

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER ADVENTURER APPEARS UPON THE SCENE.

About half-past ten o'clock, as they were thus conversing, Israel's acquaintance, the pretty chambermaid, rapped at the door, saying, with a titter, that a very rude gentleman in the passage of the court, desired to see Doctor Franklin.

"A very rude gentleman?" repeated the wise man in French, narrowly looking at the girl; "that means, a very fine gentleman who has just paid you some energetic compliment. But let him come up, my girl," he added patriarchially.

In a few moments, a swift coquettish step was heard, followed, as if in chase, by a sharp and manly one. The door opened. Israel was sitting so that, accidentally, his eye pierced the crevice made by the opening of the door, which, like a theatrical screen, stood for a moment between Doctor Franklin and the just entering visitor. And behind that screen, through the crack, Israel caught one momentary glimpse of a little bit of by-play between the pretty chambermaid and the stranger. The vivacious nymph appeared to have affectedly run from him on the stairs--doubtless in freakish return for some liberal advances--but had suffered herself to be overtaken at last ere too late; and on the

instant Israel caught sight of her, was with an insincere air of rosy resentment, receiving a roguish pinch on the arm, and a still more roguish salute on the cheek.

The next instant both disappeared from the range of the crevice; the girl departing whence she had come; the stranger--transiently invisible as he advanced behind the door--entering the room. When Israel now perceived him again, he seemed, while momentarily hidden, to have undergone a complete transformation.

He was a rather small, elastic, swarthy man, with an aspect as of a disinherited Indian Chief in European clothes. An unvanquishable enthusiasm, intensified to perfect sobriety, couched in his savage, self-possessed eye. He was elegantly and somewhat extravagantly dressed as a civilian; he carried himself with a rustic, barbaric jauntiness, strangely dashed with a superinduced touch of the Parisian salon. His tawny cheek, like a date, spoke of the tropic, A wonderful atmosphere of proud friendlessness and scornful isolation invested him. Yet there was a bit of the poet as well as the outlaw in him, too. A cool solemnity of intrepidity sat on his lip. He looked like one who of purpose sought out harm's way. He looked like one who never had been, and never would be, a subordinate.

Israel thought to himself that seldom before had he seen such a being. Though dressed à-la-mode, he did not seem to be altogether civilized.

So absorbed was our adventurer by the person of the stranger, that a few moments passed ere he began to be aware of the circumstance, that Dr. Franklin and this new visitor having saluted as old acquaintances, were now sitting in earnest conversation together.

"Do as you please; but I will not bide a suitor much longer," said the stranger in bitterness. "Congress gave me to understand that, upon my arrival here, I should be given immediate command of the *Indien*; and now, for no earthly reason that I can see, you Commissioners have presented her, fresh from the stocks at Amsterdam, to the King of France, and not to me. What does the King of France with such a frigate? And what can I not do with her? Give me back the "*Indien*," and in less than one month, you shall hear glorious or fatal news of Paul Jones."

"Come, come, Captain," said Doctor Franklin, soothingly, "tell me now, what would you do with her, if you had her?"

"I would teach the British that Paul Jones, though born in Britain, is no subject to the British King, but an untrammelled citizen and sailor of the universe; and I would teach them, too, that if they ruthlessly ravage the American coasts, their own coasts are vulnerable as New Holland's. Give me the *Indien*, and I will rain down on wicked England like fire on Sodom."

These words of bravado were not spoken in the tone of a bravo, but a prophet. Erect upon his chair, like an Iroquois, the speaker's look was

like that of an unflickering torch.

His air seemed slightly to disturb the old sage's philosophic repose, who, while not seeking to disguise his admiration of the unmistakable spirit of the man, seemed but illy to relish his apparent measureless boasting.

As if both to change the subject a little, as well as put his visitor in better mood--though indeed it might have been but covertly to play with his enthusiasm--the man of wisdom now drew his chair confidentially nearer to the stranger's, and putting one hand in a very friendly, conciliatory way upon his visitor's knee, and rubbing it gently to and fro there, much as a lion-tamer might soothingly manipulate the aggravated king of beasts, said in a winning manner:--"Never mind at present, Captain, about the 'Indien' affair. Let that sleep a moment. See now, the Jersey privateers do us a great deal of mischief by intercepting our supplies. It has been mentioned to me, that if you had a small vessel--say, even your present ship, the 'Amphitrite,'--then, by your singular bravery, you might render great service, by following those privateers where larger ships durst not venture their bottoms; or, if but supported by some frigates from Brest at a proper distance, might draw them out, so that the larger vessels could capture them."

"Decoy-duck to French frigates!--Very dignified office, truly!" hissed Paul in a fiery rage. "Doctor Franklin, whatever Paul Jones does for the cause of America, it must be done through unlimited orders: a separate,

supreme command; no leader and no counsellor but himself. Have I not already by my services on the American coast shown that I am well worthy all this? Why then do you seek to degrade me below my previous level? I will mount, not sink. I live but for honor and glory. Give me, then, something honorable and glorious to do, and something famous to do it with. Give me the Indien"

The man of wisdom slowly shook his head. "Everything is lost through this shillyshallying timidity, called prudence," cried Paul Jones, starting to his feet; "to be effectual, war should be carried on like a monsoon, one changeless determination of every particle towards the one unalterable aim. But in vacillating councils, statesmen idle about like the cats'-paws in calms. My God, why was I not born a Czar!"

"A Nor'wester, rather. Come, come, Captain," added the sage, "sit down, we have a third person present, you see," pointing towards Israel, who sat rapt at the volcanic spirit of the stranger.

Paul slightly started, and turned inquiringly upon Israel, who, equally owing to Paul's own earnestness of discourse and Israel's motionless bearing, had thus far remained undiscovered.

"Never fear, Captain," said the sage, "this man is true blue, a secret courier, and an American born. He is an escaped prisoner of war."

"Ah, captured in a ship?" asked Paul eagerly; "what ship? None of mine!

Paul Jones never was captured."

"No, sir, in the brigantine Washington, out of Boston," replied Israel;
"we were cruising to cut off supplies to the English."

"Did your shipmates talk much of me?" demanded Paul, with a look as of a parading Sioux demanding homage to his gewgaws; "what did they say of Paul Jones?"

"I never heard the name before this evening," said Israel.

"What? Ah--brigantine Washington--let me see; that was before I had outwitted the Soleby frigate, fought the Milford, and captured the Mellish and the rest off Louisbergh. You were long before the news, my lad," he added, with a sort of compassionate air.

"Our friend here gave you a rather blunt answer," said the wise man, sagely mischievous, and addressing Paul.

"Yes. And I like him for it. My man, will you go a cruise with Paul Jones? You fellows so blunt with the tongue, are apt to be sharp with the steel. Come, my lad, return with me to Brest. I go in a few days."

Fired by the contagious spirit of Paul, Israel, forgetting all about his previous desire to reach home, sparkled with response to the summons. But Doctor Franklin interrupted him.

"Our friend here," said he to the Captain, "is at present engaged for very different duty."

Much other conversation followed, during which Paul Jones again and again expressed his impatience at being unemployed, and his resolution to accept of no employ unless it gave him supreme authority; while in answer to all this Dr. Franklin, not uninfluenced by the uncompromising spirit of his guest, and well knowing that however unpleasant a trait in conversation, or in the transaction of civil affairs, yet in war this very quality was invaluable, as projectiles and combustibles, finally assured Paul, after many complimentary remarks, that he would immediately exert himself to the utmost to procure for him some enterprise which should come up to his merits.

"Thank you for your frankness," said Paul; "frank myself, I love to deal with a frank man. You, Doctor Franklin, are true and deep, and so you are frank."

The sage sedately smiled, a queer incredulity just lurking in the corner of his mouth.

"But how about our little scheme for new modelling ships-of-war?" said the Doctor, shifting the subject; "it will be a great thing for our infant navy, if we succeed. Since our last conversation on that subject, Captain, at odds and ends of time, I have thought over the matter, and

have begun a little skeleton of the thing here, which I will show you. Whenever one has a new idea of anything mechanical, it is best to clothe it with a body as soon as possible. For you can't improve so well on ideas as you can on bodies."

With that, going to a little drawer, he produced a small basket, filled with a curious looking unfinished frame-work of wood, and several bits of wood unattached. It looked like a nursery basket containing broken odds and ends of playthings.

"Now look here, Captain, though the thing is but begun at present, yet there is enough to show that one idea at least of yours is not feasible."

Paul was all attention, as if having unbounded confidence in whatever the sage might suggest, while Israel looked on quite as interested as either, his heart swelling with the thought of being privy to the consultations of two such men; consultations, too, having ultimate reference to such momentous affairs as the freeing of nations.

"If," continued the Doctor, taking up some of the loose bits and piling them along on one side of the top of the frame, "if the better to shelter your crew in an engagement, you construct your rail in the manner proposed--as thus--then, by the excessive weight of the timber, you will too much interfere with the ship's centre of gravity. You will have that too high."

"Ballast in the hold in proportion," said Paul.

"Then you will sink the whole hull too low. But here, to have less smoke in time of battle, especially on the lower decks, you proposed a new sort of hatchway. But that won't do. See here now, I have invented certain ventilating pipes, they are to traverse the vessel thus"--laying some toilette pins along--"the current of air to enter here and be discharged there. What do you think of that? But now about the main things--fast sailing driving little to leeward, and drawing little water. Look now at this keel. I whittled it only night before last, just before going to bed. Do you see now how"--

At this crisis, a knock was heard at the door, and the chambermaid reappeared, announcing that two gentlemen were that moment crossing the court below to see Doctor Franklin.

"The Duke de Chartres, and Count D'Estang," said the Doctor; "they appointed for last night, but did not come. Captain, this has something indirectly to do with your affair. Through the Duke, Count D'Estang has spoken to the King about the secret expedition, the design of which you first threw out. Call early to-morrow, and I will inform you of the result."

With his tawny hand Paul pulled out his watch, a small, richly-jewelled lady's watch.

"It is so late, I will stay here to-night," he said; "is there a convenient room?"

"Quick," said the Doctor, "it might be ill-advised of you to be seen with me just now. Our friend here will let you share his chamber. Quick, Israel, and show the Captain thither."

As the door closed upon them in Israel's apartment, Doctor Franklin's door closed upon the Duke and the Count. Leaving the latter to their discussion of profound plans for the timely befriending of the American cause, and the crippling of the power of England on the seas, let us pass the night with Paul Jones and Israel in the neighboring room.