from the advantages of our project. This much shall I exact from your friendship, in his favor; the necessary sum may be divided, in moieties, between you; a common bond shall render the affair compact; and then, as we shall be masters of our own secret, there can be little doubt of the prudence of our measures. The amount is written in this bit of paper."

"Two thousand pounds, my lord!"

"Pardon me, my dear sir; not a penny more than one for each of you. Justice to Van Staats requires that you let him into the affair. Were it not for the suit with your niece, I should take the young gentleman with me, to push his fortune at court."

"Truly, my lord, this greatly exceeds my means. The high prices of furs the past season, and delays in returns, have placed a seal upon our silver—"

"The premium would be high."

"Coin is getting so scarce daily, that the face of a Carolus is almost as great a stranger as the face of a debtor—"

"The returns certain."

"While one's creditors meet him at every corner—"

"The concern would be altogether Dutch."

"And last advices from Holland tell us to reserve our gold for some extraordinary movements in the commercial world."

"Mr. Alderman Myndert Van Beverout!"

"My Lord Viscount Cornbury!"

"Plutus preserve thee, sir—but have a care; though I scent the morning air, and must return, it is not forbid to tell the secrets of my prison-house. There is one in yonder cage who whispers that the Skimmer of the Seas is on the coast! Be wary, worthy burgher, or the second part of the tragedy of Kidd may yet be enacted in these seas."

"I leave such transactions to my superiors," retorted the alderman, with another stiff and ceremonious bow. "Enterprises that are said to have occupied the Earl of Bellamont, Governor Fletcher, and my Lord Cornbury, are above the ambition of an humble merchant."

"Adieu, tenacious sir; quiet thine impatience for the extraordinary Dutch movements!" said Cornbury, affecting to laugh, though he secretly felt the sting the other had applied, since common report implicated not only him, but his two official predecessors, in several of the lawless proceedings of the American buccaneers. "Be vigilant, or la demoiselle Barbérie will give another cross to the purity of the stagnant pool!"

The bows that were exchanged were strictly in character. The alderman was unmoved, rigid, and formal, while his companion could not forget his ease of manner, even at a moment of so much vexation. Foiled in an effort that nothing but his desperate condition, and nearly desperate character, could have induced him to attempt, the degenerate descendant of the virtuous Clarendon walked towards his place of confinement with the step of one who assumed a superiority over his fellows, and yet with a mind so indurated by habitual depravity, as to have left it scarcely the trace of a dignified or virtuous quality.

CHAPTER II

"His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles;
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate."
—*Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

THE philosophy of Alderman Van Beverout was not easily disturbed. Still there was a play of the nether muscles of the face, which might be construed into self-complacency at his victory, while a certain contraction of those which controlled the expression of the forehead seemed to betray a full consciousness of the imminent risk he had run. The left hand was thrust into a pocket, where it diligently fingered the provision of Spanish coin without which the merchant never left his abode; while the other struck the cane it held on the pavement, with the force of a resolute and decided man. In this manner he proceeded in his walk for several minutes longer, shortly quitting the lower streets, to enter one that ran along the ridge which crowned the land in that quarter of the island. Here he soon stopped before the door of a house which, in that provincial town, had altogether the air of a patrician dwelling.

Two false gables, each of which was surmounted by an iron weathercock, intersected the roof of this building, and the high and narrow stoop was built of the red freestone of the country. The material of the edifice itself was, as usual, the small, hard brick of Holland, painted a delicate cream color.

A single blow of the massive glittering knocker brought a servant to the door. The promptitude with which this summons was answered showed that, notwithstanding the early hour, the alderman was an expected guest. The countenance of him who acted as porter betrayed no surprise when he saw the person who applied for admission, and every movement of the black denoted preparation and readiness for his reception. Declining his invitation to enter, however, the alderman placed his back against the iron railing of the stoop, and opened a discourse with the negro. The latter was aged, with a grizzled head, a nose that was levelled nearly to the plane of his face, features that were wrinkled and confused, and with a form which, though still solid, was bending with its load of years.

"Brave cheer to thee, old Cupid!" commenced the burgher, in the hearty and cordial manner with which the masters of that period were wont to address their indulged slaves. "A clear conscience is a good night-cap, and you look bright as the morning sun! I hope my friend the young Patroon has slept sound as yourself, and that he has shown his face already to prove it."

The negro answered with the slow, clipping manner that characterized his condition and years.

"He'm werry wakeful, Massa Al'erman. I t'ink he no sleep half he time lately. All he a'tiverty and wiwacerty gone, an' he do no single t'ing but smoke. A gentle'um who smoke alway, Massa Al'erman, get to be a melercholy man at last. I do t'ink 'ere be one young lady in York who be he deat' some time!"

"We'll find the means to get the pipe out of his mouth," said the other, looking askance at the black, as if to express more than he uttered. "Romance and pretty girls play the deuce with our philosophy in youth, as thou knowest by experience, old Cupid."

"I no good for any t'ing data way now, not'ing," calmly returned the black. "I see a one time, when few color' man in York hab more respect among a fair sec', but dat a great while gone by. Now, de modder of your Euclid, Massa Al'erman, wa' a pretty woman, do' she hab but poor conduc'. Den a war' young herself, and I use to visit at de al'erman's fadder's; afore a English come, and when ole Patroon war' a young man. Golly! I great affection for Euclid, do' a young dog nebber come a-near me!"

"He's a blackguard! My back is no sooner turned than the rascal's atop of one of his master's geldings."

"He'm werry young, Massa Myn'ert; no one get wis'om fore a gray hair."

"He's forty, every minute; and the rogue gets impudence with his years. Age is a reverend and respectable condition, when it brings gravity and thought; but, if a young fool be tiresome, an old fool is contemptible. I'll warrant me, you never were so thoughtless, or so heartless, Cupid, as to ride an overworked beast at night."

"Well, I get pretty ole, Massa Myn'ert, an' I forget all he do when a young man. But here be 'e Patroon, who know how to tell 'e al'erman such t'ing better than a poor color' slave."

"A fair rising and a lucky day to you, Patroon," cried the alderman, saluting a large, slow-moving, gentlemanly-looking young man of five-and-twenty, who advanced, with the gravity of one of twice that number of years, from the interior of the house towards its outer door. "The winds are bespoken, and here is as fine a day as ever shone out of a clear sky, whether it came from the pure atmosphere of Holland, or of old England itself. Colonies and patronage! If the people on the other side of the ocean had more faith in mother Nature, and less opinion of themselves, they would find it very tolerable breathing, in the plantations. But the conceited rogues are like the man who blew the bellows, and fancied he made the music; and there is never a hobbling imp of them all, but he believes he is straighter and sounder than the best in the colonies. Here is our bay, now, as smooth as if it were shut in with twenty dykes, and the voyage will be as safe as if it were made on a canal."

"Dat werry well, if 'a do it," grumbled Cupid, who busied himself affectionately about the person of his master; "I t'ink it alway better to travel on 'e land, when a gentle' um own so much as Massa Oloff. Der' war' 'e time a ferry-boat go down, wid crowd of people; and nobody eber come up again to say how he feel."

"Here is some mistake," interrupted the alderman, throwing an uneasy glance at his young friend. "I count four-and-fifty years, and remember no such calamity,"

"He 'm werry sing'lar how a young folk do forget! 'Ere war' drown six people in dat werry boat. A two Yankee, a Canada Frenchman, and a poor woman from a Jarseys. Eberybody war' werry sorry for a poor woman from a Jarseys!"

"Thy tally is false, Master Cupid," promptly rejoined the alderman, who was rather expert at figures. "Two Yankees, a Frenchman, and your Jersey woman, make but four."

"Well, den, I s'pose 'ere war' one Yankee; but I know all war' down, for 'e gubenor lose he fine coach-horses in dat werry boat."

"The old fellow is right, sure enough; for I remember the calamity of the horses, as if it were but yesterday. But Death is monarch of the earth, and none of us may hope to escape his scythe when the appointed hour shall come! Here are no nags to lose to-day; and we may commence our voyage, Patroon, with cheerful faces and light hearts. Shall we proceed?"

Oloff Van Staats, or the Patroon of Kinderhook, as by the courtesy of the colony he was commonly termed, did not want for personal firmness. On the contrary, like most of those who were descended from the Hollanders, he was rather distinguished for steadiness in danger, and obstinacy in resistance. The little skirmish which had just taken place between his friend and his slave, had proceeded from their several apprehensions; the one feeling a sort of parental interest in his safety, and the other having particular reasons for wishing him to persevere in his intention to embark, instead of any justifiable cause in the character of the young proprietor himself. A sign to the boy who bore his portmanteau settled the controversy; when Mr. Van Staats intimated his readiness to move.

Cupid lingered on the stoop until his master had turned a corner; then, shaking his head with all the misgivings of an ignorant and superstitious mind, he drove the young fry of blacks, who thronged the door, into the house, closing all after him with scrupulous care. How far the presentiment of the black was warranted by the event, will be seen in the course of the narrative.

The wide avenue in which Oloff Van Staats dwelt was but a few hundred yards in length. It terminated at one end with the fortress, and at the other it was crossed by a high stockade, which bore the name of the city walls; a defence that was provided against any sudden irruption of the Indians, who then hunted, and even dwelt, in some numbers, in the lower counties of the colony.

It requires great familiarity with the growth of the town, to recognize, in this description, the noble street that now runs for a league through the centre of the island. From this avenue, which was then, as it is still, called the Broadway, our adventurers descended into a lower quarter of the town, holding free converse by the way.

"That Cupid is a negro to keep the roof on a house, in its master's absence, Patroon," observed the alderman, soon after they had left the stoop. "He looks like a padlock; and one might sleep without a dream, with such a guardian near his dwelling. I wish I had brought the honest fellow the key of my stable."

"I have heard my father say that the keys of his own were always better near his own pillow," coolly returned the proprietor of a hundred thousand acres.

"Ah, the curse of Cain! It is needless to look for the fur of a marten on the back of a cat. But, Mr. Van Staats, while walking to your door this morning, it was my fortune to meet the late governor, who is permitted by his creditors to take the air at an hour when he thinks the eyes of the impertinent will be shut. I believe, Patroon, you were so lucky as to get back your moneys before the royal displeasure visited the man?"

"I was so lucky as never to trust him."

"That was better still, for it would have been a barren investment—great jeopardy to principal, and no return. But we had discourse of various interests; and, among others, something was hazarded concerning your amatory pretensions to my niece."

"Neither the wishes of Oloff Van Staats, nor the inclinations of la belle Barbérie, are a subject for the governor in council," said the Patroon of Kinderhook, stiffly.

"Nor was it thus treated. The viscount spoke me fair, and, had he not pushed the matter beyond discretion, we might have come to happier conclusions."

"I am glad that there was some restraint in the discourse."

"The man certainly exceeded reason, for he led the conference into personalities that no prudent man could relish. Still, he said it was possible that the Coquette might yet be ordered for service among the islands!"

It has been said that Oloff Van Staats was a fair, personable young man of vast stature, and with much of the air of a gentleman of his country; for, though a British subject, he was rather a Hollander in feelings, habits, and opinions. He colored at the allusion to the presence of his known rival, though his companion was at a loss to discover whether pride or vexation was at the bottom of his emotion.

"If Captain Ludlow prefer a cruise in the Indies to duty on this coast, I hope he may obtain his wish," was the cautious answer.

"Your liberal man enjoys a sounding name, and an empty coffer," observed the alderman, dryly. "To me it seems that a petition to the admiral to send so meritorious an officer on service where he may distinguish himself, should deserve his thanks. The freebooters are playing the devil's game with the sugar trade, and even the French are getting troublesome, farther south."

"He has certainly the reputation of an active cruiser."

"Blixum and philosophy! If you wish to succeed with Alida, Patroon, you must put more briskness into the adventure. The girl has a cross of the Frenchman in her temper, and none of your deliberations and taciturnities will gain the day. This visit to the Lust in Rust is Cupid's own handiwork, and I hope to see you both return to town as amicable as the Stadtholder and the States General, after a sharp struggle for the year's subsidy has been settled by a compromise."

"The success of this suit is the affair nearest my—" The young man paused, as if surprised at his own communicativeness; and, taking advantage of the haste in which his toilette had been made, he thrust a hand into his vest, covering with its broad palm a portion of the human frame which poets do not describe as the seat of the passions.

"If you mean stomach, sir, you will not have reason to be disappointed," retorted the alderman, a little more severely than was usual with one so cautious. "The heiress of Myndert Van Beverout will not be a penniless bride, and Monsieur Barbérie did not close the books of life without taking good care of the balance-sheet—but yonder are those devils of ferrymen quitting the wharf without us! Scamper ahead, Brutus, and tell them to wait the legal minute. The rogues are never exact; sometimes starting before I am ready, and sometimes keeping me waiting in the sun, as if I were no better than a dried dunfish. Punctuality is the soul of business, and one of my habits does not like to be ahead nor behind his time."

In this manner the worthy burgher, who would have been glad to regulate the movements of others, on all occasions, a good deal by his own, vented his complaints, while he and his companion hurried on to overtake the slow-moving boat in which they were to embark. A brief description of the scene will not be without interest to a generation that may be termed modern in reference to the time of which we write.

A deep, narrow creek penetrated the island at this point, for the distance of a quarter of a mile. Each of its banks had a row of buildings, as the houses line a canal in the cities of Holland. As the natural course of the inlet was necessarily respected, the street had taken a curvature not unlike that of a new moon. The houses were ultra-Dutch, being low, angular, fastidiously neat, and all erected with gables to the street. Each had its ugly and inconvenient entrance, termed a stoop, its vane or weathercock, its dormer-windows, and its graduated battlement-walls. Near the apex of one of the latter, a little iron crane projected into the street. A

small boat, of the same metal, swung from its end,—a sign that the building to which it was appended was the ferry-house.

An inherent love of artificial and confined navigation had probably induced the burghers to select this spot as the place whence so many craft departed from the town: since it is certain that the two rivers could have furnished divers points more favorable for such an object, inasmuch as they possess the advantage of wide and unobstructed channels.

Fifty blacks were already in the street, dipping their brooms into the creek, and nourishing water over the sidewalks, and on the fronts of the low edifices. This light, but daily duty was relieved by clamorous collisions of wit, and by shouts of merriment, in which the whole street would join, as with one joyous and reckless movement of the spirit.

The language of this light-hearted and noisy race was Dutch, already corrupted by English idioms, and occasionally by English words; a system of change that has probably given rise to an opinion, among some of the descendants of the earlier colonists, that the latter tongue is merely a *patois* of the former. This opinion which so much resembles that which certain well-read English scholars entertained of the plagiarisms of the continental writers, when they first began to dip into their works, is not strictly true; since the language of England has probably bestowed as much on the dialect of which we speak, as it has ever received from the purer sources of the school of Holland. Here and there a grave burgher, still in his night-cap, might be seen with a head thrust out of an upper window, listening to these barbarisms of speech, and taking note of all the merry jibes that flew from mouth to mouth, with an indomitable gravity that no levity of those beneath could undermine.

As the movement of the ferry-boat was necessarily slow, the alderman and his companion were enabled to step into it before the fasts were thrown aboard. The *periagua*, as the craft was called, partook of a European and an American character. It possessed the length, narrowness, and clean bow of the canoe, from which its name was derived, with the flat bottom and lee-boards of a boat constructed for the shallow waters of the Low Countries. Twenty years ago vessels of this description abounded in our rivers, and even now their two long and unsupported masts, and high, narrow-headed sails, are daily seen bending like reeds to the breeze, and dancing lightly over the billows of the bay. There is a variety of the class of a size and pretension altogether superior to that just mentioned, which deserves a place among the most picturesque and striking boats that float. He who has had occasion to navigate the southern shore of the Sound must have often seen the vessel to which we allude. It is distinguished by its great length, and masts which, naked of cordage, rise from the hull like two tall and faultless trees. When the eye runs over the daring height of canvas, the noble confidence of the rig, and sees the comparatively vast machine handled with ease and grace by the dexterity of two fearless and expert mariners, it excites some such admiration as that which springs from the view of a severe temple of antiquity. The nakedness and simplicity of the

construction, coupled with the boldness and rapidity of its movements, impart to the craft an air of grandeur that its ordinary uses would not give reason to expect.

Though, in some respects, of singularly aquatic habits, the original colonists of New York were far less adventurous, as mariners, than their present descendants.. A passage across the bay did not often occur in the tranquil lives of the burghers; and it is still within the memory of man, that a voyage between the two principal towns of the State was an event to excite the solicitude of friends, and the anxiety of the traveller. The perils of the Tappan Zee, as one of the wider reaches of the Hudson is still termed, were often dealt with by the good wives of the colony, in their relations of marvels; and she who had oftenest encountered them unharmed, was deemed a sort of marine Amazon.

CHAPTER III

"I have great comfort from this fellow; methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him; his complexion is perfect gallows."

—*Tempest*.

IT has been said that the periagua was in motion, before our two adventurers succeeded in stepping on board. The arrival of the Patroon of Kinderhook and Alderman Van Beverout was expected, and the schipper had taken his departure at the precise moment of the turn in the current, in order to show, with a sort of pretending independence which has a peculiar charm for men in his situation, that "Time and tide wait for no man." Still there were limits to his decision; for, while he put the boat in motion, especial care was taken that the circumstance should not subject a customer so important and constant as the alderman, to any serious inconvenience. When, he and his friend had embarked, the painters were thrown aboard, and the crew of the ferry-boat began to set their vessel, in earnest, towards the mouth of the creek. During these movements, a young negro was seated in the bow of the periagua, with his legs dangling one on each side of the cut-water, forming no bad apology for a figure-head. He held a conch to his mouth, and with his two glossy cheeks inflated like those of Eolus, and his dark, glittering eyes expressing the delight he found in drawing sounds from the shell, he continued to give forth the signal for departure.

"Put up the conch, thou bawler!" cried the alderman, giving the younker a rap on his naked poll, in passing, with the end of his cane, that might have disturbed the harmony of one less bent on clamor. "A thousand windy trumpeters would be silence itself, compared to such a pair of lungs! How now, Master Schipper, is this your punctuality, to start before your passengers are ready?"

The undisturbed boatman, without removing the pipe from his mouth, pointed to the bubbles on the water which were already floating outward, a certain evidence that the tide was on the ebb.

"I care nothing for your ins and outs, your ebbs and floods," returned the alderman, in heat. "There is no better time-piece than the leg and eye of a punctual man. It is no more pleasant to go before one is ready, than to tarry when all business is done. Harkee, Master Schipper, you are not the only navigator in this bay, nor is your craft the swiftest that was ever launched. Have a care; though an acquiescing man by nature, I know how to encourage an opposition, when the public good seriously calls for my support."

To the attack on himself, the schipper was stoically indifferent, but to impeach the qualities of the periagua was to attack one who depended solely on his eloquence for vindication. Removing his pipe, therefore, he rejoined on the alderman, with that sort of freedom that the sturdy Hollanders never failed to use to all offenders, regardless alike of rank or personal qualities.

"Der wind-gall and alderman," he growled, in the dialect of the country; "I should be glad to see the boat in York bay that can show the Milkmaid her stern! The mayor and councilmen had better order the tide to turn when they please; and then, as each man will think of his own pleasure, a pretty set of whirlpools they will give us in the harbor!"

The schipper, having delivered himself of his sentiments to this effect, resumed his pipe, like a man who felt he deserved the meed of victory, whether he were to receive it or not.

"It is useless to dispute with an obstinate man," muttered the alderman, making his way through vegetable baskets, butter-tubs, and all the garniture of a market-boat, to the place occupied by his niece, in the stern sheets. "Good morrow to thee, Alida dear; early rising will make a flower-garden of thy cheeks, and the fresh air of the Lust in Rust will give even thy roses a deeper bloom."

The mollified burgher then saluted the cheek whose bloom had been deepened by his remark, with a warmth that showed he was not without natural affection; touched his hat, in return for a low bow that he received from an aged white manservant, in a clean but ancient livery; and nodded to a young negress, whose second-hand finery sufficiently showed she was a personal attendant of the heiress.

A second glance at Alida de Barbérie was scarcely necessary to betray her mixed descent. From her Norman father, a Huguenot of the *petite noblesse*, she had inherited her raven hair, the large, brilliant, coal-black eyes, in which wildness was singularly relieved by sweetness, a classical and faultless profile, and a form which was both taller and more flexible than commonly fell to the lot of the damsels of Holland. From her mother, la belle Barbérie, as the maiden was often playfully termed, had received a skin fair and spotless as the flower of France, and a bloom which rivalled the rich tints of an evening sky in her native land. Some of the *embonpoint*, for which the sister of the alderman was a little remarkable, had descended also to her fairer daughter. In Alida, however, this peculiarity did not exceed the fulness which became her years, rounding her person and softening the outlines of her form, rather than diminishing its ease and grace. These personal advantages were embellished by a neat but modest travelling habit, a little beaver that was shaded by a cluster of drooping feathers, and a mien that, under the embarrassment of her situation, preserved the happiest medium between modesty and perfect self-possession.

When Alderman Van Beverout joined this fair creature, in whose future happiness he was fully justified in taking the deep interest which he has betrayed in some of

the opening scenes of this volume, he found her engaged in a courteous discourse with the young man, who was generally considered as the one, among the numerous pretenders to her favor, who was most likely to succeed. Had other cause been wanting, this sight alone would have been sufficient to restore his good humor; and, making a place for himself, by quietly dispossessing François, the domestic of his niece, the persevering burgher endeavored to encourage an intercourse that he had reason to think must terminate in the result he both meditated and desired.

In the present effort, however, the alderman failed. There is a feeling which universally pervades landmen and landwomen, when they first embark on an element to which they are strangers, that ordinarily shuts their mouths and renders them meditative. In the older and more observant travellers, it is observation and comparison; while with the younger and more susceptible, it is very apt to take the character of sentiment. Without stopping to analyze the cause or the consequences, in the instance of the Patroon and la belle Barbérie, it will be sufficient to state, that in spite of all the efforts of the worthy burgher, who had navigated the sluggish creek too often to be the subject of any new emotions, his youthful companions gradually grew silent and thoughtful. Though a celibate in his own person, Myndert had not now to learn that the infant god as often does his mischief through this quiet agency as in any other manner. He became, therefore, mute in his turn, watching the slow movement of the periagua with as much assiduity as if he saw his own image on the water.

A quarter of an hour of this characteristic, and it is to be inferred, agreeable navigation, brought the boat to the mouth of the inlet. Here a powerful effort forced her into the tide's-way, and she might be said to put forth on her voyage. But while the black crew were trimming the sails, and making the other necessary preparations for departure, a voice was heard hailing them from the shore, with an order rather than a request, that they would stay their movements.

"Hilloa, the periagua!" it cried. "Haul over your head-sheet, and jam the tiller down into the lap of that comfortable-looking old gentleman. Come; bear a hand, my hummers! or your race-horse of a craft will get the bit into its mouth, and run away with you."

This summons produced a pause in the movements of the crew. After regarding each other, in surprise and admiration, the watermen drew the head-sheet over, put the helm a-lee, without however invading the lap of the alderman, and the boat became stationary, at the distance of a few rods from the shore. While the new passenger was preparing to come off in a yawl, those who awaked his movements had leisure to examine his appearance, and to form their different surmises concerning his character.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that the stranger was a son of the ocean. He was of a firmly knit and active frame, standing exactly six feet in his stockings. The

shoulders, though square, were compact, the chest full and high, the limbs round, neat, and muscular,—the whole indicating a form in which strength and activity were apportioned with the greatest accuracy. A small bullet head was set firmly on its broad foundation, and it was thickly covered with a mass of brown hair that was already a little grizzled. The face was that of a man of thirty, and it was worthy of the frame, being manly, bold, decided, and rather handsome; though it expressed little more than high daring, perfect coolness, some obstinacy, and a certain degree of contempt for others, that its owner did not always take the trouble to conceal. The color was a rich, deep, and uniform red, such as much exposure is apt to give to men whose complexions are by nature light and florid.

The dress of the stranger was quite as remarkable as his person. He wore a short pea-jacket, cut tight and tastefully; a little, low, and rakish cap, and full, bell-mouthed trousers, all in a spotlessly white duck; a material well adapted to the season and climate. The first was made without buttons, affording an apology for the use of a rich India-shawl, that belted his body and kept the garment tight to his frame. Faultlessly clean linen appeared through the opening above, and a collar of the same material fell over the gay bandanna, which was thrown, with a single careless turn, around his throat. The latter was a manufacture then little known in Europe, and its use was almost entirely confined to seamen of the long voyage. One of its ends was suffered to blow about in the wind, but the other was brought down with care over the chest where it was confined, by springing the blade of a small knife with an ivory handle, in a manner to confine the silk to the linen; a sort of breast-pin that is even now much used by mariners. If we add that light canvas slippers, with foul anchors worked in worsted upon their insteps, covered his feet, we shall say all that is necessary of his attire.

The appearance of one, of the air and dress we have just described, excited a strong sensation among the blacks who scrubbed the stoops and pavements. He was closely attended to the place where he hailed the periagua, by four or five loungers, who studied his manner and movements with the admiration that men of their class seldom fail to bestow on those who bear about them the evidence of having passed lives of adventure, and perhaps of hardship and daring. Beckoning to one of these idlers to follow him, the hero of the India-shawl stepped into an empty boat, and casting loose its fast, he sculled the light yawl towards the craft which was awaiting his arrival. There was, in truth, something in the reckless air, the decision, and the manly attitudes of so fine a specimen of a seaman, that might have attracted notice from those who were more practised in the world than the little crowd of admirers he left behind him. With an easy play of wrist and elbow, he caused the yawl to glide ahead like some indolent marine animal swimming through its element, and as he stood, firm as a planted statue, with a foot on each gunwale, there was much of that confidence created by his steadiness, that one acquires by viewing the repeated and successful efforts of a skilful rope-dancer. When the yawl reached the side of the periagua, he dropped a small Spanish coin into the open palm of the negro, and sprang on the side of the periagua, with an

exertion of muscle that sent the little boat he quitted half-way back towards the shore, leaving the frightened black to steady himself in his rocking tenement, in the best manner he could.

The tread and posture of the stranger, when he gained the half-deck of the *periagua*, were finely nautical, and confident to audacity. He seemed to analyze the half-maritime character of the crew and passengers at a glance, and to feel that sort of superiority over his companions which men of his profession were then a little too wont to entertain towards those whose ambition could be bounded by *terra firma*. His eye turned upwards at the simple rig and modest sails of the *periagua*, while his upper lip curled with the knowing expression of a critic. Then kicking the fore-sheet clear of its cleet, and suffering the sail to fill, he stepped from one butter-tub to another, making a stepping-stone of the lap of a countryman by the way, and alighted in the stern-sheets, in the midst of the party of Alderman Van Beverout, with the agility and fearlessness of a feathered Mercury. With a coolness that did infinite credit to his powers for commanding, his next act was to dispossess the amazed schipper of the helm, taking the tiller into his own hands with as much composure as if he were the everyday occupant of the post. When he saw that the boat was beginning to move through the water, he found leisure to bestow some observation on his fellow-voyagers. The first that met his bold and reckless eye was François, the domestic of Alida.

"If it come to blow in squalls, commodore," observed the intruder, with a gravity that half deceived the attentive Frenchman, while he pointed to the bag in which the latter wore his hair, "you'll be troubled to carry your broad pennant. But so experienced an officer has not put to sea without having a storm queue in readiness for foul weather."

The valet did not, or affected not to understand the allusion, maintaining an air of dignified but silent superiority.

"The gentleman is in a foreign service, and does not understand an English mariner! The worst that can come, after all, of too much top-hamper is to cut away, and let it drift with the scud. May I make bold to ask, judge, if the courts have done anything of late concerning the freebooters among the islands?"

"I have not the honor to bear her majesty's commission," coldly returned Van Staats of Kinderhook, to whom the question had been hardily put.

"The best navigator is sometimes puzzled by a hazy observation, and many an old seaman has taken a fog-bank for solid ground. Since you are not in the courts, sir, I wish you joy; for it is running among shoals to be cruising there, whether as judge or suitor. One is never fairly snug and land-locked while in company of a lawyer, and yet the devil himself cannot always give the sharks a good offing. A pretty sheet of water, friends; and one as snug as rotten cables and foul winds can render desirable, is this bay of York."