

## CHAPTER XLII

### Remorse

During the skirmish not a single musket had been discharged. The first snatched by Jarl had missed fire, and ere he could seize another, it was close quarters with him, and no gestures to spare. His harpoon was his all. And truly, there is nothing like steel in a fray. It comes and it goes with a will, and is never a-weary. Your sword is your life, and that of your foe; to keep or to take as it happens. Closer home does it go than a rammer; and fighting with steel is a play without ever an interlude. There are points more deadly than bullets; and stocks packed full of subtle tubes, whence comes an impulse more reliable than powder.

Binding our prisoners lengthwise across the boat's seats, we rowed for the canoe, making signs of amity.

Now, if there be any thing fitted to make a high tide ebb in the veins, it is the sight of a vanquished foe, inferior to yourself in powers of destruction; but whom some necessity has forced you to subdue. All victories are not triumphs, nor all who conquer, heroes.

As we drew near the canoe, it was plain, that the loss of their sire had again for the instant overcome the survivors. Raising hands, they cursed us; and at intervals sent forth a low, piercing wail, peculiar

to their race. As before, faint cries were heard from the tent. And all the while rose and fell on the sea, the ill-fated canoe.

As I gazed at this sight, what iron mace fell on my soul; what curse rang sharp in my ear! It was I, who was the author of the deed that caused the shrill wails that I heard. By this hand, the dead man had died. Remorse smote me hard; and like lightning I asked myself, whether the death-deed I had done was sprung of a virtuous motive, the rescuing a captive from thrall; or whether beneath that pretense, I had engaged in this fatal affray for some other, and selfish purpose; the companionship of a beautiful maid. But throttling the thought, I swore to be gay. Am I not rescuing the maiden? Let them go down who withstand me.

At the dismal spectacle before him, Jarl, hitherto menacing our prisoners with his weapon, in order to intimidate their countrymen, honest Jarl dropped his harpoon. But shaking his knife in the air, Samoa yet defied the strangers; nor could we prevent him. His heathenish blood was up.

Standing foremost in the boat, I now assured the strangers, that all we sought at their hands was the maiden in the tent. That captive surrendered, our own, unharmed, should be restored. If not, they must die. With a cry, they started to their feet, and brandished their clubs; but, seeing Jarl's harpoon quivering over the hearts of our prisoners, they quickly retreated; at last signifying their

acquiescence in my demand. Upon this, I sprang to the dais, and across it indicating a line near the bow, signed the Islanders to retire beyond it. Then, calling upon them one by one to deliver their weapons, they were passed into the boat.

The Chamois was now brought round to the canoe's stern; and leaving Jarl to defend it as before, the Upoluan rejoined me on the dais. By these precautions--the hostages still remaining bound hand and foot in the boat--we deemed ourselves entirely secure.

Attended by Samoa, I stood before the tent, now still as the grave.