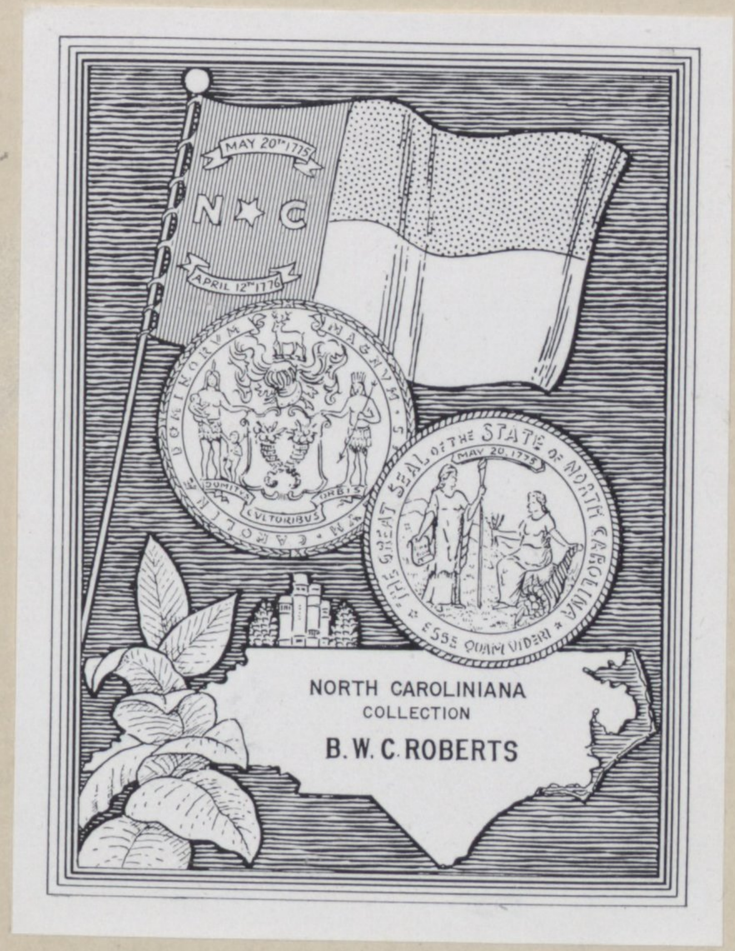
# FOR THE LOVE OF LADY MARGARET



WILLIAM THOMAS WILSON

$6.00




# FOR THE LOVE OF LADY MARGARET

Anna Bonnet



Lady Margaret Carroll

*Frontispiece*

# FOR THE LOVE OF LADY MARGARET

*A Romance of the Lost Colony*

BY

WILLIAM THOMAS WILSON

CHARLOTTE, N. C.
STONE & BARRINGER COMPANY
1908

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# FOR THE LOVE OF LADY MARGARET

## CHAPTER I

### THE END OR THE BEGINNING

AND so this was the end? Well, no matter—I had lived my little day—had played my part. The bell had tapped; the curtain had fallen; and so the scene must end. How many of those who had seen the little game played out, and had applauded the actor, would remember after the lights were out and the house was dark? I had passed from Heaven to Hell in four short hours—four hours!

My new white trunks, with the gray doublet, were on the bed, where I had laid them out. I had planned to wear them to Lady Wiltshire's ball to-night.

The guests were just beginning to arrive—Raleigh, with the gallant air and courtly mien; Lord North, with his stupid and insufferable egotism; Francis Bacon, the austere and brilliant, and the Viscount James Henry Hampden, who would, in my absence, promptly take possession of Lady Margaret Carroll.

Ah, my lady! wouldst thou give one thought to me when I had passed out of thy life forever? Wouldst thou, like the rest, move on without one sigh, thine eyes fixed upon the moving figures about thee, forgetful that there was wont to be another by thy side, who was now gone for aye? Would one tear fall from those beautiful eyes which I had looked into so often within the last two years?—years that seemed so short to me to-night, as I looked back over them, and thought of the golden hours, which had once gleamed so bright and happy before me, but now lay so far behind, lost in the moldering ashes of the forgotten past.

It seemed like long years since I had received that short note from my father, with its few curt lines, saying that our paths must separate; that I had disgraced the family; that he had borne with me till flesh and blood could stand no more, and henceforth I would be as a stranger to him.

Life indeed seemed black to me! Past my first youth (I was thirty-two), brought up to do nothing except to enjoy myself, with an ample income, which my father, Lord Richmond, had always supplied—what wonder that I felt as if the anchor had indeed slipped, and that I was adrift at the mercy of the wind and tide.

I might, it was true, drift on for a few weeks on credit, and borrow from my friends, but I had no mind to do that. Whatever my faults, and they were many and grievous, I had at least lived like a gentleman, and had nothing on that score to reproach myself with.

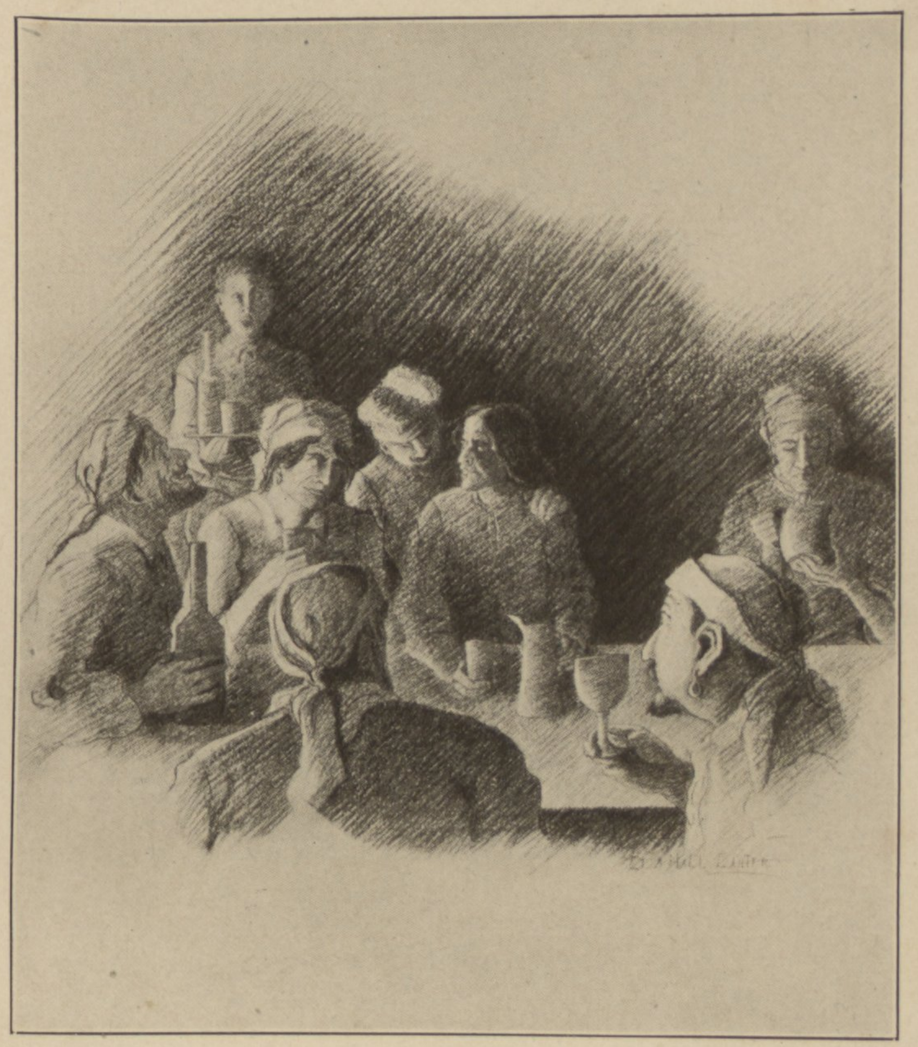
I did not wish to run deep into debt, and cause honest tradesmen to lose their just dues because they had trusted to my honor. No; whatever came, I would not do that. I would face the situation fairly and squarely—would work out as best I could my own salvation, without fear or favor from any man.

The old lord, my father, had always disliked me; I remember as a boy how he never had a kind word for me. My older brother, Richard, was his favorite, and Richard had never lost an opportunity to prejudice him against me.

My brother, as a little boy, had always treasured up all my mistakes and punishments at school, and when he returned home, would recount them to my father with a grave face, so that he would have the pleasure of hearing him reprove me, which I believe that Richard delighted in.

What wonder was it, when I finished school, that I chose, after a year or two in the Irish campaign, to return and remain in London, rather than journey down to the grim old castle, built by the third Lord Richmond during the reign of Stephen, and live there with my father and Richard.

My mother had been dead for years. From out of the dim memories of my childhood I see her arise—a gentle, sweet-faced woman, who loved her family and her home more than all else. She died when I was young, and there remained of the family only my father, Richard, and myself.



"He Placed His Hands upon Their Shoulders"

*Page 8*

This sudden fury of my father's was Richard's work, I had no doubt. He had played on my father's old hatred for me, and had fanned it by his hints of my extravagance and wildness, until it had burned into a flame ready to sweep all before it. Well, they could go their own way now, and I would go mine. Henceforth they should not be troubled with me.

I walked over to my window, and looked down upon the crowd, as it surged to and fro along Cheapside. Many parties of richly clad gallants hurried along, bound for the playhouse and the rout.

On the opposite side of the street, amidst the throng, I descried Bobby Vane, in his new plum-colored cloak, as he hastened to my Lady Wiltshire's ball. I followed him with my eyes, until the torch of his linkboy was lost in the crowd.

The night was hot and sultry, and to me, exhausted by my painful thoughts, the room seemed insufferably close and stifling. Hardly knowing what I did, I picked up my coat and hat, and passed out into the street.

How long I walked, or where, I know not. The faces about me on the street I saw dimly, as though in some dream —indistinct, faint, which on the morn comes to the mind in broken fragments. Thou knowest that such thoughts, such faces, have passed before thine eyes, but when and where thou canst not tell.

I strode on rapidly, looking neither to right nor left, not knowing or caring whither I went; glad that I was occupied, and not sitting idle, tortured with painful thoughts of the morrow. Many I passed thus, some of whom stopped to look back at me as I left them behind in my rapid walk. Some sound of their conversation came to my ears as they whispered after me.

I was coming now into the less frequented part of London, where I did not remember to have ever been before. The crowd upon the streets was smaller here, and was of the poorer class, mostly laborers and tradesmen, and the sight of a well-dressed stranger must have created some sensation in their minds. They said naught to me, however, and I passed on.

I had halted at a corner to let a cart pass by, and moved by some impulse of the moment, I now looked back. A man

stood by a house a few feet away, and as he caught my look he shrank against the wall, as though to conceal himself from my sight. I had seen him before—a short, squat man, with a dark bronzed face, and thick black hair sprinkled with gray. He was dressed in the garb of a well-to-do tradesman, but there was an indescribable something in his appearance or manner, I know not exactly what, that suggested the sea to me. It may have been his walk, rolling and clumsy, or the slits in his ears, which showed where once there had been ear-rings, that made me think of a seaman.

I had seen him several times within the last few days, hanging around the corners near my apartments, as though watching for someone. Once on coming down my steps, I ran full into his arms as he stood on the landing, and as I disengaged myself, he glanced keenly into my face as though to fix it in his mind, and with a word of apology passed on. It seemed as though he followed my footsteps, for half an hour later, on passing a fruit stand near the Thames, I had seen him gazing intently at me through the lattice.

And now the same man was just behind me, and when I glanced at him, innocently enough, he shrank back as though to avoid my look. Could it be that he dogged my steps, and for some purpose of his own wished to keep me in sight? I knew not why he should do so. I had no enemy in the city, who would go to so much trouble on my account. But it was worth looking into, and so I turned into an alley, and stepping quickly into a dark doorway, I waited.

A few moments, and footsteps sounded on the pavement, and the figure of my pursuer, for pursuer he undoubtedly was, came in sight. Pausing at the entrance of the lane, he looked cautiously into it, no doubt pondering where I could have disappeared so suddenly. The moonlight shone full in his face as he stood there, and from my hiding place I could see every sinister feature, as like a baffled hound he sought to rediscover the lost scent. An instant thus he stood, as if undecided; then silently he stole into the dark alley, and passing the doorway where I stood melted away in the gloom.

Waiting a few minutes where I was, I stepped down, and turning strode out of the lane and back to the corner whence



I had come only a moment ago. Congratulating myself on the fact that I had shaken this spy, I resumed my walk. Through strange twisted streets, overhung with gabled, many-windowed houses; by dark shops, now closed for the day; and along ill-paved crooked lanes I strode, engaged with my own thoughts, as black and gloomy as my surroundings.

What was I to do? Turn my back upon London and all my friends, and one bright lady, more than all the rest to me? I could not remain among those where once I held high sway, the chief amidst the gay throng—now poor, despised, forsaken, stripped of my rank and means, for I had been dependent upon the old lord, my father, for all that I had. Monthly he had sent to me through a London bank, a good round sum in shining gold, which I had promptly sown to the four winds.

The life of a gentleman of leisure in the reign of Elizabeth was no cheap thing, I can tell thee. There were many new doublets, made of silk and satin, of varied colors and shapes, which were ever changing, even as a maid blushes—and as readily. There were the routs and balls; playhouses where the painted actors strutted and declaimed; the dice games in the evenings at the houses of the noble ladies who entertained, where we threw for the golden coin, stacked high upon the table, until daylight peeped in at the closed shutters, and shone upon the flushed, haggard faces and disheveled hair of the lords and ladies. Then there were our servants, many and skillful; our horses and hounds; our wines and dinners; our banquets and routs—all the most elegant. No wonder the sovereigns melted from our purses as snow before a summer sun.

Those were brave old days in London town, when we laughed and idled around, free and happy as the larks. Naught to do save enjoy ourselves; naught to think of save the color of some fair lady's eyes. Sweet, happy days—but gone forever!

Even now, when my hair has grown as white as the driven snow and my eye is dim and feeble, I think of them sometimes with a smile. I would give all of worldly fame and fortune I possess, if, for one brief moment, I could feel again the bounding blood of youth pulse through my with-

ered veins, and my bent form could straighten with the old proud fire, and my step be as light and care-free as of yore; if in my ears could ring the sound of those dear voices—Walter Raleigh's ringing laugh, Bobby Vane's piping tones—and if those true and tried friends—many of whom are scattered east and west, some of whom sleep the last, long, quiet sleep—could be gathered with me as of yore in the great room about the roaring fire of the Mermaid Inn.

A great bar of light loomed ahead of me across the narrow street, and as I drew nearer I heard the sound of shouting and carousing, the clink of glasses, and the deep roars of laughter of the drinkers. Evidently some crowd held high carnival to-night, bent on feasting and frolic.

Nearing the latticed window, I peered in. It was a low room in a tavern, its ceiling black with smoke and age. A great log fire roared up the wide fireplace. Around a long table in the center of the room was seated what looked to me like the crew of some foreign ship—swarthy-faced, with earrings hanging from their ears, and cutlasses and swords buckled around their waists—they seemed none too good for any wild deed of crime and plunder.

There were some twenty-five or thirty of them, who, flagons in hand, sat about the table, telling many strange tales of the unknown regions of the Spanish Main, and motioning to the waiters, who ran frantically to and fro, filling the ever empty glasses. They were plainly the terror and admiration of the other guests, who, huddled together in a corner near the chimney, leered and whispered at their boisterous conduct and wild appearance.

I looked in at them for a few moments, aroused from my thoughts by the extraordinary spectacle. It was doubtless the crew of some foreign merchant vessel, probably a Spaniard, who, returning from a long voyage to the West, and touching at London, had chosen this night to celebrate their return to civilization.

As I peered in, a door at the rear of the room opened, and there advanced rapidly into the room my pursuer, whom I had but just outwitted a few brief moments ago in the alley. Hot and breathless he stood there, as though he had just emerged from some race, and I chuckled when I thought what a chase I must have given him.



He crossed the room to where the foreign seamen drank and feasted; bending over two, who sat at the head of the table, he placed his hands upon their shoulders, and whispered a few words in their ears. Instantly they rose, and putting on their caps, followed him out through the rear door, deaf to the taunts and entreaties of their comrades to "drink one more glass."

The seamen cried out in Spanish, a tongue which I understood, and their conversation, mostly about their voyages, was carried on in that same language. But they talked only of such things as seamen were wont to do; so turning away from my station, I retraced my steps toward my room.

Why had this man come so quickly into this place, and whispering to two of the seamen, gone out as silently and speedily as he had appeared? Plainly he was known to these men, for they had shouted at him, and two had followed him out without a word. Where? Was it in pursuit of me? And if so with what motive? Perhaps they meant to capture me, and exact a ransom from my doting father, and at the thought, I smiled bitterly to myself. Ah! a kingly ransom would he pay for my return. Long would he grieve, together with the saintly Richard, should I vanish from his ken.

To reach this place was easier than to find my way back through the long labyrinth of turns and corners, of cross streets and alleys. Retracing my steps, I wended my course through a maze of dark lanes, and had almost despaired of ever finding my way home, when turning I saw two men, who seemed to be engaged in an earnest discussion, and quickening my steps, I approached them, inquiring, as I did so, whether they could direct me to Cheapside.

The taller turned quickly at the sound of my voice, and stood looking down at me. He was wrapped in a great cloak, and I only saw, bent upon me, the flash of a pair of cold black eyes. "Turn the first corner to the right," he answered, with a slight foreign accent. "That will take thee straight to it," and he turned again to his companion as though eager to be rid of me.

With a brief word of thanks I passed on, but had gone only a few steps when I heard a loud oath, and wheeling about saw one of the men draw his sword and make for

the other, who seemed to be surprised and dismayed by the sudden attack.

The sword flashed in the moonlight, and I barely had time to dash back, and running in between them to catch it upon my own, which I had hastily drawn, else the luckless victim had departed this flesh in a twinkling.

With another loud cry, the assailant made a hasty pass at me, and we closed. Even in the moonlight I was struck with the unusual beauty of the face—its long aquiline nose, and keen hawk eyes. The hat had fallen from his head, and his jet black hair shone like the wing of a raven.

I had small time to observe these things, however, for he pressed me with the fury of a demon, now thrusting with the point, then cutting at me with the blade. I had on merely a light rapier, more for dress than work, while he was using a heavy service sword, and I began to realize that this could not last much longer, for he would beat me down by the strength of his arm, as with all his swordsmanship he pressed upon me.

I was bleeding from several slight wounds where he had touched me, for he was undoubtedly the finest blade with whom I had ever crossed swords—I, Thomas Winchester, accounted one of the best swordsmen of the North Country; backward, backward he was pressing me, and I could see the evil look on his face, as he steadily pushed me to the wall.

How much longer the unequal fight would have lasted, I know not. I had abandoned all hope and given myself up for lost, when the gentleman to whose rescue I had come, and who had stood by in the meantime as if dazed, suddenly drew his sword and came to my assistance.

Together we rushed upon my tall assailant with all our skill and force, but try as we would, we could never cross the gleaming hedge of steel, with which he seemed ringed about. Now he would meet my ally's blade and beat him back, and when I rushed upon him, thinking to take him unawares, I would meet that impenetrable wall of fire, and would be forced to retreat again. It seemed more than mortal man could endure, but his dark, gleaming eyes showed no change; and it looked as if we would have both been held at bay, had it not been for an unlooked for and unforeseen circumstance.



In meeting the attack of my friend, for I knew not what else to call him, the tall stranger's foot slipped, and he fell at full length on the pavement. We both rushed forward quickly, eager to disarm so dangerous a foe, when raising himself on his elbow, he drew a little silver whistle from his breast, and blew one sharp, long blast.

Immediately it seemed as if the whole street were alive with men. They looked as if they sprang from the very pavements. My friend was seized before he could turn to meet the new foe, and a dozen or more sprang upon me. The first, a burly ruffian armed with a cutlass, I ran through the body with my rapier, but as he fell, he dragged my weapon out of my hand, and before I could disengage it from his body, the others were upon me.

I had one glimpse of a mass of dark, bronzed faces, evil and leering; then there was a noise as of many waters in my ears—I seemed to be falling, falling, and I knew no more.

## CHAPTER II

### I HAVE AN OFFER

I SEEMED to be back at Richmond Castle. I could see the great green lawn and the dove-cot with its pigeons. Old Dennis, the gardener, was speaking to me, "Mister Thomas, it's glad I am to see thee back." My hound came running forward to lick my hand, and I could feel the fresh breeze of the country, so different from the hot, feverish air of London, upon my face. A great peace fell upon me—I was at home.

The scene changed; I was at Lady Wiltshire's ball. I could see the brilliantly lighted rooms, the eager, joyous faces about me. There was the young débutante, unaffectedly pleased and amused; the bored, tired rake, weary of the game. Yonder comes my Lord Leicester, followed by his crowd of satellites, and with him my Lady Wiltshire and her beautiful ward, the Lady Margaret Carroll, surrounded by a little coterie of admirers.

I could see the light as it fell upon her beautiful brown hair, turning every thread into gold, as rich and pure as any mined from the far fabled land of the Indies in the days gone by, and the deep violet of her eyes, like the azure blue of the sky on a summer day, with not a cloud to disturb or ruffle it. As she turned her head, I could see the rich full throat, white as the driven snow, and the lovely rose color upon her cheek—that fair cheek, the envy and despair of many a titled beauty.

I could hear the whispers of the Viscount James Henry Hampden, who stood beside her; and while he fanned her with the pretty jeweled fan and poured out a stream of small talk, it was a sight for gods and men. It was more than mortal man could bear, and stretching out my arms, I called to her, "Margaret!" She turned her dark blue eyes upon me, and as she did so faded from my sight.





I seemed to be wandering in a vast and limitless desert, no vegetation was in view, and I could see nothing but the hot, burning sand. I was thirsty, but though I searched far and wide, I could find no water to cool my burning tongue. But as I looked toward the horizon, I saw a beautiful, cool oasis; the fresh, green trees seemed to beckon me on. I struggled through the terrible heat and sand, and finally as I reached it, it vanished, and I awoke.

My first sensation was one of pain. I raised my hand to my head. It was bandaged, as was also my left arm; and on attempting to turn on the bunk where I lay, a sudden pain seized me, which turned me faint and sick.

I lay perfectly still for some time, gazing at the ceiling above me—so different from my own apartments. My eyes were met with the sight of plain, unpainted pine boards, the rough, unfinished wood broken and defaced in places, as though dented by some heavy article coming into violent contact with it.

I also became conscious of a rocking, tossing motion, as if caused by the rolling of a vessel upon the open sea, and while wondering where I was, I dropped off into a peaceful, dreamless sleep.

I was awakened by someone shaking me roughly by the shoulder, and on looking up, I perceived the man who had dogged my steps on last evening standing over me, with a platter in one hand, upon which there was some salt beef and ship biscuits, and a candle in the other.

He, on perceiving my rueful countenance, broke out into a loud peal of laughter.

"Here, my fine fellow, eat whilst thou mayst!" he cried. "Perchance a day may dawn when thou canst not."

"Where am I?" I exclaimed weakly.

"Eat and ask no more questions," he replied. "Our captain will see thee after thou hast eaten."

Without more words I fell to upon the food, and notwithstanding that it was rough fare, I managed to make a good meal of it. My head had ceased to pain me, and while my arm still throbbed and ached, I was beginning to feel like myself again.

I thought of my encounter with the tall stranger of the night before—at least I supposed it was the night before;

for although the room in which I was confined was without windows or openings of any kind, and was dark save for the candle, I had seen a gleam of light, as the sailor had opened the door. He was a short, bronzed fellow, with bold, dark eyes, and a sullen face, garbed in the rough clothes of a seaman.

I fumbled in my pocket, and finding a sovereign, drew it out, and extended it to him.

"My man, I would ask thee a question. Wilt answer it?"

At the sight of the gold, the face of the seaman changed. His dark sullen look was replaced by one, which, if not of delight, plainly indicated that he was pleased, and he extended his hand, with a rough, uncouth bow.

"Anything that I know, I will answer, your honor," he said.

"Well, then, where am I?" I asked.

The man did not answer, and looking at his face, I saw that he seemed to hesitate between a desire to answer, and fear to do so.

"Come now, didst not thou say that thou wouldst answer my question?" I cried.

"Thou art on the ship 'Betsy' of London," he answered sullenly; and picking up his empty platter (for I had almost demolished the salt beef and bread), he strode out of the room before I could stop him, and I heard the heavy bolts turn, as he secured the door.

I had discovered on looking around the room while eating, that I was in a common sailor's cabin, the windows of which were boarded, so as to exclude all light from the room.

Groping my way in the dark, as best I could, I crossed over to the other side of the cabin, and began to feel with my right hand along the side of the room for the boards, with which the window had been planked up. But I was still weak and dizzy, and after a few minutes' work, I was compelled to sink down on the floor to rest, and while I lay there, I heard the sound of footsteps outside the door.

The heavy bar creaked; the door swung open; and I was gazing into the face of the tall stranger, with whom I had fought upon the streets of London. The same high forehead, aquiline nose, thin, cruel lips, and jet-black eyes and hair. He wore a plum-colored doublet, with dark fawn



trunks and hose, and had about him that ease and grace which mark the gentleman.

In truth, he would have passed as a handsome gallant, had it not been for the cruelty and sensuality of his face. I have never been able to determine what feature it was that gave him that air of sinister, reckless cruelty. Analyzing his face, no one single member gave it that expression, but the combined effect was that of a man who had never let any fear or scruple come between himself and his desire.

He stood in the doorway a moment in silence, a candle in his hand, looking upward; then closing the door, he advanced into the room, and with a bow and smile, addressed me as I sat upon the floor, speaking in English, but with a pronounced accent:

"I trust that Sir Thomas Winchester will pardon this rude abode, and this somewhat unceremonious treatment. I assure him that nothing but the most urgent necessity is to blame for it."

"If thou wilt have the goodness to tell me where I am, how I came here, and by whom and what authority I am detained in this place?" I said angrily, for the Richmond blood, which had never brooked opposition, and which had been the pride and curse of my race, was up now, and was boiling in my veins.

"One thing at a time, my dear sir," he replied, and seating himself on a stool near the rude table on which he had placed the candle, he motioned me to a seat upon the other side of the room.

But my temper was aroused, and by a shake of the head I declined the proffered seat, at the same time indicating my desire that he should answer my questions.

"In the first place," he replied, "thou art on the brig, 'Betsy,' two days out from London. In the second place, as doubtless thou rememberest, thou didst attack me on the street of London, without any just cause, and wouldst have slain me, hadst thou had thy way. On my men coming up, thou wert unfortunately struck on the head, and being senseless, wert brought on board this ship. In the third place, thou art detained on board this vessel by me, and by my authority," and he looked down coolly upon me, as I sat upon the floor.

"Who art thou," I exclaimed, rising to my feet, "that thou shouldst detain me?"

My heat produced no noticeable effect upon him; with an evil smile he calmly replied, "The Count DeNortier."

In a flash I knew into whose hands I had fallen—DeNortier, the Spanish adventurer and pirate, whose boldness and cruelty had been the talk of London two years ago.

He had taken a Portuguese merchant vessel, bound from Lisbon to the West Indies, and fearful tales had been told of the way in which he had tortured the men and women. After taking everything of value from the ship, he had cut the throats of those who remained alive, and scuttling the ship, had sailed away. The ship, however, had not sunk immediately, and two days later was found by a Spanish vessel, and from a dying sailor the news of the tragedy had been heard.

Since that day, from time to time, had come news of some further devilish act, until the whole of Europe knew and feared this human fiend.

But I was a man. I could meet death like a gentleman, and if this desperado expected me to flinch, he would be disappointed. So unmoved, I awaited further explanation.

The Count, seeing that I was unaffected by his name, continued:

"Thou wouldst perhaps know why I had thee brought aboard, and I will satisfy thy curiosity. I am in need of men—not puppets, but men. When thou wert overpowered upon the street of London, I knew thee to be a man, and had thee brought aboard this ship, not knowing who thou wert. Since bringing thee aboard, I have discovered thy name and reputation. Several of thy countrymen are with me. Come with us. I have lost my lieutenant, and thou shalt have the place. What more couldst thou desire? Gold, wine, the wealth of the broad seas at thy command, a climate the finest in the world, a life of stir and enterprise, which would appeal to thee. Is there more that thou couldst wish?" And leaning back upon his stool against the wall, he looked at me with his cold black eyes.

For a moment the audacity of the scheme amused me. I, a gentleman, to become a wild sea rover; to roam the sea



knowing no law or God save that of my captain? It was ridiculous and laughable.

The Count perceived the look of covert amusement upon my face.

"Laugh not, my friend—I am in earnest!" he exclaimed slowly and deliberately. "Weigh my offer well before thou refusest," and he looked at me grimly.

And now the tempter rushed upon me, and whispered—why not? Thou art cut off from thy friends and people, and left an outcast upon the earth, with no home or friends. Why not? To roam the wide seas with none to say thee nay; free as a bird that wings its way among the clouds, far above the path of weary mortals; gold, the wealth of the seas at thy command. Why not?

All the demons of hell assailed me to bear me down. I had no one to mourn for me, or grieve that I should take such a course. To live the bold, free life, though but a day—were it not better than to stand a pariah among men? What matter the morrow? We could live the night with song and laughter, and if with the morn came the pale spectre to hold us to a grim account, we would at least have the consolation of knowing that for one brief night we had lived.

I had almost accepted his offer, forgetting all honor and manhood, forgetting all those higher, nobler things. I had turned to DeNortier, and had opened my mouth to close with his proposition. Already his eye had brightened at the prospect of securing a bold assistant and lieutenant.

And even as I turned there flashed into my mind the thought of a fair maiden, with clear, blue eyes and gold-brown hair, into whose pure soul there had never come one unworthy thought; and I could see with what scorn those eyes would be turned upon me, as one who had disgraced his birth and rank and the honored name he bore.

No, come what might, I would endeavor to be as she would have me. Cut off from her by an impenetrable barrier, I would yet live as a gentleman should, and would pursue my solitary path throughout the long night until the morn.

"Thou hast my answer," I said. "I will not join thee."

The pirate's face had changed, and had grown dark with

anger. Although he endeavored to conceal his wrath, his eyes sparkled with rage, and his hand played with the hilt of his sword.

"Thou hadst best reconsider my offer," he said in a low, fierce voice. "We have a short way of dealing with those who thwart us."

"I have decided," I replied. "I am willing to abide by my decision."

He arose to his feet, and stood looking at me a moment; then picking up his candle, he left the room. The bolt turned in its socket; his footsteps died away; and I was left to my own meditations.

They were far from pleasant; afloat on the seas in the hands of a man who knew no law save his own will; shut off from all help, I was indeed in a not-to-be-envied position.

My thoughts turned to London. What did my old friends think had become of me? What did Bobby Vane think? Good old Bobby! How many times had we explored the city by moonlight. How many escapades we had had together, in the ten years we had been in London. We had been more like brothers than friends.

And then there were a score of others, boon companions, with whom I had laughed and drank and feasted; had frequented the playhouses, and seen the puppet shows with their tinsel and glitter. What did they think of me—or care?

Well, it was the way of the world. We have our little day, our little jest, our little song, and then the night falls, and shuts out the last faint gleam of the setting sun. As travelers who pass upon the road, we meet—a moment's greeting; then the journey is resumed, and we disappear in the deepening gloom. And so thinking I fell asleep.

Then passed long uneventful days and nights, during which I saw only the sailor who had first brought my meals, and who had told me his name was Herrick. Three times a day he brought my food, and stood by me, sullen and morose, while I ate. When I finished, he would take the platter and candle and leave me, locking the heavy bolt behind him. All my efforts to draw him into a conversation proved vain; he would not be drawn out, or answer any of my questions.



My health began to suffer from my close confinement, and I had almost given up all hope of ever seeing again the blue skies of heaven. I could still feel the rocking and tossing of the vessel, and sometimes could hear the shouts of the men, but outside of this, I was as much dead to the world as if I had been buried.

It was about the twentieth day, I reckoned, after my conversation with DeNortier, when I heard footsteps approaching the door of my prison at an unwonted hour; as only a few minutes before the grim Herrick had brought my meal—whether breakfast, dinner, or supper, I did not know.

The heavy lock groaned; the door opened, and Herrick stood outside.

"Come," he said, "thou art wanted on deck," and candle in hand, he waited for me.

The candlelight threw into relief his grim, dark features; his broad, flat nose and coarse, rough mouth; sparkled on the earrings in his ears; gleamed on his cutlass, which was suspended from his waist by a broad leather belt—altogether it was a picture for some ancient master, as he stood in the doorway.

Picking up my tarnished hat, I passed up the ladder and stood on the deck of the ship.

The vessel lay motionless upon the water. About the deck there clustered a group of rough sailors—English, by their costume and language, some thirty or more.

On the other side of the vessel there stood about fifty of the most villainous-looking men I had ever seen—the ruffians whom I had noticed in the alehouse in London—of every clime and nationality, their faces stamped with all manner of vice; they were a crew repulsive enough to make men shudder.

Between these two groups there stood DeNortier, and a broad, squat man, whom, from his dress and deportment, I surmised to be the master of the ship.

A few ship-lengths distant there lay another vessel, long, low, with the hull painted a dull black. Many culverins protruded their frowning mouths from her dark sides; her decks were crowded with men. From her mast there flew a black flag, and as I gazed at it the folds opened wide to the

wind, and I saw upon its face the skull and crossbones of the sea rover.

From the vessel was putting out a boat filled with men, which was making for the ship on which I stood.

The voice of DeNortier fell upon my ears at this moment.

"Well, honored sir, I trust that thou hast had a pleasant trip."

I turned to him as he stood beside me looking at my face, with a sinister smile on his own.

"Pleasant trip!" I cried. "Yes—as the sufferings of the damned are pleasant, such pleasure have I had."

He shrugged his shoulders, then came close to me, and spoke in a lower tone:

"Thou hast in thy power to change it. Would it not be better to be a leader among those merry men yonder—to have the treasure of the world at thy command—than to languish out a miserable existence in some foul prison, shut out from the world; or perhaps to die by the thumbscrew and the torture?"

"Better," I replied, "perhaps—but answer one question."

"What is it?" he asked.

"Why dost thou detain me here?"

"I have told thee once," he answered; "it is not necessary to repeat it."

"Granting that," I said; "in case of my refusal, what dost thou intend to do with me?"

"I shall take thee with me to my rendezvous; shall keep thee until thou dost change thy mind. If thou wilt not join us after a reasonable time—why, dead men tell no tales." And as he said this, his black eyes narrowed to a mere slit.

He gazed at me a moment, then, turning his back, walked to where the pirates, whose boat had arrived, were scrambling aboard the vessel.

I was about to follow him, when my attention was attracted to two seamen who came up the companionway, bearing between them a man. They came forward to where I stood alone, and as they neared, I looked at the burden in their arms. It was not—could not be? Yes, it was the gentleman to whose rescue I had come on the street of London, and to whom I owed my present situation.



The confinement had told on him, great hollows were under his eyes, his cheeks were wan and thin; no wonder I looked at him twice before I knew him. The seamen brought him forward to where I stood, and there deposited him, as though he were a bundle of goods.

I believe he did not know me when he raised his eyes blankly to my face, but as he looked at me a moment, the light of recognition crept into them, and he held out his hand in greeting, with a smile.

"Pardon me, that I did not at first know thee, but thou must remember that I only saw thee a moment in the moonlight, when we were both engaged, and this cursed imprisonment has so worked upon me, that I hardly believe I would know my own mother, could I see her."

I laughed at the energy with which he spoke, and after grasping his proffered hand, sat down beside him.

"Dame Fortune has played us a scurvy trick," I said, "but perhaps the wheel may turn. I am Thomas Winchester, Kt., of London. Pray, whom have I the honor of addressing?"

He bowed. "I well know Sir Thomas Winchester by reputation, and am glad to know in person so redoubtable a gentleman," he answered. "Thou wert in Ireland some years ago with Sir Philip Sidney. Permit me to introduce Captain Henry Steele, at thy service."

Steele? Steele? Where had I heard that name before? Ah, yes, it all came back to me. I remembered Philip Sidney's recounting, at the old Mermaid Inn, over a pipe of the fragrant Virginia tobacco, the tale of how this man Steele had swam across a river in the Low Country, during the campaign with Spain, and had traveled ten miles through a country swarming with the enemy, where capture meant certain death, to carry dispatches to a besieged fortress.

I remembered the crowded room; the cloud of blue tobacco smoke, through which peered the eager, interested faces of the listeners; remembered the applause which the tale evoked; and Francis Drake's "By God! 'twas a gallant deed, sir."

No wonder was it that I wrung his hand, glad to have so sturdy a warrior with me. Short, erect, strongly built, with a face that bespoke courage and determination, his was a

noble spirit, and one calculated to invite confidence and trust.

"And now let me thank thee for thy assistance in that fight on the street of London," he said. "The gods only know what I would have done without thy arm, for I have never before seen such swordplay in mortal man."

"Tell me," I inquired, "how thou didst come to get into a difficulty with thy assailant?"

And then, in a few short words, he told me that he had just returned from the Low Country a few days before, where he had been engaged in the noble fight that the Netherlands were waging against their Spanish oppressors. He had spent the early part of the night at a tavern with some of his friends, and was returning to his lodgings, his head heavy with wine, when he was stopped on a corner by DeNortier, who held up a sparkling ring, set with a precious stone, and asked him if he had lost it. He stepped nearer, to look at the gem; the man struck him in the face, and then, drawing his sword, had rushed at him.

The rest I knew. Then he requested me to tell him where he was, and I told him all that I knew. I had barely finished, before I saw DeNortier approaching us.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, "the boat awaits you."

I looked around—I had no weapon, neither had Steele. We were both weak from our long confinement, and were surrounded by the cutthroats whom DeNortier had brought with him from London. Resistance seemed useless, so gathering up my faded cloak, and assisting Steele, who was very feeble, I followed DeNortier to the boat.

For a moment I hesitated at the ladder, which led down to the little craft, but the pirate, as if divining my purpose, had placed his whole force at the entrance. Grim and cold they stood, weapons in hand. Bowing to the inevitable, we went down the ladder into the boat, and were rapidly rowed over to the pirate vessel.

The men who manned the craft were like those I had seen on the "Betsy," wild and reckless, and were dressed in fantastic costumes. They were also heavily armed.

On attempting to address one of them, I was immediately silenced by Herrick, who seemed to be in command, and who growled out that if I wanted to save my neck, I had best



hold my tongue. Taking the polite suggestion, for the remainder of our trip I held my peace, and we neared the vessel in silence.

Reaching the pirate, we were immediately carried down the cabin way into a large bare room, with a rough bunk in one corner, and only a rude table together with a chair or two. The window of this room was enclosed by an iron grating. Here Steele and myself were left alone.

## CHAPTER III

### WE TAKE THE MERCHANT

TEN days more passed; but they were not so dull and tedious as those I had spent heretofore. Both Steele and myself were rapidly improving in health, under the cheering influence of our mutual companionship and conversation.

We passed the days in recounting our mutual adventures; he telling of his experience in the Low Country; the many hairbreadth escapes that he had met with at the hands of the Spaniards; of the struggles that the people of Holland were passing through in their fight for freedom, and how many gallant Englishmen had drawn swords in their cause. He also asked me something of my Irish campaign with Sidney many years ago, when I was but a light-hearted lad, before I had ever gone to London and lost the sweetness and freshness of my youth in that great city of fashions and society.

I would tell him of the gayeties of London of which he knew little; of the nobles and ladies of fashion, and their empty, care-free, butterfly existence.

I told him of a great play which I had seen, when the little man, Shakespeare, had played a noble tragedy before the crown, and tried to give him some idea of the great lighted house with its audience of nobles and fair ladies.

Steele's eyes flashed, as I tried to depict the play, and the enthusiasm of the people as they saw some noble scene.

"It must have been grand!—grand! lad," he cried. "I would give five years of my existence to live such a life, be it only for a day."

I also told him of my father's dismissal, for Steele's was a fine and generous nature, which invited confidence; and he agreed with me that Richard must have had a hand in it.

We also talked of the golden Virginia, which Raleigh was





determined to make into a great, vast empire; and discussed its wild, ferocious tribes, and its mines of gold and gems. So passed ten days.

We had exhausted all plans for escaping; none seemed feasible. Were we to overpower our jailer, our condition would not be bettered; and so being surrounded by a ship-load of pirates, and with no means of escape, we mutually agreed to wait until land was reached before making an attempt to free ourselves.

On the eleventh morning, just as we finished our breakfast, Steele went to the grating to look out, and as he did so, uttered an exclamation.

"Look!" he cried, pointing out upon the sea.

I ran over to the window, and following his finger, saw far away on the horizon a dark speck, which Steele asserted was a ship. Even as we looked we heard a hoarse order in Spanish, a language I am familiar with. It was DeNortier's command to the pirates to put about in the direction of the distant vessel.

All the morning long we followed that dark speck upon the water, gaining little by little, until about two of the evening we had gotten well in sight of her. She was a great galleon, bearing the yellow flag of Spain, her decks crowded with men, women, and children, who pointed and gesticulated at us.

Slowly, steadily, we drew nearer, nearer, until within a few yards of her. I could see the soldiers trying to drive the women and children down below. Suddenly we came about; I heard the hoarse word of command, and then like a peal of thunder from a clear sky, the pirates discharged their culverins into the galleon.

The slaughter was fearful. Men, women, and children were mowed down; and the screams of the wounded and dying rang loud and clear in our ears. Men ran hither and thither upon the decks. A few of the soldiers returned the fire of the pirates, but they seemed paralyzed with terror.

Slowly our vessel came around in the wind, and discharged another broadside—and yet another, the musketoons of the pirates keeping up an incessant fire all the while. The deck of the galleon literally ran blood. Of the many who had

thronged the vessel but a few minutes before, barely one-half were alive.

The others lay huddled into great heaps—some dead, others grievously wounded, many praying, others screaming with pain. An officer, his steel helmet gleaming, ran to and fro, trying to get the men in order—but in vain.

They seemed utterly beside themselves with fright, and abandoning the culverins, from which they had never fired a shot, the gunners ran down the hold; while the remainder of the men stood as if dazed by the destruction which the pirates had wrought.

As we looked on, sick at heart, and wishing but for some weapon, that we might strike one blow for the galleon, we heard the door behind us open, and old Herrick, a grin of delight upon his face, came into the cabin.

"The captain wishes you to come on deck," he informed us.

We followed the old ruffian in silence up the companion-way, and stood upon the deck. A few dead and wounded pirates lay about us.

DeNortier, sword in hand, stood by the mast, two or three of his lieutenants around him. He gave us a dark look and said, "Gentlemen, you will accompany me to yonder ship."

I merely inclined my head in token of our assent.

The boats were gotten out, and crowded with the pirates, made their way to the stricken vessel. As we drew nearer, we saw that the slaughter was even worse than it had appeared from the deck of the ship.

Here lay the body of a fresh young girl; there that of a grizzled old sailor; here a soldier in his armor, musketoon in hand; there a young child, his chubby arm under his head, as if asleep and dreaming; there a negro, dark and scowling. It was a horrible sight.

We climbed on deck, and immediately DeNortier ordered a squad of sailors to throw the dead bodies overboard; another to divide the prisoners—the men into one group, the women and children into another.

Steele, who had been examining a culverin that stood near him, touched me on the sleeve. I turned and looked at the gun to which he pointed—it was spiked and useless. We looked at another—spiked too.



The culverins had all evidently been disabled by some trusty ally on the ship. This accounted for the fact that they were never fired. I turned sick at the thought of such treachery, which had cost so many human lives, and so much blood and carnage.

And now we noticed that the pirates had stood all the men, who were left alive, by the side of the rail, their hands bound behind them. DeNortier advanced in front of the silent line.

"My men," he cried in Spanish (most of the men were Spaniards), "who of you wish a merry life, plenty of wine, gold in abundance, and a good ship under you, to roam the wide blue seas? Any who prefer that to a watery grave, step forward."

There were about one hundred men left; some twenty stepped forward; the rest stood firm and unyielding. Some of their faces were pale; a few of them were wounded; some had wives and children in far-off Spain, who would watch for their coming in vain. The suns would wax and wane; the hair of the watchers would fade slowly into the white of the winter snows; their children would grow up, live their little day, and lie down in the arms of the great angel, "Death"—but still they would not come. Not for them was a grave beneath the sunny skies of Spain, with the mourners to weep about their lifeless clay—theirs was a watery grave, lonely and deep, beneath the ocean's brine.

"I will give you one more chance," the pirate said. "Step forward, and your lives are saved—if not, overboard you go."

I have never admired the Spaniard as a race; but at this moment I felt a thrill of admiration and respect for those men, most of them bronzed and battered veterans, who could look into the face of death and meet him unafraid and undismayed.

The captain raised his hand; but I could not see them go down without one effort to save them. I sprang forward, as did also Steele.

"Count," I cried, "thou canst not mean to throw them overboard?—thou dost not mean to do that?"

"Why not?" he said coolly. "They are of no use to me, if they will not join me. I cannot keep them as captives. What other course is open to me?"

"Unbind them," I said; "give them the ship and let them go. Better starvation upon the seas, than such a death as this."

"What? And let them bring down a swarm about my ears? Hardly!" he sneered. "I was not born yesterday, brave sir." Then raising his voice he shouted, "Herrick, seize them!"

The sturdy Herrick and a score of others rushed upon us. The struggle was brief; we were unarmed, and two against a score, for many others of the pirates had rushed to the assistance of their companions.

I felled some two or three of my assailants to the floor, and Steele did the like, but flesh and blood could do no more. We were seized, bound hand and foot, and deposited like two logs on the floor of the deck to await the destruction of the captives.

The prisoners, with their hands bound and tied together, could only dumbly watch the struggle, which was to decide their fate.

As the pirates, after securing us, turned to their captives to put the brutal sentence of their captain into execution, the prisoner who stood at the end of the line next us, and who wore a long white beard, which flowed down over his armor, turned to us and cried in English:

"We thank you, noble sirs, for your gallant struggle in our behalf. May the blessings of the Holy Virgin be with you forever! May you ever remember that you have stood up manfully for those who could not help themselves; and may the memory of this deed be as water to the thirsty traveler in the desert. Farewell! may the benediction of God be ever with you."

As he finished, the pirates rushed upon them. I had been a soldier in Ireland, and had looked unmoved on many a bloody field, but this slaughter of men, bound hand and foot, was more than I could see unmoved. A moment of brief struggle; I turned my head aside; there was a thud, as man after man struck the water—then silence. I looked again; they were gone; only the pirates, laughing and jeering among themselves, remained.

And now the burly Herrick appeared, leading by the sleeve a girl, dark, slender, petite, with a complexion like a wild



rose, and great glorious black eyes. Truly she was a beautiful sight, though she shrank back in affright from the admiring eyes of DeNortier.

"By the Holy City! Here is a find!" he cried. "Herrick, thou shalt be made a bishop, and wear a miter; I swear it shall be so."

The rascal bowed, a leer upon his face.

"I thought that this would please thy Excellency," he said.

"I have long searched the broad blue seas for a bride—what need to go further? Here is a pearl from the Antilles, a very jewel of the West. Bid Father Francis stand forth, and make us one."

The girl stood as though frozen into stone, during this conversation, as if dazed by the terrible scene through which she had passed. But as DeNortier motioned a seaman to find the priest, whom he called Father Francis, the full horror of the situation seemed to burst upon her, and breaking away from the grasp of old Herrick, she threw herself at DeNortier's feet, in a torrent of tears.

"Señor! Señor!" she cried, "for the love of God, have mercy! Hast thou no soul? Hadst thou a mother? For her sake I implore! Kill me if thou wilt, but do not do this act; 'twill be a stone about thy neck, to drag thee down to the bottomless pit."

The Count smiled and touched her with his hand.

"Rise up, fair one," he said; "thou shalt be queen of the tropic isles, and share my throne. Thou shalt have slaves to answer thy beck and call; thy slightest wish shall be my law. Dry those tears; Father Francis shall tie the wedding knot—and then, ho! for the fragrant isle where we shall reign."

The girl sprang to her feet, her eyes flashing.

"Dog!" she cried, "rather would I die than be the wife of such as thou! Rather would I let the crows pick the flesh from my bones, than to submit to such an outrage! Knowest thou not that I am the Donna Maria DeCarnova, the daughter of the Duc DeCarnova? The blood of kings and princes runs in my veins. Kill me, if thou wilt, but do not compel me to be thy wife."

The Count laughed—such a laugh as the damned might

have uttered, as they gloat in the regions of the Inferno over a soul that is lost.

"Donna," he said, "save thy pretty blandishments, until after the priest hath finished with us. Thou mightst as well try to climb into the clouds of Heaven as to move me, after my mind has been made up. My wife thou shalt be, whether thou dost desire it or not. Prepare thyself for the wedding."

I could stand this scene no longer; for, from where I lay, bound and tied, I could see and hear all that passed. The agony of the girl touched me to the heart. I have seen much of the evil side of life; but all the scenes of sin and sorrow have made me unable to turn a deaf ear to the cry of suffering, agonizing humanity.

Naught had I to live for, disowned and spurned by my own father; cut off by an impenetrable barrier from all I knew and loved, what did there remain for me? What mattered a few short days? I could not ask the Lady Margaret Carroll to share such a life as this—would not let her do so, even were she willing.

The Spanish girl was young, wealthy, beautiful; life held much, meant much to her; stretched out rich and wonderful before her eyes. I would let the maiden go. I was a soldier and a gentleman, and death's cold hand had been near me too often on the fields of Ireland to fear him now.

"Steele," I said, "I am past my youth; have seen the best in life; have drunk deep of the golden cup. The maiden is young and lovely. I will exchange myself for the girl. DeNortier may do what he wishes with me, if he will but let the maid go free. Good-by, old friend—God bless thee! We have been together but a small space as time goes, yet I have learned to love thee. When thou returnest to England in the days to come, thou wilt bear my devoirs to Lady Margaret Carroll, and tell her that I was ever unto death her loyal knight. That I died as became a soldier and a gentleman—my last thoughts were of her. Farewell!"

I could not see his face, for they had bound and thrown me with my back to him; but in a moment he spoke, his voice husky with emotion:



"Truly, my friend, thou art the bravest gentleman that it has ever been my good fortune to know. I would I could persuade thee from this deed."

"Thou canst not," I answered. "My mind is fixed and immovable."

"Then fare thee well!" he answered, "and God be with thee. If ever I come to England, I will search out the Lady Margaret Carroll, and deliver thy message, though I be compelled to walk through England barefoot to do so."

"So be it," I replied, and I called loudly for DeNortier.

The Count came forward to where I lay bound, his face dark with anger, his eyes flashing; plainly the Spanish girl had not left him in the best of moods.

"What wouldst thou have?" he cried. "Speak quickly, my time is short."

"Count," I answered, "thou art a soldier, and sometime a gentleman. Release the maid; swear to me that thou wilt furnish her a safe conduct to Spain; let my friend, Steele, go with her as escort, and thou mayst do what thou wilt with me."

"Art thou mad," he said, "that thou proposest such a thing? Art thou flesh and blood, that thou shouldst pass through such torture as I can devise? Granting that thy life should be of enough value to me that I should release the maid, of what benefit would that be to me? What is the maid to thee, that thou shouldst give thy life for her?"

As I lay there, a verse of Scripture passed through my mind, learned long years ago, at my mother's knee. I had not thought of it for twenty years, but it came clear and fresh to my mind, as if learned on yesterday. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Hardly knowing what I did, I repeated these few words, more to myself than to him. They were so short, and yet so full of meaning.

The loving face of my mother came back to me as of old, when kneeling at her feet, I would repeat my simple prayers. Much had I learned since then, more of sin and evil than of good; yet many things, that I had lisped long years ago, would come back to me at unexpected moments, like rich gold buried for a season, and but awaiting the spade of the

miner to uncover the yellow ore. Dear patient one, thy toil was long and weary, but perhaps thou builded better than thou dreamed.

DeNortier burst into a peal of laughter at the words. "This is the best yet!" he shouted, stamping his feet with glee. "The devil turned priest! I had as soon expected old Herrick to don the cassock."

I answered him: "The maid is naught to me, yet I would not see her young life blighted. Swear to me on the crucifix that she shall go unharmed, with my friend as an escort; that thou wilt send them to some Spanish port, and I am content. Let it be said that thou didst one good deed in all thy career of blood and crime; perhaps it will avail thee much, at the last grim moment."

He still stood looking at me. "Thou art a strange and perverse man, that thou wouldst give thy life for an unknown maid, but the humor of the thing appeals to me. I, too, am strange, and have my whims and fancies. So be it; the maid shall go free with thy friend to see her safe. I have another vessel, which meets me in a day or two; they shall go on that, and thou canst take her place."

"One last word," I said, "thou canst take my life if thou wilt, but thou canst not make me stoop to play the knave. A gentleman I was born, and by God's help, a gentleman I will die."

A bitter smile played around his mouth for a moment. "So be it," he said, and turning, he called: "Francis! Francis! where art thou?"

"Here, thy Excellency," cried a voice; and from out of the group of pirates, there waddled towards us the large, stout figure of an Englishman, clad in the gown of a priest; a man on whose rubicund face the mellow juice of the grape had stamped its seal. The nose red and swollen, the cheeks puffed and bloated, the watery eye, all told the tale of his vice as plainly as if it had been spoken in words.

He came forward, a smile of triumph upon his face. "Ah! thy Excellency," he cried, as he came nearer, "did I not do my work well? Not one culverin to answer thee with, and all at the risk of my life. Was I not nearly discovered several times? I would not go through the like again for a mine of gold, freshly dug from the virgin soil."



"Thou shalt be well requited for thy pains," DeNortier replied. "In the meantime, hast thou a cross?"

"Most assuredly," he answered; "the servant hath ever the tools of his calling," and he plucked from under the folds of his cassock a little iron cross, and held it out to the Count.

"Swear upon it," I said, "that by the bones of thy ancestors, by the body of Jesus, by all the fears of perdition, thou wilt deliver the maiden, with Captain Steele, safe and unharmed, into the hands of her friends. If thou failest to do so, may a thousand curses weigh down thy soul."

"I swear it," he said sullenly, kissing the cross, and returning it to the priest.

"And thou foul imp of Satan," I cried to the priest, "the first time I get but a chance, I will run my sword through thy traitor heart; and this I swear."

"Bold words, brave sir," he answered. "Strange words from a dying man. I will heed them more, when thou art more able to perform thy threat," and with a leer at me, he hobbled after DeNortier, who had gone forward to acquaint the girl with the fact that she was free.

As he told her that she was at liberty, and would be placed in the hands of her friends in a few days, and that I had taken her place, she ran forward to where I lay, and threw herself at my feet.

"Oh, Señor!" she cried, "thou must be a blessed saint in disguise."

"No saint, maiden," I answered, "only a weak, erring man."

"But thou canst not mean that thou wilt stay among these dreadful men, and let me go back to my home? I cannot let thee do that; thy blood would be upon my hands."

"No," I answered, "I am in the hands of God; thou canst do no good by remaining here. I am in the power of these men already, and can be in no worse position. Perhaps," I said, speaking in a lower tone, "thou canst bring succor, and thus assist me."

"I will," she answered quickly, "though I be compelled to go to the King himself. Have no fear, I will send back as soon as I reach my friends, and rescue thee." And before I could prevent her, she had caught my hand, and pressed it to her lips.

The voice of DeNortier sounded at my elbow: "Welcome, Sir Thomas! Welcome to Eldorado!"

"And so this is Eldorado?" I said. "Long have I searched for Eldorado; I had not looked to find it here."

"Fate plays us many strange tricks," he answered, his eyes upon the island.

"Where is this Eldorado?" I inquired.

"It is near the coast of Cuba," he answered, "which is only a few leagues distant. I discovered it several years ago on one of my expeditions. It is safe and pleasant, out of the track of stray ships, and here, when home from my voyages, I reign as though I were a king."

The ship had fired a culverin some moments ago, and now, in answer to the signal, a long canoe put off from the shore and came rapidly toward us.

We watched it come forward in silence, and as it drew nearer, I saw that the men who filled the boat were the wild Indians, like the savage Manteo, whom I had seen in London—and yet not like him. Like him in the bronze color of their skin, in their black, glittering eyes, and long, coarse hair; yet not like him, for they wanted the rugged strength of his face, wanted the martial pose of his bearing and the freedom of his glance.

They were not clad in skins, as had been Manteo, but wore jerkins of some cotton material, their legs and arms bare. Upon their feet were fastened light sandals. Evidently, by their countenances and deportment, they did not belong to the warlike tribes which roamed the virgin forests of Virginia, but were a gentler type of that race.

In a few minutes their light boat touched the ship, and one, who seemed to be the leader, ran forward to where DeNortier stood, and dropping on one knee, spoke some words in a soft tongue which I did not understand.

The Count answered him in the same language, and turning to me, told me that I might so ashore.

"One thing, Count," I said, detaining him as he turned to leave, "when am I to recover my sword? I am strangely ill at ease without the tapping of the blade against my knee, and care not to go among yonder barbarians without a weapon."

He looked at me in some surprise. "Thy sword? Of



what use is a sword to a captive? Swords are for the free. As for yon Indians, thou couldst drive them before thee with a lash. But thou shalt have thy sword upon one condition. Give me thy word of honor as a gentleman that thou wilt not attempt to escape while upon this island, and thou shalt be free to come and go as thou dost please."

I pondered a moment. Escape was not possible, even should I break forth from my prison, for the boundless ocean stretched between me and land. So he should have my word of honor for the present; should a favorable opportunity for escape present itself, I could retract my word.

"Thou shalt have my word of honor for the present," I said. "Should I see proper to change my mind, thou shalt be informed."

A sardonic smile was upon his face. "Dost thou think that I am a child, to bring thee here, and then let thee escape? Suit thy own fancy; when thou seest fit to retract thy promise, I shall secure thee well. As for thy sword—Francis! come hither."

The priest, who had hovered near during this brief conversation, drew closer to us.

"Go into my cabin, and bring my gold-hilted Toledo blade," DeNortier commanded.

The rogue turned, and walked toward the cabin. In a few minutes he returned, bringing with him a splendid gold-hilted sword.

The Count took it from him, and drawing the long, bright blade from its sheath, turned to me with a bow.

"Allow me to present thee with this sword in lieu of thine own, which was unfortunately lost the night thou wert brought on board. It is of the finest steel, and, I am sure, could be in the hands of no more gallant gentleman."

I bowed in reply, as I took the sword from him.

"I thank thee," I said, "and hope that it will not be dishonored in my hands."

"I am sure it will not," he answered. "But it is time that we were on shore," and he walked forward to where the canoe lay. Together we descended the ladder and stepped into the boat.

The natives bent their muscles to the task; the paddles flew, and the canoe passed rapidly through the water to a

spot which seemed suited for landing, and where a little throng of the Indians, both men and women, together with a few of the pirates, awaited us.

The canoe grated upon the beach, and treading our way through the crowd of Indians, who stood with bent heads as we passed by, we took a well-beaten path which led through the trees, and after about fifteen minutes' brisk walking turned a corner and passed into a broad, level savannah, carpeted with long luxuriant grass.

A long, low building stretched to the left, rough and unpainted; while to the right there arose a splendid mansion, many-windowed, with broad, white pillars—stately and magnificent it stood, looking like a pearl among swine.

The Count noticed the surprise depicted upon my face.

"Be not dismayed," he said. "It is but my poor home; for though shut off in some sense from the world, I yet manage to enjoy some of the good things of the flesh. The world has contributed to my comfort and the furnishings of yonder house. Italy has given us of her sculpture and paintings; England, our furniture and tapestry; Spain, our wine and goblets; from Venice have come our carpets and tableware; the Netherlands have given us linen and clothing; from Portugal have come our gold and silverware. I have managed to make my brief stays here not unpleasant. Yonder is the barrack for the men," he said, pointing to the rough, unfinished building, which stood to the left.

As we came nearer to the mansion, one of the Indians, detaching himself from the group of servants on the steps, ran forward to greet his master. As he reached us, he caught DeNortier's hand and carried it to his lips, crying out a few words in the same musical language which the native who first came aboard the vessel had spoken.

The pirate answered in the same tongue, and turning to me, said:

"Thou seest that I have something human in me after all; these poor dogs worship the very ground that I walk upon."

Resuming our steps, we passed on into the house. When within, I stood amazed at the elegance of its furnishings; the floor carpeted in some soft material into which the feet



sank as we walked; the walls covered with elegant tapestry; the chairs and other furniture, massive and splendid; on pedestals stood the choicest statuary of the masters of Italy; from the walls there hung paintings, costly and exquisite; and the perfume of sweet-scented flowers filled the rooms. Wealth and culture seemed to reign supreme.

This might be the palace of some noble in far-off England or Spain, a man of wealth and refinement, but not the home of a reckless, blood-thirsty pirate, devoid of conscience or soul, his head resting insecurely upon his shoulders—for so unmerciful and terrible had been the cruelty of DeNortier that, if captured by any civilized nation, his neck would pay the penalty of his crimes. No wonder I was amazed.

The Count had thrown himself upon a velvet couch, which stood near the center of the great room into which he had led me. Stretching out his hand he touched a little silver gong, which stood upon a pedestal near his elbow. A soft-footed attendant stood noiselessly in the doorway. A word in that same unknown language, and the servant disappeared.

A moment later he reappeared, a bottle and two goblets in his hand. Drawing up a small table, he pushed another soft couch opposite me as I stood gazing around the room, and silently passed out of the apartment.

"Be seated, sir," the Count said. "Drink one glass with me. This wine," he continued, filling a golden goblet and holding it up to the light, "was intended for his Catholic Majesty, the King of Spain. I took it from a galleon near the coast of Cuba, a year ago, after a bitter fight. Little thinks his Majesty that to-day we drink it." And he poured a glass for himself, his goblet matching mine.

"Come, Sir Thomas, let us lay aside all enmity for a few brief moments, and drink one glass together. I give thee a toast which thou canst not refuse," he cried, rising to his feet, and holding out the glass at arm's length—"Her Royal Majesty, the Queen of England!"

"The Queen!" I rejoined, rising. "May her glory never wane or fade!"

"Amen to that," the pirate said, and we both sank back upon our couches.

"Where, pray, didst thou find these rich treasures which adorn thy mansion? If all be of the same quality as the

wine we have just drank, thou art well named King of Eldorado."

He glanced around the room before replying, and then answered, speaking slowly and clearly:

"Some of these things I took from vessels upon the seas; some I obtained when I raided the South American coasts, the spoils of monasteries and cathedrals; some I bought in Europe and sent in merchant vessels, which I met as I did the 'Betsy' and transferred to my own ship. It has been the work of several years, but it is well worth the price. Some day, when I tire of war and bloodshed, I shall come back here, and pass the remainder of my life in this lovely spot, with the song of the bird and the odor of the rose. Allow me to fill thy glass." And he poured me out another goblet, and refilled his own.

"And now as we talk," I said, "what of myself? Of what advantage am I to thee? Why not release me and let me go back to England?"

"Release thee? No; my dear sir, not yet. Did I not give up a Spanish maiden, a jewel of the West, to have the pleasure of thy company? Wouldst thou deprive me of it so soon, and bought with such a price? Cruel! Cruel!" and he laughed again.

"But of what advantage am I here to thee? I am not gold; thou canst not melt me into shining coin."

"No," the pirate answered, looking at me narrowly, "I cannot melt thee—but there are other things. I offered thee a place beneath me, to be my right-hand man——"

"Which I refused," I interrupted. "Dost thou take me for a child, one day to refuse an offer, the next to accept it? I credited thee with more wisdom."

A dark look had spread over the sea rover's face, accentuating the thin lips and dark overhanging brows. His eyes glittered; he reminded me of a snake as it rears back to strike its victim.

He spoke thickly: "Thou canst not say that I have not done my best to save thee from thy own folly. Join me, thou art safe; refuse me——" and he shrugged his shoulders. "Thou hast powerful enemies, wouldst thou refuse an ally?"

He had drank several glasses to my one. Twice, during



our conversation, had the soft-footed native replaced with full bottles the empty ones upon the table, as DeNortier finished them.

I waited until the Indian disappeared before I spoke.

What meant the pirate, when he said powerful enemies? Might not this explain my abduction and detention in this place? I would see whether he would not say more, under the generous influence of the wine.

"Is that so?" I answered. "I know not what thou meanest by powerful enemies; such a thing as that might change my resolution."

But he would not be drawn out. Evidently alarmed by what he had said, he arose unsteadily from the couch.

"Think on what I have said," he replied, as he turned toward the door; "perhaps thou mayest yet come with me." And turning a deaf ear to all my endeavors to detain him, he walked out of the door, bidding me remain where I was.

I still reclined on the couch after DeNortier had passed out of the room. I was tired, my limbs ached, and the wine had produced a pleasant torpor which sapped my energy.

What meant the pirate when he said that I had powerful enemies? Could it be that my father or Richard had taken this method to get me out of the way? Not my father, certainly; he hated me, it is true, but he was too much of the aristocrat to stoop to such work as this. He had cast me off forever, but what motive could he have for condemning me to the life of an exile? No; whoever it was behind the scene, it could not be my father.

Richard, then? It was more like him, for he had always been wont to do his dirty work under cover of darkness, and was none too good for such a trick. But where was the motive? He was the eldest son; the estate and title would fall to him at my father's death; he stood near my father's heart, while the old lord despised me. Why should he wish to do this deed, which might come to light and ruin him? No, I did not think it was Richard. He would have put a dagger in my back, and so been rid of me, once and forever. He would never have had me kidnaped and carried out of England.

There only remained the Viscount James Henry Hampden. It might be that his was the master hand that worked

the wires; but I could not believe he would do such a deed. He might wish to get so dangerous a rival out of the way, but why in such a manner as this? He was a soldier; would it not be more likely that he would have picked a quarrel with me, and fought it out as a gentleman? But there came to my mind the threat he had made, that Margaret should be his in spite of Heaven and Hell.

Rumor had it that he had done strange deeds in the Low Country—things that would not bear the light of day. Tales were told of a house in which some Spanish prisoners were confined, which was burned by his command, cooking them alive in its ruins.

Yes, it might be his work. At the thought I ground my teeth together, and my hand sought the hilt of my sword. There was no one else I could think of who had any motive for keeping me out of England. I would keep my eyes open, and perhaps the plot would thicken; in the meantime I would watch and wait.

Woe to whomsoever had done this deed; for whoever it was, I would never rest until I had punished him. The world was too small to hold both of us; one must pass out should we meet face to face. With these thoughts, I caught up my hat, and walked out upon the broad veranda.

Without, dusk was just beginning to fall. The men were struggling up from the vessel bringing their booty, the spoils of the ships they had rifled, and their rude songs floated up to me. The natives, men, women, and children, were running to and fro, their arms loaded with small articles.

A little apart from the men stood a small group, composed of DeNortier, Herrick, Francis, and one of the Indians. Even as I looked, they separated—the Count and the Indian going toward the barrack, Herrick going down the path toward the landing place, and the priest coming toward me.

As he drew nearer I could see his fat, evil face, with its watery eyes, looking like some bloated monster of the deep. He called to me as he drew closer, the habitual leer upon his face:

"How does my lord stand the fatigue of his travel? I trust that he has not been greatly inconvenienced by our rude accommodations."

I answered calmly, having my own reasons for not angering the man; perhaps he knew something of the plan to detain me here, and who stood behind it.



"Not greatly fatigued," I said, "and yet tired. Come inside and have a glass of the wondrous wine of the Count."

The pale eye lit up, his tongue protruded from his lips, as I have seen a dog's at the sight of a bone, and he glanced hastily around him. Only a few men were in sight, busy at work around the barrack.

Coming nearer he spoke in a low voice: "I will take one glass with thee, noble sir; only one glass, to celebrate thy safe arrival."

"Come into the house, then," I said. Retracing my steps to the room which I had just left, I threw myself upon one of the divans, motioning him to take the one opposite.

He did so, at the same time catching up the bottle of wine from the table and looking at the seal. A smile broke over his face, as he saw the rich amber fluid.

"The wine of the King of Spain!" he cried. "How camest thou by this?"

"The Count opened it," I answered. "Drink!" And taking the bottle from his unwilling hands, I poured out a brimming glass.

Catching it up, he put it to his lips; then held out the empty glass to me.

"Wine!" he cried, "that warms the cockles of the heart as old age creeps on; that turns life's cheerless existence into gold. Wine, the curse of youth; the friend of middle life; the staff of old age—the great alchemist that turns the dull, gray hours into sunshine. Ah, I drink to him who first discovered wine!" And he drained the second goblet, though somewhat slower than the first, as if to taste each drop of the precious fluid.

Upon finishing this glass, a thought seemed to strike him, and he held up the golden goblet to the light; for while we sat, the same noiseless servant lit the candles that stood in the golden candelabras which hung upon the walls, and the great room was bathed in a flood of light.

"Ah! this goblet," the priest resumed, "well do I remember it; taken by the impious son of Holy Church from the Cathedral at Cartagena. I implored, but my anguish availed nothing." And the great tears rolled down the fat

cheeks of the rascal, whose face was fast settling into the cunning of intoxication.

The two great goblets he had drunk in rapid succession—and I surmised that he had been celebrating before now the safe return of the vessel—had almost overcome him. Although his head was like a stone, from constant, excessive drink, yet even a stone can be worn away by continual dripping.

His eye rested on my goblet which I had not filled, for I needed a clear head to pump the rascal. Suspicion struggled for a moment upon his face.

"Why dost thou not drink?" he said. "It is nectar for gods and men."

"Thou forgettest," I replied, "that I have already drunk with DeNortier, and my head will stand no more at present."

Suspicion died out of his eyes, and in its place there appeared a look of gentle merriment.

"Ah! you boys! You boys!" he chuckled. "Wait until thou hast reached my years; then thy head will be stronger; thou wilt learn wisdom." Solemnly shaking his head, he poured another brimming goblet and slowly drank it down.

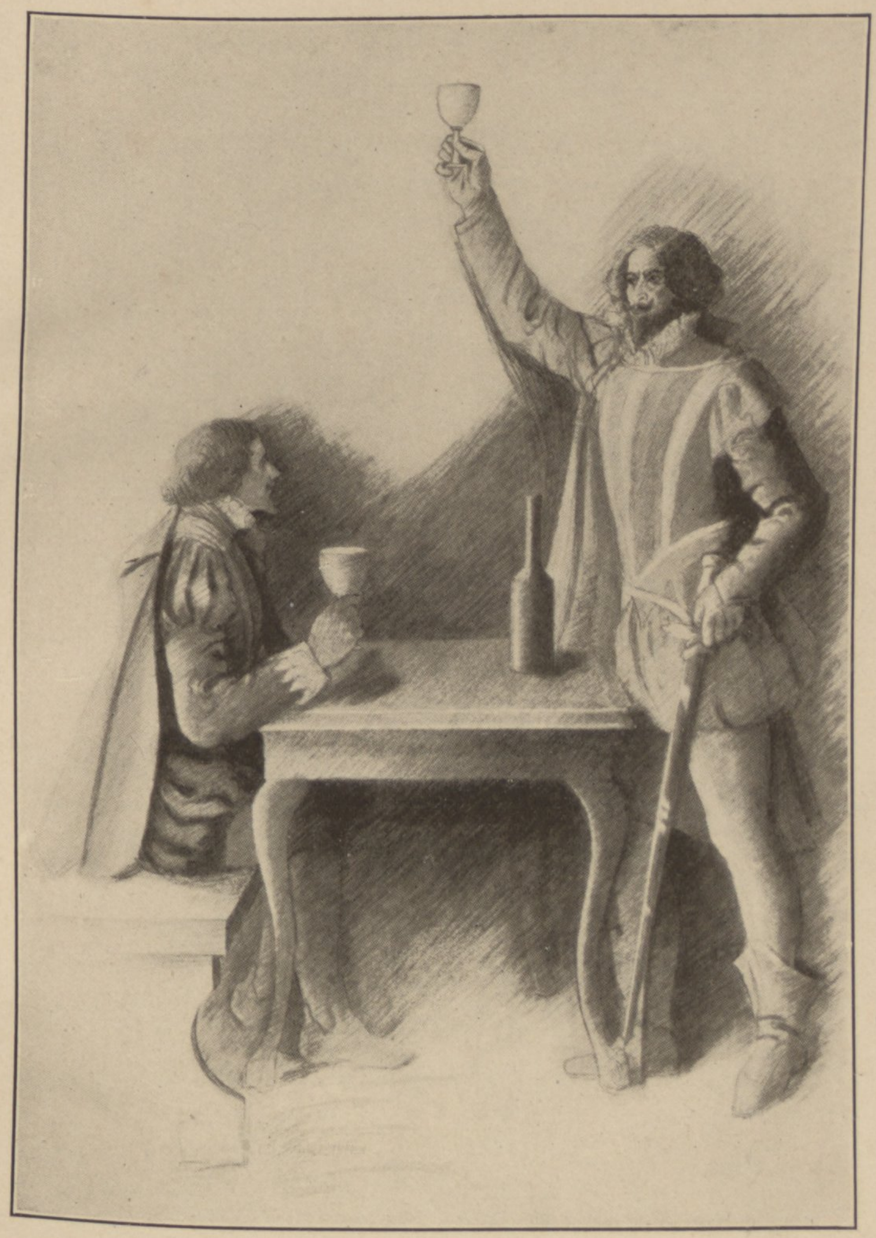
"Such trinkets as these," he went on, still holding the massive goblet in his hand, "should belong to the faithful servants of Mother Church, to reward them for their constant prayer and vigil," and he fetched a great sigh, that caused the very candles on the wall to flare. "See the carving upon the sides of the goblet—a miter and robe. Who knows that I may not wear the miter?" His face brightened at the thought, and he looked at me inquiringly, a drunken smile upon his face.

"A miter would surely become so pious a man," I said, "who spends his days and nights in vigil and fastings."

His head had fallen to one side; his red cheeks shone in the candlelight; the bald pate; the hair white around the edges; his cassock ruffled and disheveled—surely he was a sight to make the gods weep.

I judged that the moment was ripe to broach the subject. I looked cautiously around—not a soul was in sight but the drunken priest. I leaned forward.

"Why not?" I said. "Why not? My uncle, thou knowest, is an Archbishop, a few words spoken in his



"Her Royal Majesty, the Queen of England"

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ear by one whom he loves, and presto—Francis, Bishop of the Holy Catholic Church!"

I leaned back and watched the effect of this announcement upon him. A look of avarice replaced that of drunken wisdom, and bending, he placed his head upon his hands, looking up at me. His eyes swam with the liquor he had drunk. I saw plainly that he was hesitating. He sat thus for a moment; then looking at me broke the silence:

"Sayest thou so? Would I had known this before; rather had I burnt my right hand to the stump, than to have helped to bring thee here," and he broke into sobs, the tears running between his fingers and mingling with the little puddle of wine upon the table. "My last chance gone," he gurgled, "gone!—gone!"

"No," I continued, still watching narrowly his face, "thou hast only to say one word, and the place is thine."

"What?" he cried, looking up, a smile swiftly replacing the tears. "But no; promises are easy to make, hard to keep. How do I know that thou canst fulfill that which thou dost now promise?"

I hesitated; the time had come for me to play my last card. Months before, I had found one night on the streets of London a ring, large, peculiar, strange, with a miter carved upon the soft gold. I had carried it to a jeweler, thinking that I might possibly find the owner. He, being a Catholic, and high in the church councils, had told me that it was a ring of state of some bishop; whose he did not know. I had kept the ring, not finding the owner, and now drew it from my finger, where I had worn it, holding it out to Father Francis.

He took it in his fingers, and gazed at it. A look of amazement came over his face, and he looked up, the ring still in his hand.

"What is it that thou wouldst ask? I will answer it," he said, bending nearer to me, our heads almost meeting over the table, his flushed face touching mine.

"Who is it that is at the bottom of this plan to kidnap and detain me here?" I asked.

He would have answered—a moment of hesitation—he opened his mouth, and I bent forward eagerly to catch the answer.

Suddenly a look of horror came over his face; he was gazing up, the expression upon his countenance such as I have seen in the eyes of a bird, charmed by the baleful gaze of a snake.

The voice of DeNortier at my elbow broke the silence. "My dear sir, I object to thy asking such pointed questions," he said.

I arose to my feet, and turned around. DeNortier, sober now, stood near me, a look of almost devilish anger upon his face. Near him stood the grim Herrick, sword in hand. They had entered the room just in time to scatter my plans to the four winds—just at the moment when victory was in sight.

"And so thou didst think to wring my plans from my servants," the pirate continued, his face white with rage. "Thou didst try all thy art upon me, and I, unsuspecting, almost fell a victim. Then when thou failed on me, thou attempted to pick from yonder drunken sot the secret of thy detention. This is the work of a gentleman."

"And so is that of a jailer," I replied, angered at the gibe. "It is the work of a gentleman to kidnap a man, struck senseless in the street by one of thy ruffians, and detain him here against his will. I count it no sin to fight the devil with fire," and I drew my sword, and stood on guard.

He drew his sword also, and for a moment I thought that he would cross with me, but he hesitated—then sheathed it.

"Another time, sir," he said. "Believe me, it is only for important reasons, which I cannot explain, that I do not satisfy thee now. Ah!" he said, as I laughed aloud in scorn, "thou dost laugh. It is an old saying and a true one, that 'He laughs best who laughs last.' Have no fears, I will satisfy thee, but the time is not yet ripe. Herrick, take yon drunken sot out of here."

The sailor strode to the door and called. At the sound two natives entered. He motioned to the priest, who had fallen asleep upon the table, and whose stentorian snores shook the very goblets. Picking him up between them, they carried him out of the door.

The Count stood looking at me after the priest had been removed from the room; the anger had died out of his face,



and a look of grim humor had replaced it. Finally he spoke:

"It was a fortunate thing for thee, Sir Thomas, that I came in when I did; a little more, and thy head would have rested on an uneasy pillow.

But I was tired; tired of the enigmas and puzzles; tired of wearying my brain with unfruitful guessing. I cared not whether he laughed or frowned, so I merely inquired whether my room was ready, and made known my wish to retire.

"Certainly," he answered, and touching the silver gong again, he spoke to the native. Then turning to me he said, "José will show thee thy room. Good-night, and pleasant dreams," and with a bow he threw himself upon the great couch.

"Thanks," I answered.

Following the Indian, I was shown up a noble stairway, through the splendid hall into a large room, where my guide left me, after lighting the candle in a great silver stick, the spoil of some cathedral, I doubted not.

As he went out, I heard the key turn in the lock, and I was left alone. I glanced around the room. It was furnished like the one downstairs; was smaller certainly, and had a bed instead of the luxurious couch.

I walked over to the window, through which beamed the splendid tropic moon, and drawing aside the curtain, I saw that the window, the only one in the room, had an iron grating over it. I was fastened in securely, no doubt of that.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE CAVE

I HAD been on the island three months, and as yet had found no clew as to why I was kept there, or who was responsible for my detention.

I was free in a sense. I wandered all around the country, and had visited the native settlement, some five miles from the mansion, as I called DeNortier's palatial home; had tramped over the island, which was about fifteen miles square, and had seen about all that there was to see upon it.

But I had not been able to discover where the adventurer kept the treasure which he took from the vessels that he scuttled. I knew that the galleon on which the Donna DeCarnova had been, carried treasure for the Spanish crown; knew that he had taken many other ships laden with gold.

My life went on much as usual. DeNortier had been gone for two months, but I saw no change in my condition; the servants were at my beck and call, always ready to wait upon me. I spent my days in roaming over the island, my nights in exploring the great house.

Somewhat discouraged I was, as I wended my way homeward this February evening. The air was fresh and balmy, despite the fact that it was winter and the people in England were huddled over the fires, and were wrapped in their great-coats and furs. I had spent the day hunting, and two natives who trotted in front of me carried the spoils of the day, a lordly stag; a third Indian carried my musketoon.

The last three months had been spent profitably in a way; the time had been passed in the open air, and my muscles were like steel. I could spend the whole day in the chase, and at night be fresh and untired. I had also devoted a good deal of my time to learning the language of the Indians, and had gotten such a fair idea of it that I could carry on an intelligible conversation.





But I was low-spirited and downcast. Would I ever see England again—and Margaret? At the thought I groaned aloud, and the sound caused the Indians to look back at me.

Shouting to them to go on, I quickened my footsteps and followed faster. They were rapidly getting out of speaking distance, and breaking into a long, swinging trot, they turned in among some trees, and were lost to my view.

I resumed my train of thought. What did Margaret think had become of me—or did she care? England I would fain see again, but more than England, more than all else, I longed for a sight of her whom I worshiped, as the heathen worship the sun. She was my sun. As the captive longs for a sight of the sun, when shut up for weary months in some deep dungeon far below the prison walls, so I longed for one sight of the Lady Margaret Carroll, and with it I would have been content.

What had become of Steele and the lovely Spanish maiden? Were they safe in Spain, or had the pirate but cozened me with his promise, and were they not now in some prison like my own? If Steele had reached England safely, had he delivered my message to my lady? What would she say to such a greeting as that? These and many other thoughts filled my mind, as I walked briskly on to overtake my carriers.

Descending a steep hillock overgrown with brush and undergrowth, I saw far below me, some one hundred yards away, the mansion, from the windows of which the light streamed down and brightened up the dusk below—for it was beginning to grow dark.

I had almost reached the foot of the hill, when I stopped. The dull murmur of conversation caught my ear, and I looked around me; there was no one in sight. Where could the sound come from? It was near me somewhere. I turned, and retraced my steps a few feet, the voice becoming plainer. Stepping cautiously, for I did not know what I was running into, I peered around.

The noise seemed to come from the ground beneath me. A thick hedge of bushes was at my elbow, and from this the sound proceeded. Softly pushing them aside, I looked behind them. Below me I could see a light; that was where the people were, evidently, and talking in English.

I crawled under the bushes, and found myself in a low cave. Quietly moving forward, I looked down. The soft dirt on which I stood came abruptly to an end, and a sheer fall of fifteen feet was directly beneath me.

Sitting together, facing each other, a candle between them, were Herrick and the old priest, Father Francis. Herrick was talking, and I bent forward to hear what he said.

"Yes, the captain has gone forward to meet him now. They will come back together."

"A curse on them both!" Francis replied. "What do we care whether they come back or not?" and he leaned forward to peer at Herrick; but the pirate's face was inscrutable. He straightened back with a sigh, and looked up to where I lay.

"It is a shame," the priest went on, "to keep so gallant a gentleman here in this hole. If he loves the maid, let him have her, and be hanged to him."

"Thou wilt sing a different tune, when I tell the Count what thou hast said," Herrick answered, and he leaned back calmly against the rock.

"Hell and the furies!" cried the old rogue, his face white with terror. "Thou wouldst not tell what I have said in jest?"

"Why not?" answered the sailor. "I could get a handful of gold for it."

"Herrick," the priest implored, his face ashy with fright, "ask what thou wilt. I will do anything, if thou wilt but keep secret what I have said to thee here, only in jest," and he arose, a look of terror awful to behold upon his face.

"Well, I will keep silent," the pirate answered, seemingly enjoying the fright of his companion, "but only upon one condition, which I will tell thee in a moment. But what said thou awhile ago?—that the Count was half-crazy. Why dost thou say that?"

Francis hesitated; then he answered: "Did I not see him walk the floor in agony only a few days ago, and cry out as if in pain? Would a man in his senses do that, thinkest thou?"

"It may be that he has something upon his mind that thou dost not know of," the sailor replied, his face grim and stolid.



The priest smiled, his wrinkles deepening. "Or perhaps it is more likely this devil of an Englishman that he has upon his hands. A thousand fiends fly away with them both to perdition!" the priest continued, his face flushing with anger. "Betwixt them, I am 'between the devil and the deep blue sea.' The Count swears that he will burn me alive, if I so much as intimate to this fellow what I know about his imprisonment; the Englishman will kill me if I do not tell. Between them I do not know what to do," he finished in a wail of agony.

Herrick still looked at him unmoved. I thought I could even discern, from where I lay, a faint trace of irony about his mouth.

"And thou wouldst have lost thy head," he rejoined, "if we had not come upon thee in the nick of time, one night three months ago."

"What wouldst thou have?" Father Francis cried. "The fool had me fuddled with wine, and offered me a king's ransom. What could I do?"

The seaman shrugged his shoulders. "What matter! It is done. We saved thee—and now what other strange thing hast thou seen the Count do lately? Thou art like a cat, creeping silently about the house, thy paw in the cream of all."

"The Count sighs for some lady love," the priest continued deliberately, eying his companion, to see what effect this announcement would have upon him. "Why, even on the night I tell thee of, did I not hear him call out once, twice, 'Margaret! Margaret!'" and he chuckled to himself in glee at the thought.

I started in my hiding place, and a lump of dirt dislodged itself and rolled down to where the villains sat. They started; Francis sprang to his feet in terror.

"What is that?" he cried, and he peered uneasily up to where I crouched.

His companion kept his seat unmoved.

"Art thou a fool," he said, "to be scared out of thy wits by a clod of dirt falling? Thou art even as if thou hadst seen a ghost," and he laughed at his ally's fright.

The priest resumed his seat, still gazing up to where I lay.

"I fancy Sir Thomas Winchester is after me in every breeze I hear," he muttered, as he reseated himself.

"Calm thy mind," the seaman rejoined. "He is safe at his supper long ere this, dreaming over the king's wine," and he grinned.

"What foolishness is this? The Count yearning for some fair lady! Dost thou take me for a schoolboy, that I should believe this? Did he pine for some maid, he would bestir himself and take her; quietly, if possible—if not, then by force. Faith! thou little knowest him, if thou thinkest he would pine over any maiden."

"All the same, comrade, I saw him wring his hands, with my own eyes, but three short months ago, and cry out, as I have told thee, the name Margaret. Who could this Margaret be, if not a lady?"

All this time I was craning my neck to catch every word that was uttered, my mind in a tumult. Why did the Count cry Margaret? There was but one Margaret—pure, innocent, sweet. As soon would I have expected a worm to raise his eyes to the far-distant stars, as that this blood-stained villain should raise his evil eyes to her—so far above him.

And yet would this not explain my detention? Perhaps the pirate expected to lure Margaret from her home, and bring her here to torture me with the sight of her in his arms, before he should make away with me.

Yes, it was like him. He would exult in such exquisite anguish as this, and at the thought I ground my teeth together, and felt for the hilt of my sword. Happen what might, this should not come to pass. Rather would I, with one swift blow, put an end to her misery, and fall upon my own sword, than to witness such a scene as this—death would be a boon beside it.

Perhaps DeNortier was even now returning with her on his ship, that evil smile upon his face as he thought of my anguish and his triumph. He had been gone three months; and I had heard one of the men say only the day before, that the Count would return now almost any time.

I bent forward again; they had resumed their conversation.

"And now," said Herrick, "I will tell the price of my



silence. Answer the question that I ask, and the grave shall be no more silent than I; refuse, and I will go to DeNortier immediately upon his arrival, and tell him what thou hast said to me. Thou hast thy choice," and he looked carelessly at the other, as though he would not give a farthing which course he pursued.

Father Francis was moistening his white lips with his tongue. "Thou knowest I must answer," he said sullenly. "Why trifle with me? What is thy question?"

"Who is it behind this plot to keep Sir Thomas Winchester here?" Herrick asked quietly, and leaning back, he gazed up at the wall of the cave above him.

His companion was trembling with fear. "'Tis as much as my life is worth to tell thee!" he cried excitedly. "I durst not! Anything but this—anything! I implore thee to ask me some other question. Herrick, I have been thy friend; have stood by thee through thick and thin, when others would have forsaken and left thee to thy fate. For God's sake! ask not this of me. Dost thou remember Gromas? Did I not save thy life there, when the very breath of thy body hung by but a thread, and I could have slain thee with a word? For the sake of this spare me!" And with clasped hands he looked at the other.

"It is as much as thy life is worth not to tell me," boldly answered the adventurer. "Rememberest thou the tender mercies of our captain—the Indian burned alive at the stake; the mutineer crucified; the slave branded with red-hot irons; the——?"

"Hush!" cried the poor priest, his eyes almost starting from their sockets. "Thou makest my very blood run cold. Lean forward, and I will whisper it in thy ear—the very walls have ears in this place."

Herrick leaned forward, his eyes sparkling. The priest bent over to whisper to him. In my eagerness to hear, I leaned forward further—further over the edge of the ledge, and Dame Fortune, with a twist of her wheel, turned the propitious fates aside. For even as I bent forward, my ears strained to catch the slightest whisper, the soft earth under me gave way, and in a perfect avalanche of dirt, shrubbery, and rocks, I rolled down into the camp of my enemies.

With a yell—shrill, loud, and piercing, which rang through

the cave like the blast of a trumpet, the priest sprang up. With one spring like a wild goat, he was upon the ledge from which only one short moment ago I had fallen. I heard him tear through the bushes, and run down the hill outside, as though the furies were after him. The sound died away in the distance—he was gone.

But the other rogue was of sterner mold. With an oath, he whipped out his cutlass, and was upon me as I was rising from the ground. Well it was that I had on my light steel breastplate, for the blade, coming viciously down, struck full upon it, and glanced off harmlessly, or I would not have been here to tell the tale. In an instant I had drawn my sword and was on guard.

"I have against thee a goodly account to settle, Master Herrick," I said. "The night wanes, and we must to business."

"Aye," he cried, "I will rid the world of one rascal," and he pressed upon me, thrusting, cutting, striking with such fury that, had my blade not been a good one, it would have broken sheer off, from the very force of the blows.

I let him come on, contenting myself with parrying his thrusts, for by and by I knew that he would exhaust himself, and then I would force from him the secret of my imprisonment; for the priest had whispered it into his ear before I had rolled down upon them.

Of Father Francis I had no fear. He would not bring help to his comrade. No, I knew him too well to think that he would fail to protect himself. It was to his interest that Herrick should be silenced, now that he knew so much, and he was too shrewd not to know what was best for his own interest.

So I held my own, and let him exhaust himself with his fruitless efforts. Back he came upon me, striking down blow after blow with his blade, any one of which, had it gone home, would have split me like a herring. I could have run him through at any moment, for he left his whole breast exposed in his insane fury; but I merely waited, calmly, coolly meeting every thrust, parrying every cut with a wrist of steel.

Five minutes passed, and the smile which at first had been upon his face died away. The great beads of sweat began



to gather upon his forehead, as he saw his every trick and maneuver met easily, without an effort; and how fresh I was, and knew that he was rapidly exhausting himself.

Another little trick he tried, but I read what was coming in his eyes, even before he thrust, and met him, parried his blade, and thrusting back, laid open his cheek—the first time that I had drawn blood.

Then slowly I began to advance towards him, thrusting faster, faster, faster—surrounding him with a flaming wall of steel, which, try as he might, he could not penetrate. Backwards—backwards I pressed him.

It was a grim, weird scene. The white, bare walls of the cave lit up by the gleam of one little candle; the shadows coming and going upon the sides, as the air from above flared the wick of the candle. Now we were in the light; now in darkness.

The wind was rising outside; already it wailed and moaned, like the souls of the lost. There was not a sound to break the stillness that reigned throughout the cave, save only that—for we had fought in grim silence—only the sound of our feet upon the stones, as we moved and turned hither and thither, and the quick panting of our hot breath.

There, within the walls of the cavern, we fought out the last hard battle, that sooner or later, in some guise or other, comes to all of mortal flesh; that grim, silent struggle in darkness and agony, and in that despair that wrings the heart, as we run the last race, with Life in the balance, and the specter, Death, holding in his fleshless hand the scales.

I could feel his presence that night, as he stalked about us, his garments almost touching us; as we struggled to and fro—shut off from the world, with only the feeble rays of one little candle. Life seemed far away and unreal; Death seemed near and omnipresent.

Strange thoughts crossed my mind, as I cut and thrust at the grim pirate. I recalled how my mother had looked, twenty years ago, as she lay in state in the great hall at Richmond Castle. My years seemed to fall from me as a mantle, and I was again the little boy, innocent and fresh, as, holding my nurse's hand, I looked down upon the cold, waxen features of one whom I had known and loved.

I remembered the thrill of fear—or was it only dread of

the unknown?—that filled my mind, as I looked upon the change that had been wrought by the hand of the great destroyer. The calm, serene features, lovely with a beauty not of earth; with that look of majesty which death brings to the face of mortals, as they lie wrapped in the embrace of the last foe.

It is as if he would erase the lines and wrinkles that sorrow and care had wrought—which the toil and pain of this cold sphere had imprinted upon that patient face—and instead would imprint upon its calm lineaments that great mystery which none but the immortal can know.

It all came back to me, and I could remember how I had turned away in the throes of my first real grief. Ah! many since then had old "Time" brought me, but none so bitter as the first.

Strange thoughts to think, as I pressed the sea rover back nearer the wall.

Ah! I had him—but he sprang nimbly aside, and my blade passed under his arm.

I had forgotten my scheme to spare his life; the blood thirst was upon me; the blood of the fighting Richmonds was up. Angered by the long fight, angered at myself that I had not slain him when I had a chance, I pressed him harder and harder, with no thought but to run him through.

And now his back was against the wall; he could retreat no further. He turned in despair, as I have seen some hunted thing do when driven to its lair; as I have seen some lone wolf when brought to bay by the hunters, and hope has fled, determined to strike one last blow, and then if need be, to go down with its face to its foes, and its teeth clinched in the throat of some good hound.

The adventurer sprang at me in such fury that I was compelled to give back a pace or two, or be cut to pieces. But his strength was gone; he was exhausted—the end had come.

I know not at that last moment, whether I would have spared his life—I cannot tell; but Fate, who ever stands patiently at our side, awaiting a favorable opportunity to interfere, took the matter out of my hands. For even as I drew back to end the matter by one home thrust, my feet slipped upon the stone and I stumbled.



With a cry, he thrust full at my breast, a blow that would have finished me; but he was too much exhausted to strike true. The blade slipped between my arm and my shoulder, and caught for an instant—it was enough. Recovering myself, I made one good lunge. He had on no armor, and the blade striking him full in the breast, right above the heart, passed entirely through his body and stood out a foot behind his back.

With a shout, he threw up his hands and dropped like a log, the force of the fall wrenching the blade from his body. I stood holding the dripping sword in my hand, and looked down at him, as he lay upon the floor. A slight shudder passed over his body; one deep, long sigh came from his lips—and then he lay motionless.

That figure, which but a short moment before had been animated with hatred and thirst for my life, was now powerless to help or hurt me. Only a moment ago he had been a man, with a man's soul; had loved and sorrowed; had rejoiced and mourned; had toiled and striven—now he was but a lump of senseless clay. He had fought a good fight; he had his faults, but he was a man. Peace to his ashes!

Picking up what remained of the candle from the floor, I walked back further into the cave. It seemed to me to be the work of nature; and at the further end a long, dark passageway led deeper into the earth.

I hesitated a moment, as I peered into it. Then I listened, but could hear nothing, so I plunged boldly into the tunnel, the candle in my left hand, my drawn sword before me in my right, its red blade still dripping. Stopping I wiped the blood off upon my kerchief, and passed on down the narrow way.

Where it led I did not know; nor with what secret traps it was filled. It might be that I would learn the mystery of my captivity at the end; it might be that I would meet with such a fate as Herrick.

Probably this tunnel led to some place where the pirates gathered to discuss the plans for their expeditions and forays; or it was possible that DeNortier had his treasure concealed somewhere within its dark depths, and even now these two men whom I had seen had been sent to watch it.

I must be careful, or I would walk full into the pirates' arms.

I had walked perhaps a hundred feet, when I stopped. Two paths diverged here—one to the right, the other to the left; both yawned dark, gloomy, and mysterious before me. I had long since passed out of the natural part of the cave, and this was plainly the work of man, for I could see upon its sides the mark of the pick and shovel.

Both ways looked alike to me. Hesitating a moment, I drew a coin from my pocket. If the Queen's head fell uppermost, I would go to the right; if the reverse, to the left. I tossed the coin into the air and bent over it as it fell. It had fallen upon its face, and turning to the left, I passed on down the path about one hundred and fifty feet more.

I stopped again. Before me, shining down from the top of the rock overhead, a few yards away, there gleamed a light. Moving cautiously forward, I blew out my candle, and in a moment came upon a flight of stone steps. Looking up, I could see that what had appeared to me to be a light was simply an opening in the wall above me, which led into a lighted room.

Ascending the steps, I stood in the bed-chamber of DeNortier. I had never been in it before. It was the only room in the house, so far as I knew, that I had never entered; but the door was always fastened when I tried it, and I could find no key that would fit the lock.

Heavy tapestry lined the walls, and as I stood in the room I was concealed from view by the embroidered arras, which hung directly in front of the trap-door, hiding it from the sight of the occupants of the chamber.

The floor was of polished wood, as was the rest of the house, and bending down I closed the aperture through which I had come, noting as I did so how cunningly it fitted into the wood, so as to be indiscernible to the eye.

A thought struck me. I had best leave the trap-door ajar; it might be that those who had left it open might wish to go through it again. It would arouse suspicion were it found closed. Bending down I endeavored to again open the door, but in vain. It was evidently worked by some secret spring, and desisting from the vain attempt, I peered through the hangings into the brilliantly lighted room.



The same golden candelabra suspended from the wall; the same heavy, elegant furniture and luxurious couches; the same soft rugs and skins upon the floors; even the identical odor of flowers, tropical and sweet-scented.

Upon a little table stood a bottle of that same delicious nectar that I had drunk before; even the very golden goblets were there, from which DeNortier and I, and also Father Francis, had sipped the amber juice.

I had not tasted such wine as that since the fat priest had drunk with me, that night which had proved so near his undoing. DeNortier had sailed the next day, where, I did not know; the burly Francis I had not seen since, until this evening in the cave; only Herrick, the grim, with a few hardy ruffians, had remained behind.

I had already stepped into the room, thinking to let myself out of the door and into the great hall, when the soft thud of approaching footsteps caused me to dodge back behind the friendly tapestry. A key grated in the lock; the door swung open, and I heard the tread of footsteps across the threshold.

The key turned again, and the voice of DeNortier broke the silence. "Come, my dear Lord, thou art safe here. Be seated, pray."

The noise of some heavy article being pushed over the floor, and I could hear them throw themselves upon the couches.

Only one man with the Count, whom, I did not know. I had only heard him growl out a brief "Thank thee," as he took the proffered seat. A man of rank, too, evidently, for DeNortier had said, "My Lord." What did a noble in this part of the world? English, too, by his voice. I had as soon expected to see an elephant here as an English lord.

The stranger spoke. "Where is our prisoner?" he said in a low, clear voice. "I care not to meet him during my brief stay here."

Where had I heard that voice before? It sounded as familiar to me as my own. In London, surely, but I could not for my life remember whose it was. Could I but peer out from my hiding-place without detection, I would soon find out who the visitor was.

Carefully, very carefully, I drew aside a fold of the

arras and looked out. There facing me, and looking down at DeNortier, who sat opposite, a grin of pleasure upon his face, sat the Viscount James Henry Hampden. The same piercing gray eye, dark brown hair and pointed beard; the same nose and broad, wide mouth; the same cold, hard expression upon his face. As though he were at Lady Wiltshire's ball, instead of upon a wild island in the unknown Western seas, he sat there, gay and careless.

So this was the explanation that I had sought so long. He should pay dearly for this deed. I had a heavy reckoning against him, but it could wait for a while. Perhaps I would learn something of interest to me to-night.

Luckily this part of the room (I was in the furthest corner) was in the shadow, for the tapestry hung some six or eight inches from the wall, and I could move stealthily behind it without being seen from the room.

But the Count was speaking. "No fear of that, my Lord. I inquired from one of the servants as I came in, and he informed me that our prisoner had not returned from a long hunt. He is probably sleeping in the hut of some native to-night. Have no fear—he cannot hear of thy arrival."

And now he proceeded to fill one of the golden goblets with wine; pushing it toward Hampden, and filling another for himself, he said, "Let us drink a toast in this rare old wine. What shall it be? I await thy pleasure," and he rose to his feet and bowed.

The Viscount hesitated; for a moment he sat as if undecided. But the wine he had drunk before had mounted to his head, and he too arose to his feet and extended his glass.

"I give thee a toast!" he cried, his colorless cheek warming. "One for gods and men! Drink with me to the fairest of earth's mortals, as divinely beautiful and as innocent as an angel; one upon whose slightest word all London hangs—to the Lady Margaret Carroll!" And he drained the great golden goblet in a draught.

"The Lady Margaret Carroll!" rejoined the sea rover, lifting the goblet to his lips. "May she be the bride of the bravest gallant!" and he too drained his cup to the dregs.

The Viscount still stood staring at him as the Count finished his cup and set it upon the table. "Yes," said he finally, with a frown, "may the bravest man win her." And following the example of DeNortier, he resumed his reclining position upon the couch.



"And now, my Lord," the adventurer continued, "how long since is it that thy noble uncle died, and thou didst come into the possession of the title and estate?"

"Only a bare two months ago," answered Hampden, with a growl. "I thought the old fool would never die. He hung on to the estates and title as though he thought that he could carry them in his doublet with him, when he passed out of this world. I had thought that I would finally have to end his sufferings with my dagger, but he at last saved me that trouble. The Saints be praised!"

With a devout sigh at the thought of such sin and wickedness, he put to his lips the goblet that the Count had refilled, and drank off half of its contents with a gulp. Then putting it down once more on the table, he continued:

"I had been here long since had it not been for that; but from day to day I kept waiting for the old Lord to die. Each day we thought would be his last, but he held on for months," and looking up at the golden candelabra, he sighed again.

"And what effect had the titles and estates upon thy lady love?" asked DeNortier, with a slight smile. "Surely, Lord Dunraven, the possessor of an ancient title and lordly estates, would be a fit mate for any lady, barring none. Even the Queen would not stoop did she unite her fate with so noble a line."

Lord Dunraven frowned blackly. "It is true many a titled lady would be proud to be Lady Dunraven, wife of one of the greatest noblemen of England, but the foolish girl is as obstinate as a donkey. She would have none of it; told me she would be my friend ever, but I could never hope for more. The foul fiend fly away with such a friend!" he cried, his anger, stimulated by the rich wine, arising at the thought.

"I believe that she loves this Sir Thomas Winchester, so I had thee to bring him here."

My heart gave a great bound of joy as I heard this. Was it possible that Lady Margaret Carroll, courted and ad-

mired, with the choice of England's nobility before her, herself the bearer of a proud name, and with great estates, did she—could she—love and remember a gentleman spurned by his own family, penniless, an outcast from his home? Was she true to me, or was it only maidenly coyness, but used to heat my lord's passion, that she repulsed him thus?

"If I cannot win, he shall not!" and rising to his feet, Dunraven began to pace the floor.

The pirate's face wore a serious air, and fingering the goblet before him, he spoke to Lord Dunraven, who was tramping restlessly to and fro.

"If thou fearest that, my Lord, why not say the word? A dagger in the back, and thy rival would be out of thy way forever."

"No," Dunraven said, stopping for a moment his aimless walk. "No; I reserve him for a more exquisite torture than that; he would not suffer—a blow, and he would be out of his misery. But to see her in my arms, his successful rival, to have her cry to him for aid, and he bound helpless, unable to do aught but writhe in impotent agony—agony which wrings the soul—ah, my friend! that would be revenge indeed, such as I long for. Watch over him carefully. I would not have him come to harm for an earl's ransom. Curse him! How I hate him! When I can bring him to such a fate as this I shall be content, and not until then will I rest."

"And what are thy plans?" DeNortier asked, his hands still fingering listlessly the massive goblet.

The other looked at him keenly with his cold gray eye. "Can I trust thee?" he asked suspiciously.

The adventurer laughed sardonically. "Thou hast trusted me thus far," he answered. "Have I played thee false in aught that thou askest me this?"

"Forgive me," replied the Viscount. "Forgive me—but there hangs so much at stake that I fear to trust myself. Listen, and thou shalt learn my plans and purpose," and drawing up a heavy chair to the table, he seated himself.

Filling up another goblet of wine, and drinking it down as though it were a thimbleful, he resumed:

"The lady will not yield to me. I will give her but one more chance to freely and of her own will become my



bride. If she still refuses to consent, then," a frown, dark and ominous, passed over his face, "I will by some ruse obtain possession of her and by force carry her on board one of my ships. Then, ho for Eldorado!"

"Yes," he said, noticing the look of astonishment upon the Spaniard's face, "Sir Thomas Winchester shall behold her my bride. When he has suffered enough to satisfy me, I will put him out of the way. We will stay here until my lady becomes reconciled,-and then we will sail back to England and home," and his eyes, so cold and gray, lighted up with delight and pleasure as he surveyed the face of the other.

His companion did not at once speak, but sat in silence. "And all this," he finally said musingly—"all this toil and blood and sweat for one woman, when a score as beautiful stand at thy elbow. Truly did some wise man say, 'What fools we mortals be.'"

"Ah!" answered Dunraven, rising from his chair, "thou hast not seen the Lady Margaret Carroll. Didst thou but lay eyes upon her, thou wouldst wonder no longer, for she is the daintiest slip of mortality that ever graced this cold gray earth. Man, half London is wild over her!"

"It may be so," DeNortier replied, yawning behind his hand. "I would, for my part, prefer some less lovely maid who would be won more easily, and without all this labor."

"*Tendit ad astra!*" cried my lord. Then bending across the table, "Thou shouldst see this lady. Did I not fear that she would entangle that black heart of thine in her golden tresses, I would take thee in disguise with me to London, and show thee this wondrous beauty."

"No fear of that," rejoined DeNortier, a grim smile of amusement upon his countenance. "Would the lady prefer a worn old warrior, his neck resting uneasily upon his shoulders, to a noble of England, handsome, rich, accomplished?" and he drummed his fingers restlessly upon the table, his legs sprawled out before him.

"Thou flatterest me, my friend, and underratest thyself. The lady would look twice before she refused thee." And Dunraven looked at his companion.

Truly they were a striking pair as they sat together beneath the candlelight, and thou couldst have searched

Europe, and not have found their match for comeliness and martial bearing. Dunraven, with his broad shoulders, his striking face, his proud pose, dark brown hair and beard; the Spaniard, more slender, but quicker, more agile, his jet-black hair and beard gleaming like the wing of a crow in the light.

They were a dangerous couple. DeNortier was the leopard, restless, cunning, lurking ready to spring at a moment's warning—not so big as his bulky companion, but with muscles of steel; Dunraven, bigger, heavier, clumsier, but more powerful—the bear. Woe to the creature that he locked in his iron arms; he would crush the life from him, even as a vise.

They both now sat silent and motionless, wrapped in their own thoughts, neither breaking the deep silence that reigned in the room.

Quick steps sounded upon the floor outside. A loud rap upon the door, and then another.

"What is it?" DeNortier cried, springing to his feet and catching up his sword, which lay upon the floor beside him.

"The sentry swears that he saw the gleam of the moonlight upon a sail, captain," a gruff voice answered.

"The fiends!" cried the adventurer. Then turning to Dunraven, who had risen to his feet, he whispered rapidly, "Down the stairs into the passageway—quick! Wait for me there; I will join thee as soon as I can," and he stepped forward to unbolt the door.

Hampden dashed behind the tapestry. "Where?" he cried. "What passageway?" and he looked at the floor about him.

"I forgot," DeNortier answered, "that thou dost not know the secret."

Crossing the room and pushing aside the tapestry, he knelt a moment upon the floor and pressed his hand against it. There was a quick click, and slowly the trap door rose. Hampden sprang through it. I held my breath, my unsheathed sword in hand. Surely they must see me; but no, they were too much engaged.

DeNortier sprang up as soon as the trap door yawned open, and rushing over to the door, unlocked and opened



it. It slammed to behind him, and he ran down the hall, the sailor following.

In an instant I was through the opening beside me, sword in hand. My enemy was in my grasp. We would fight out the quarrel below, with none but the dead to interrupt us. One of us would come out perhaps; he would have the field to himself; however it ended, the matter would be settled. If my lord fell, I would have the ground to myself; if he triumphed, it would not disturb me; if I fell beneath his sword, it could not matter to the dead.

At the sound of my footsteps, he, not knowing who it was that followed, quickened his own. The dim light through the trap door died out, and we were treading in total darkness. Guided by the sound of his feet, I ran on after him. I had no wish to fight under DeNortier's chamber; some one might hear and interrupt us. I would wait until we got further on into the cavern, where we would be undisturbed.

Several minutes passed; I judged that we were out of hearing, and raising my voice shouted: "Why hurry, my Lord? The night is young yet, and we have much to settle between us. Wait for me but a moment, and I will join thee."

I heard him stop in the darkness.

"Ha!" he said, "speak of the devil and we hear his wings. So that was thou who ran down after me into this black hole; thou must have been behind the arras and have heard all that I said. Well, no matter, dead men tell no tales," and he laughed, a ring of menace sounding in it.

I thrust out in the darkness before me with my sword; he could not far far away, by the sound of his voice—but my blade only struck against the wall, the steel ringing as though struck by a hammer. I heard his footsteps move on down the tunnel.

"Stop!" I cried, "I have long wished to settle several small matters with thee. If thou wilt but wait for me an instant, we will go out into the moonlight, and there we will cross blades and fight out our difference."

"Why should I fight thee?" he answered, his voice coming from in front of me. "The game is mine; did I wish thee knifed, a dozen men stand ready to do it at my com-

mand. Why should I risk my life? I do not wish to kill thee, for I reserve thee for a more delicious fate," and his laugh, low and smothered, floated back to me.

"Dog!" I cried, my anger getting the best of me—anger at the taunt—anger that my sword could not reach him. "Boast not, 'there be many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.' I may not win my lady but thou at least shalt not have her. Rather would I see her dead than meet such a fate."

"When thou beholdest her resting peacefully upon my breast, my arms around her, my lips pressed close to hers, then, and not till then, will I be content. Fear not. Only a few months, and thou wilt behold her mine. Till then—adieu!" and his footsteps moved again. Then silence.

With a curse I rushed on down the dark passageway, prodding with my sword the walls, cutting the darkness in front of me wildly. Like a madman I dashed on until, cracking my head upon the projecting stone, I staggered back, fell at full length upon the floor, and so was checked in my mad career.

Getting on my feet again, I called. No answer. "Dunraven!" I cried, "Where art thou?" But only the echo of my own voice answered me. He was gone, as though the darkness had swallowed him up to protect him from my wrath. Truly the devil had taken good care of his own.

I resumed my way on down the cavern, for a gleam of light had caught my eye, far in front of me. I drew cautiously nearer; it was the moon shining down at the mouth of the cave, which I had entered a few brief hours ago.

Stumbling over the body of Herrick as it lay where he had fallen, I scrambled up the embankment, pushed aside the bushes, and stood once more in the open air. Far below me lay the mansion, its lights shining out into the darkness as though to welcome me back once more to life and hope. Descending the hill, I made my way down to it.

It was midnight when I stood again on the broad veranda between the great white pillars. No one was in sight, and passing into the hallway I ascended the stairs to my own room.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PLOT THICKENS

THE next day after the death of Herrick I set out again for the cavern, determined to find out, if possible, whether Lord Dunraven still lurked in its dark recesses; and also to follow the right-hand tunnel to its termination, for it might be that it led to some place from which I could escape.

I strode up the hill again, and before pushing through the hedge which screened the mouth of the cave, I turned and looked about me. There was no one in sight, and so bending my head, I brushed aside the bushes and entered. Lighting the candle which I had brought with me, I peered around. The body of Herrick was gone; evidently someone had removed it since last night.

I passed rapidly down the passage, until I reached the place where the two paths diverged. I took the one to the right, and with my candle over my head made my way down it. There was nothing unusual about the tunnel, it loomed about me much as had the other. Its sides and floor were of white stone which gleamed in the candlelight.

I had probably gone about two hundred feet when there came a sudden gust of wind which blew my candle out. Now I was at a loss to account for this, as it felt more like an artificial gust than a natural one; more as if someone with a great fan had created a breeze. Fumbling about, I found my flint and steel which I always carried with me, and striking it, I relit my candle and looked around. There was no one in sight, and so pausing an instant, I started on my way again.

I had barely taken a couple of steps when there came a second blast of wind, as sudden and unexpected as the first, and my candle was blown out again, as silently and quickly as it had been before. Exasperated by this recurrence

I angrily struck another light, and as I did so the candle was snatched from my hand, and a low mocking laugh ran through the tunnel; sinister and cold it sounded in my ears, and at the noise I shrank back.

I am not a superstitious man (I have seen too much of the world for that), but the flint and steel as I struck it, had lit up the cave around me for an instant with a flash of light, and it was at that instant that the candle had been caught from me. It had been no human hand that had done this, for I could see distinctly around, and naught had touched my hand; only as I looked had the candle fallen from my fingers.

Again and again I struck the flint and steel, and peered wonderingly about me. There was no trace of the candle anywhere, only the bare, cold walls of the cave could I see, as I stood with white face and shaking hands.

The accents of a voice, stern and low, from I knew not where, fell upon my ears: "Go back! Go back! And if thou wouldst live, come not again to this place."

A sudden shiver passed over me, and my knees knocked together with terror; there was a grandeur and majesty in the tones that I had heard in no earthly language. It was as though I listened to the voice of a god. A sudden dread fell upon my soul as I stood there, and the craven "Fear" which I had never known before in all my life, on the fields of Ireland, or in great London, smote me with his cold hand.

Gone were my manhood and courage now, and I became as some old withered hag, crouched in the chimney by the fire. With a yell I turned and fled down that silent cavern, as though grim Death himself were at my heels. Twice I dashed into the wall in the darkness and fell, screaming at the top of my voice, thinking that the fiends had me for sure; but I was up again in an instant, and with another wild yell had resumed my flight.

My reason had forsaken me for the moment, and I was as though a madman. I fancied I could see white figures, with outstretched hands and glaring eyes, awaiting me at every step. Screaming and yelling I rushed on, and never once did I slacken pace, until in front of me I saw the light streaming through the undergrowth at the entrance.



Dashing up the embankment, I tore through the bushes and out into the open air again, where I cast myself flat upon the ground and sobbed with thankfulness for the sunlight, the calm blue sky above me, and the fresh air beating upon my face.

It must have been a ruse of DeNortier's to frighten me from the cave, fearing that I would discover some of his secrets or perhaps his buried treasure; and if it were a trick, it served his purpose well, for never, from that day to this, have I put foot again in that cavern. Not for a barrel of gold would I tread again its dark recesses and feel that thrill of horror at the sound of that solemn voice. I sometimes now at night awake trembling with fear, thinking I hear once more in my ears those calm, majestic tones, the like of which I have never heard again from the lips of man.

An hour after I had rushed from the cavern I was standing on the porch of the mansion, watching the ocean as it roared and chafed against its sandy prison, as though it were some caged thing striving to be free.

. . . . . .

Two weeks had flown by since I had listened to Lord Dunraven's voice in DeNortier's chamber. Two weeks in which I had waited, my nerves keyed up to the highest pitch, for the next move from my enemies; but no sound came.

My lord I had not seen since that night when he had disappeared in the cavern. It was as though he had vanished forever; but I knew that somewhere behind the scene he was watching and waiting for the time to ripen, so that the curtain could rise for the last scene in the tragedy. DeNortier had said naught to me, though he must have known of Herrick's death, and of the fact that I now had discovered the secret of my captivity. He still came and went as heretofore.

I heard the sound of footsteps behind me and turning I saw one of the Indian attendants, called José.

"What is it, José?" I asked, speaking in his own tongue.

"The Señor wishes to talk with thee," he answered. "Even now he waits in the great room," and so saying he disappeared into the house.

So the next move had come after all. I would be very watchful and silent, and so thinking, I passed into the hall and back to the great room where DeNortier awaited me.

He was seated there in one of the huge chairs, his head buried in his hands, and did not hear me as I entered.

"What is it, Count?" I asked.

I had not seen him in several days, and the change in his appearance startled me; it was so different from his accustomed look.

"Art sick?" I asked, "or what is it that ails thee?"

He answered slowly and lifelessly. "I have even now a throbbing headache. But be seated, there is something of importance that I would speak to thee of."

Seating myself near him, I waited in silence to hear what he would say.

"Thou wilt remember that a few months ago I freed a beautiful Spanish girl at thy request. At that time thou didst tell me that I might do with thee what I would, if I but freed the maid. Is this not true?"

"It is true," I answered. "But at the same time I told thee that I would do nothing unworthy of an English gentleman. Thou dost remember that too?"

"Distinctly," he replied. "What I now ask of thee is nothing that would stain the honor of even the most scrupulous. 'Tis but a simple thing. If thou wilt sign the paper that I shall hand to thee in a moment, then not only wilt thou have kept thy promise to me, but in addition thou shalt be set at liberty, with the sum of five hundred pounds to speed thee on thy way. Come, 'tis a generous offer, and one worthy of thy acceptance."

"Where is the paper?" I asked. "Let me but see that, and I will then tell thee in a few moments whether I will sign it or not."

The Count reached his hand within his doublet and drew out a long stiff paper. He looked me full in the eye, and I could see the excitement upon his face, try as he would to conceal it.

"Do nothing rash," he said in a hurried tone. "Believe me or not, I wish thee well, and would grieve to see thee come to harm. Be cool, and weigh well what thou doest; for after thou hast once chosen, thy decision cannot be revoked. On one side liberty, on the other side imprisonment and perhaps death," and he coughed dryly behind his hand. "Choose which thou wouldst have," and he extended the paper to me.



I took it in my hand and breaking the seal, held it up to the candlelight. What paper could it be, that would be worth such a price as this?

"This indenture made and entered into this the twenty-fifth day of February, 1587, A.D. and in the reign of our Sovereign Queen——" I glanced on further down. "Between Thomas Winchester, Kt., of the City of London, England, party of the first part, and James Henry Hampden, Lord Dunraven, of the city and county aforesaid, party of the second part. Witnesseth: that for, and in consideration of the sum of five hundred pounds to me in hand paid——"

A long string of legal phrases followed, all jargon, and without meaning to me.

". . . Said party of the first part, doth hereby relinquish, release, assign and transfer all the right, title, interest or pretension, which he may have or possess, to and in the hand of the Lady Margaret Carroll, of Riverdale, England. And the said Thomas Winchester, Kt., doth hereby promise and bind himself not to have any communication by any means whatsoever with the said Lady Margaret Carroll, and doth further bind himself not to set foot in England for the space of fifty years from the date hereinbefore set out; and to reside abroad during the whole of that time."

I had seen enough. Tearing the document into a thousand fragments, I scattered them to the four winds, before the astonished Spaniard could rise from his chair.

Then turning to him, my voice hoarse with anger, I cried:

"And thou hast the hardihood to present such a paper as this to me to sign? On guard and defend thyself," and drawing my blade, I stood waiting for him to rise.

But the Count did not move from his seat nor turn even so much as an eyelash.

"Strike if thou wilt," he replied calmly. "I will not defend myself," and he sat still and motionless where he was.

I could not murder him in cold blood, and he would not budge to raise a finger in his own behalf. Sheathing my sword I leaned over the table, and speaking slowly and distinctly, my face almost touching his own, I said:

"Go back and tell thy master that I spurn his offer as I would himself, were he not too much of a coward to be here in person, instead of sending thee as a tool in his place." And turning on my heel, without so much as another look at him, I strode away and out of the house.

A storm was brewing upon the sea. Already the dark, heavy clouds hung over us, and a calm, deep, ominous silence seemed to brood over earth and sky, as though the storm god gathered every nerve and sinew, and crouching low, poised himself for one great effort that would carry terror into the hearts of men.

Passing down the steps of the house, I made my way out to the sea. My mind was in a chaos of thoughts and doubts, and I longed for the storm and struggle of the tempest.

The pale twinkling stars above me were vanishing one by one behind the storm clouds; cold and silent they looked down on me from their great heights, as they had gazed upon so many of the storm-tossed children of men. Generations and ages had passed away since they had seen the first mortal upon the earth. What mattered it to them that poor sin-cursed humanity lived and died; had their loves and hates; their friends and foes; their good days and their bad ones; lived their little span, and then crept away to make room for others who would take their places.

A sense of my own littleness crossed my mind. Out here with nature, stripped of all the gloss and glitter of civilization; alone, without that sense of security which comes to us when we are huddled with our fellows; a single atom upon the troubled sea of life—my own perplexities seemed to dwindle, and a feeling of peace swept over my care-worn spirit.

The storm was about to burst; great white-capped billows surged up, like the serried ranks of the foe ready to charge. The roar deepened and increased to a perfect thunder which seemed to shake the very earth. The sea lashed and whipped itself into a foaming caldron; the winds howled like the



spirits of the departed; and the great black clouds seemed to almost touch the very sea. A flash of lightning forked, many-tongued, sprang athwart the sky, and a burst of thunder peeled forth like the roar of a score of culverins.

One lone bird, solitary and forsaken, beat forward before the approaching gale. Such was my life I thought, as I watched him struggle against the wind. Why must I ever be the storm petrel, sport for the wind and wave, borne on, ever on, before the tempest, by the resistless force of the blast.

My old friends sat in London to-night with lights and cheer. The old Mermaid Inn rang with song and jest as they passed the cup, and smoked the fragrant weed that had been brought back from the golden Virginia. I could almost hear the hoarse tones of Francis Drake as he spun out some long-winded yarn; could hear the deep-chested laugh of Raleigh; and the yell ring out as Bobby Vane struck up some light-hearted ditty, and the others with a roar joined the chorus.

Theirs was a pleasant, easy way, smooth to the foot, bright with the garlands of flowers and the companionship of their fellows; mine was a solitary, lonely road, rough and stormy, with no friend to help or aid me. I must walk high up above the crowd, walk as best I might, this untrod path until morn. So be it. I would not murmur at what fate held in store for me. Come what might, I would at least play my part with what courage I possessed.

A slight sound seemed to come from the darkness about me. I bent forward and listened. Someone was evidently approaching, making his way toward the mansion. I could hear the quick crunch of the sand under the advancing feet, though the night had grown inky black and I could distinguish no figure in the gloom. Throwing myself flat upon the sand, I waited for the coming traveler.

The sound came nearer and passed where I lay, invisible in the night. Just as it moved swiftly by, there was a blinding flash of lightning, illuminating the darkness with dazzling brilliancy, and throwing into relief the stout form of Father Francis, as with head bent down to avoid the force of the wind, he stood motionless, his back to me, waiting for the crash of the thunder to die away. What

was the priest doing here, at this time of night and in such a gale? It must be something of importance that called him forth, for he loved his own ease too well to sally out in the storm and tempest without good cause.

Like a flash I sprang to my feet, drawing my sword as I did so; and as he stood there motionless, before he could turn, I was upon him. Catching the weapon by the blade, I brought the heavy hilt upon his head, and with a dull thud, he fell to the ground.

Kneeling beside him, I ran my hand over his garments as he lay there. Perhaps he had some paper or message that he was carrying, which would be of use, could I but discover it. Ah! I touched a square oblong package in the folds of his cassock, and running my hand on the inside, I drew it out. They were papers most probably, tied up securely, with a fold of canvass around them. Was there aught else there? I searched thoroughly, but could find nothing further, though I felt over every inch of his robe.

As I straightened myself up the storm broke, and a perfect torrent of rain poured down upon me. Hastily sheathing my sword, I left the priest where he was, and made for the house in a run, the package clutched in my hand. Had it not been for the light that streamed from the windows, I would never have found it in the darkness; but I reached the porch, after a brief dash of a few minutes, the wind tugging and fighting at my heels as if to impede my progress, loath to see me escape from its fury.

Hastily slipping the bundle in my doublet, I stepped upon the veranda and passed into the hall. DeNortier, pale and distraught, was standing in the door, surveying with lusterless eye the storm.

"'Tis an awful gale," he said, on perceiving me. "See the surf," and he pointed out to where the great waves pitched and tossed below us.

"Terrible," I answered. "The wind roars like the culverins of a fleet."

Passing him, I made my way up to my own room. Lighting the candle and fastening the door, I looked around me. All was quiet and silent, and going to the window, I drew the curtain across it. Then seating myself under the light, while



the storm howled and roared outside, I cut the fastenings and opened the package.

Drawing out a paper, I looked at it. It was a brief account of the coming of Hampden to the title and estate of his uncle, written by someone evidently well acquainted with the state of affairs which existed.

But it was of no interest to me, and laying it aside, I picked up the next one. An account of the disappearance of Sir Thomas Winchester. "He had been murdered, most probably by robbers. . . . A great loss to London society. A diligent search has been made for him, but as yet without avail. . . ."

I threw it aside with a smile. Evidently this was Dunraven's work, for though no name was signed to the paper, I had no doubt that he was the author. My lord wished it thought that I was dead, and most likely at that moment, with a solemn face, he was engaged in searching for my remains. If ever man had been fitted by nature to play two parts with consummate ease and skill, it was Dunraven.

Several other papers I saw; seemingly a diary of every movement of mine, and also of DeNortier's, from day to day, setting out the minutest instances of our lives, as though we ourselves had penned it.

The rest seemed to be the same; all but the last, a small, dainty billet, precisely penned, in a flowing hand, to the Viscount James Henry Hampden. I had seen that writing before; a faint odor as of some sweet flower yet clung to the paper. I had oft smelt just such a perfume, sweet, delicate. There was only one whom I knew, around whose dainty figure there lingered such an odor as this. Opening it with a hand which despite my efforts trembled, I read the few brief lines it contained. Only an acceptance to a ball, written months before, and signed with the name—Margaret Carroll.

Yet there, in that brilliantly-lighted room, in a far-away island, separated from her by leagues of rolling water, I pressed that sweet-scented billet to my lips, and forgetting all else, was happy. Thrusting it into my doublet, there next my breast, where I could feel the quick pulsing of my heart's blood against it, I arose to my feet.

Replacing the other papers in the oilcloth, I looked around

the room. Where should it be concealed? I could not keep it about my person, that was out of the question. My eye fell upon a heavy chest against the wall, and moving it I pushed the papers under the bottom; they could stay there at least, until I could find a better place.

I was weary, and throwing myself, dressed as I was, upon the bed, I dropped off to sleep.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PHANTOM

AND now I am about to recount an occurrence so strange and unearthly that I have sometimes since doubted whether it was not the creation of my own fancy; whether or not I really saw what I am about to relate. I can offer no reasonable hypothesis that would account for such a physical impossibility—something that we are taught to sneer at—I can only say with others who have trod before us: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in thy philosophy." I can only set down in black and white what really took place, as best I can.

I know not how long I slept, whether one hour or five; I only know that I was awakened by that peculiar sensation which thou hast felt in thy sleep, when conscious that someone is gazing intently at thee. Rubbing my eyes, I looked around the room.

The storm clouds had passed away as rapidly as they had come, and the moonlight, streaming through the window, bathed the whole room in a flood of light, and lit it up as brightly as could the noonday sun.

There, standing cold and grim and gray near the bed, some six or eight paces away, clothed in a coat of antique armor, leaning upon his great bloody sword, his eyes fixed sternly upon me, was the figure of Geoffrey Winchester, first Lord Richmond.

There is a tradition in the family, handed down from father to son, from generation to generation, which runs somewhat like this: When William the Conqueror landed in England, he brought with him from Normandy a certain stout, sturdy, and gallant gentleman—this same Geoffrey Winchester—whom he held in high esteem for his stout arm and undaunted courage.

At the great battle of Hastings, the death-blow to so many noble Saxon scions of great families, this gentleman, Geoffrey, bore himself with great valor. Twice was William beaten to his knees by the furious assaults of the desperate Saxons, and twice did Geoffrey come to the rescue, and with his great two-handled sword clear a path around the King.

And so after the battle was over, William had called the Norman to him, and had asked him what he would have, telling him that he should have what he willed, even to the half of his kingdom. And Winchester had answered, so the legend ran, that he cared not for earthly honors, but he would that he might be able to come to the rescue of those of his own blood, when in some danger from their foes.

The King, struck by the strangeness of his request, had called to him a pious bishop who had fought by his side that day, and recounted to him what the soldier would have.

The holy man of God had turned to Geoffrey Winchester, and bidding him kneel, had prayed to the God of Battle that he grant the request of Winchester's heart, and then blessing him, had said: "Thou hast chosen wisely. So be it. In the ages to come, when thou hast long crumbled into the dust, still thou shalt have the power to appear once to those of thine own blood when they are in sore distress, and warn them of danger. Go thou in peace."

And so it had been from that day. When Richmond Castle was sacked during the troublous times of Stephen's reign, the phantom had appeared to warn the third Lord Richmond, who had escaped barely in time to save himself. In the reign of Richard Cœur de Lion, John Winchester, sixth Lord Richmond, who accompanied the King on his crusade to the Holy Land, saw this vision, which told him not to embark on the vessel that was to carry the host across the Mediterranean Sea. He did as the spectre had cautioned, and though his companions jeered at him for his craven heart to fear a dream of the night, still he stood firm, and the ship had gone down with all her crew on board. And so on down the ages. My grandfather, fighting the Scots upon the frontier, was warned by the gray Geoffrey



to ride for England without delay. He waited for naught, but mounted and dashed away post-haste; an hour later the camp was sacked and burned by the wild Highlanders, and the whole company put to the sword.

Once, and only once, he had appeared, sooner or later, to each of the blood of Winchester, and in their hour of direst need had warned them of their danger.

True to the story, he stood before me to-night, just as he had stood when the bishop had blessed him at the battle of Hastings, the great dents still in his armor, his huge sword dripping with blood. There was no mistake; I had often seen his picture, when I had been but a child at the castle, and it had made an impression upon me. There was something wild, but yet noble, that I could never forget, in that bold, dark eye, the broad, high forehead, prominent, curved nose, and mouth set in its stern mould.

And now as I lay gazing at him the marrow almost froze in my bones; the cold, damp sweat stood out in great beads upon my forehead; my very hair seemed to rise on my head; my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth; I could not speak.

For a moment he stood thus, looking down at me, while his dark piercing eyes seemed to read the very secrets of my bosom. And then he spoke—or was it but the beating of my own heart? "Up! Be vigilant!" For an instant I saw him standing there, and then—there was only the moonlight as it cast the moving light and shadow upon the wall opposite. He was gone.

Springing up, with trembling hand I found my flint and steel, and lit the candle. Carefully I searched every nook and cranny of the broad room—there was nothing here; no one but myself.

Whatever there was to fear was plainly outside, and I knew not what to guard against, nor how to prepare myself for the danger that even now approached me; for I had no doubt that the specter spoke truth. He had never deceived one of my name yet, and deep down in my heart, I felt—yes, I knew—with a conviction unmistakable, that I stood to-night in perhaps the greatest peril of any which I had yet faced.

Blowing out the candle and drawing my sword, I took my

seat in the darkest corner of the room, and waited—I knew not for what. I sat there an hour; no sound floated up from the silent house, nothing stirred; only the moon, pale and calm, shone down into the window. What meant the warning? Did danger imminent and portentous threaten me? I could draw no other meaning from the vision; and if so, where and how did it approach? I could only wait.

This much I knew, that whenever the first Lord Richmond had appeared to any of my house, on down through the ages, he had ever warned of some great peril, which, but for his appearance, would have proven the end of him to whom he spoke.

An hour I sat there, silent and motionless, my drawn sword in my hand, and then—I had almost persuaded myself that I had dreamed of the spectre, and turned to go to bed when lo! I heard a slight sound. It was as if someone had halted near me, I knew not exactly where, and stopped to listen. Then a click, and from the shadow of the room opposite, as though from out the solid wall, there stepped a man. Slowly, silently, he crept forward; quietly, softly, as though he feared to breathe, he crossed the room and drew near the bed. Then as he stood beside it, he straightened himself, raised his hand high, and as he drew back to strike I saw something glitter in the dim light.

Dropping my sword, I sprang forward with one bound, and caught him by one hand on his throat, the other clutching the arm that held the dagger. A short struggle, and I felt him grow limp under my iron grasp, for I held his throat like a vise. Carrying him forward in my arms to the window, and laying him down on the floor, I peered into his face. It was the fat priest.

I waited patiently, the dagger that he had dropped clasped in my hand. It was a long, sharp blade, and had it not been for my ghostly visitant, I would even now sleep that sleep that knows no waking.

A long sigh from the priest; he was coming to his senses. Sitting up, he looked around him, and catching sight of me as I stood opposite, the dagger in my hand, he cowered back against the wall, and covered his face with his hand.

"Listen," I said, bending toward him. "One sound, and I will run this dagger into that craven heart of thine. If



thou dost fail to answer one question of mine, I shall say no word, but I will kill thee where thou sittest. Take away thy hand from thine eyes, and answer me quickly, as I put the questions to thee. Dost hear?"

Father Francis had jerked his hands from his face like a puppet figure, and now he sat by the window, his ruddy face all white and ghastly in the moonlight. "What wouldst thou have?" he moaned.

"Who sent thee here?" I asked. "Answer me quickly and truly, or into the nether world thou goest," and I flashed his dagger in his face.

"In the name of Heaven!" he cried in alarm. "Good Sir Thomas, brandish not the dagger about me so recklessly; should it but slip and strike me, I would be done for this world," and he shrank back against the wall.

"It would but serve thee right," I answered grimly. "Thou deservest no better fate. Answer me as I tell thee," and I pricked his fat arm with the point of the weapon.

With a loud howl of pain, he rubbed the injured spot vigorously.

"No one sent me," he said sullenly. "Didst thou not strike me down but a few short hours ago, without cause or provocation, as I walked peaceably along the shore, and then take from me papers that concerned thee not? Am I a man, that I should bear such treatment as this quietly? My head rings yet from the blow," and he raised his hand to his forehead, where there was a great swollen place as large as an egg.

"Thou liest," I answered coolly. "Speak truly; one last chance I give thee, and if thou dost fail to answer, thy soul shall go out to join that of thy comrade Herrick," and I made as if to stab him.

The ruse succeeded admirably.

"Stop!" he cried. "Stop! Wouldst thou murder me? I will answer truly, if thou wilt but give me time. It was DeNortier."

"And so thou wouldst creep upon a man and slay him unawares, while he sleeps. Is that all the manhood that remains in thee? I would not soil my hand with such carrion as thou art. Though thou dost richly deserve death, yet thou shalt go unharmed this once; but remember this,

if thou dost cross my path again I will slay thee as I would a serpent, calmly and without compunction. Go! And tell thy master that he should do such work as this like a man; not hire such scum to do that which he fears to attempt himself. But stay a moment," I said, as the priest scrambled to his feet, and began to slink toward the door. "Give me that ring of mine which thou wearest upon thy finger." And I held out my hand for it.

Slowly he drew it from his pudgy finger, and dropped it into my outstretched palm.

"And another thing, how camest thou into the room? Show me but that, and thou shalt go unharmed." And catching him by the collar, I dragged him across the floor to the corner where I had seen him first.

With a growl he raised his hand, and touched the wall with his finger. Immediately a panel slipped back and disclosed an opening in the solid wood.

I turned to him. "Go!" I said, pointing to the door, "before I forget myself and run thee through. No—not through the panel, but out yonder door."

He waddled back across the room, and turning the key in the lock, opened the door. Stopping on the threshold, he looked back at me as I stood by the open panel. A smile was upon his fat countenance—a smile of triumph.

"Be not so sure that thou wilt explore yon passage tonight, my Lord," he cried in glee. "The battle thou knowest is not ever to the strong;" and as he said this the secret door in the wall slid to with a snap, and with a loud laugh, even as I sprang towards him, he slammed the door of the room and the bolt turned in the lock. He had touched some secret spring outside, that closed the aperture in the wall.

Long I stood there on the floor listening, but I heard no sound. The house was as though all were wrapped in slumber.

Crossing to the window, I looked out; along the sand outside there was passing the figure of a man. I did not have to look twice to know who it was; short, thick, and clumsy, it could be none other than Father Francis.

He halted, and I saw another man step forward to meet him. They were too far away for me to recognize who the stranger was; wrapped in a great cloak, he stood close



to Francis and they seemed to be engaged in an earnest conversation, for they would turn and point towards the mansion as they talked, and I saw the priest double in a loud fit of laughter.

At the sight a bitter smile crossed my lips, for I surmised that he was relating how he had outwitted and trapped me.

I turned my head; footsteps soft and slow were coming down the hall, and at the sound I crossed over to the door, and beat upon it with the hilt of the dagger. The steps stopped outside.

"What is it, Señor?" said the low voice of one of the Indian attendants, called José.

"Open, José," I whispered. "'Tis I, Sir Thomas."

A moment of silence. "I dare not, Señor," he whispered. "What would the Count say?"

"Open," I pleaded, "and thou shalt have a fine piece of gold with the face of the great mother across the water on it."

An instant, and then the key grated in the lock; the door swung open, and the face of the native peered in.

"I know not what the lord would say, did he know that I had done this," he muttered, trembling.

"He need not know of it, I replied. "Not unless thou dost tell him, for I most assuredly will not;" and tossing him a coin, I stopped only long enough to pick up my sword, which lay in the corner where I had dropped it.

Rushing quickly down the stairs and out of the house, I dashed toward the place where I had seen the priest and the stranger a few minutes before. The sky had clouded again, and it was evident that we were to have another storm; for in this changeable climate one moment the weather would be fine, and the next the heavens would be darkened by the heavy clouds.

I made my way cautiously down the path and followed the couple who, several hundred yards ahead of me, were walking slowly by the side of the water, seemingly deep in confab. Quietly and stealthily, keeping some distance behind, I followed them, gradually drawing nearer all the while. Never once did they look behind, as with heads bent, they walked steadily on.

Suddenly I saw them stop, and I threw myself flat upon the sand. They were evidently discussing something of more than ordinary interest. Who could the priest's companion be? I could not tell from this distance.

They had seated themselves upon the bench, and at the sight, I crawled cautiously up to where the rough, uneven sand lay heaped back from the water, and began to worm my way, flat on my stomach, towards them. 'Twas slow work, for I had to move at a snail's pace lest I should startle the twain, so engrossed in their conversation.

Minutes passed; I was getting nearer to them now, when there rang out a splash from the sea, and peering gradually up, I saw a boat, manned by four seamen, approaching rapidly the spot where the priest and his companion awaited them. Turning my head, I could see that I was within a few yards of them; but I did not care to run into their hands with the boat approaching, so I lay quiet where I was.

Nearer it drew, until within a few yards of the land; then one of the sailors hailed. Father Francis answered; and the boat grated upon the sand, while the men rested on their oars in silence. As they did so, a stray moonbeam came out from behind the clouds and fell full into the face of the tall stranger, who had arisen and was about to step into the boat. It was Lord Dunraven.

For a moment I lay still; and then, reckless of the seamen, thinking only of the way that he had slunk from me in the cave, of his plans against Margaret, and how he would wrest her away from her friends and home if he could, I arose to my feet.

"And so Lord Dunraven is afraid to walk in the day, and slinks about under cover of darkness to meet his hired assassins!" I cried ironically. "Such bravery as this is worthy of thee, and deserves commendation."

At the sound of my voice he had turned toward me, his foot upon the stern of the boat.

"Ah, Sir Thomas!" he said, "did I not have other plans on foot, I would meet thee here, and once and for all settle all matters of difference between us; but mighty reasons, which I have already stated to thee, forbid me from doing so. Should I by any mischance fall by thy sword, it would be a shame that the loveliest lady of England should weep



out her eyes in sorrow at my untimely fate. Even now I go back to England to her kisses. I trust that thy stay upon the island may not prove unprofitable, and should time hang heavy on thy hands, perchance thou mightst amuse thyself with the thought of the bright lady in my arms. Farewell!" And he stepped into the boat.

"Dog!" I cried, rushing forward, "wait but one moment, and thou shalt hold no lady in thy foul arms again."

The priest, who had stood quietly on the sand, intending I suppose to see my lord off, at the first sound of my voice had pushed by Dunraven and sprang into the boat. Now as I ran forward, he cried:

"Wouldst thou wait for him? He is a fiend in disguise. Did I not lock him up, and has he not broken loose? Push off!—for the love of God push off!" his voice rising to a shriek as I neared them.

The boatmen needed no second bidding; plainly they feared the cold steel in my hand, for in a twinkle they had pushed off, and bent their backs to the oars with a will. When I reached the spot where my lord had stepped on board, they were fifty feet or more from me.

I hesitated for one moment, sorely tempted to spring into the surf and swim after them; but angered as I was, calm common sense came to my rescue. I was burdened with my steel breastplate and sword, and could not overtake the light boat manned by four sturdy seamen; even though I should, it would mean certain death to me. Six men to one, and he in the water; so I stood and watched them pull away.

Oh for a musketoon! I could have picked off my lord, as he sat in the stern facing me, as easily as I would a hare.

And even as I stood there upon the shore, biting my lips with rage to see them so easily glide out of my reach, my lord arose, and sweeping his hat from his head, bowed. "Adieu!" he said. "May thy dreams be pleasant. I shall remember thee to my lady," and he took his seat with a smile upon his face.

The boat dwindled down into a speck upon the water; still I stood there silent. Dunraven seemed ever to escape me, as I had my hand upon his throat. What meant he when

he said that he returned to England? Did he speak truth, or was it but some lie to throw me off his track while he remained here to watch my movements?

Was the priest his spy kept here but to watch me, and perhaps the Spaniard also, and report all that we did or said? It seemed so from the diary that I had read. Perhaps Dunraven distrusted the Count as much as he did me, and was keeping an eye on us both.

I was beginning to think that he had good reason to fear the Spaniard, for had not the priest said in the cave to his companion Herrick that he had seen DeNortier walk the floor in agony, and cry out "Margaret! Margaret!"

I knew something of the Count by this time, and realized that he was a dangerous foe. Instead of one rival, it began to look as if I had two. Perhaps I might be able to join forces with DeNortier, and thus outwit Dunraven; then I could settle with the adventurer later. But where had the Spaniard seen Margaret? Echo answered "where?"

And so musing I retraced my steps towards the mansion, my head bent low in thought. The wind was rising again, and we would have a great storm if this but kept up for the night.

It was nearly day when I stood again in my own room. Something hung and dangled from the window, swinging to and fro in the rising wind, and knocking against the side of the house. My God! It could not be!

Rushing to the window, I drew through the grating the rope that hung outside; and there, his face bruised and disfigured, with gaping tongue, a great cut in his breast, hung the body of José, the servant who had released me from the room only a short while before. Cold, stiff, and lifeless he hung, and there, kneeling by his lifeless body, I swore that if God gave me health and strength I would pursue and punish the fiend who had done this deed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### I DICE FOR A LIFE

IT was noon before I awoke; a terrific storm was raging outside, and the sea was white with foam. Dressing rapidly, I made my way to the great dining hall. Often had I eaten there, sometimes alone, and sometimes with DeNortier, for when he was not on the island I ate alone; the men always kept to their barrack, and never came to the house save on some errand. They were uniformly respectful to me; they had evidently had orders from the captain to be so, and they knew him too well to dare to disobey his commands. I, of course, had naught to do with them, save occasionally to ask them some question.

DeNortier supplied me with all that I needed. One evening when I returned from a stroll, I had found a new doublet and hose in my room; at another time a new feather for my hat. I had several times found small sums of money upon my table, and appreciated that delicate sense of honor which realized how I must feel, and did not roughly force what I needed upon me.

DeNortier was seated at the table alone, eating a slice of venison.

"Welcome!" he said in a cordial tone. "This venison is excellent," and he took a great bite as he glanced up at me.

There was no trace of the pallor and wildness of the night before in his manner; now self-composed, alert, calm, he was himself again.

Seating myself opposite him, I helped myself to the meat.

"Count, I have a grievance to lay before thee," I said.

"What is it?" he inquired. "Have any of the men failed to show thee the proper respect? If so, thou hast but to speak, and I will know how to punish them."

"No, it is not that," I answered. "I find this morning the body of one of the natives swinging in front of my

of Cuba to trade with the natives. We had gotten this far and all seemed well, until last night the storm arose, and the ship went down."

"Where am I?" continued the boy, as DeNortier sat silent in the great chair, his head bent in thought, as though forgetful of all around him.

At this question the pirate stirred, and raised his eyes to the handsome face of the lad.

"I could best answer that question by telling thee into whose hands thou hast fallen," he said, with a frown. "I am the Count DeNortier."

Oliver started, a look of fear crossed his face.

"What!" he cried. "Not DeNortier the pirate?"

"The same," answered the adventurer, unmoved by the other's alarm.

"I am in need of recruits," he continued. "Thou dost seem a likely strippling, wilt thou come with us? Thou shalt be my right-hand man, with thy pockets full of gold, and sword in hand thou wilt be the envy and admiration of all the maids in London," and he laughed, a grim look of mirth upon his face.

But the lad stood determined.

"I will not come," he said firmly, "though thou dost slay me. I was raised in the family of, and have served, a nobleman; thinkest thou that I would disgrace my training like this? To roam the seas with a band of cutthroats, and finally to swing 'twixt heaven and earth, a rope around my neck?"

The answer seemed to fan the smoldering rage of the Count into a flame. With an oath, he caught up his sword which lay upon the table, and drew it from its sheath.

"Choose!" he cried. "Either thou shalt join me without more words, or prepare to meet thy doom; for as certain as thou dost stand there, I will run thee through if thou dost not join me."

The boy threw back his head, his cheeks were pale, but his look was high and unflinching.

"Strike," he said, "if thou wilt, for I refuse to join thee."

The Spaniard raised his sword, but leaning over I caught the hilt with my hand and held it.



"Ruffian!" I cried. "Wouldst thou slay the youth? He is but a child."

A slow, evil look was upon his face; for a moment his anger mastered him.

"Twice hast thou crossed my path to thwart me," he growled. "Take care, there shall be no third time." Then drawing back, he sheathed his sword.

"I will dice with thee for the lad's life," he said suddenly. "If thou dost win, he is thine to do with what thou wilt; if thou shouldst lose, then he is mine. Wilt cast with me?"

I hesitated a moment; then turning to the boy, who stood gazing with wide-open eyes upon us, I cried:

"Art thou content that we should dice for thy life, or wilt thou have none of it?"

His face was pale, but he answered me quickly: "I am content; better that I should die, than be in the hands of such as he."

"So be it," I answered. "Where are the dice?"

Turning to the corner, he drew from a chest the dice, and a little round box, and with those in his hand, moved to the table.

"Wilt thou throw first?" he asked, "or shall I?"

"No," I answered; "do thou throw. I will follow thee."

It was a strange scene in that great room. The rough seamen gathered around the table watching, eager to see which way the dice would fall; the boy, Oliver Gates, as he stood behind me, watching the dice in the Count's hand—his life the stakes for which we gamed. DeNortier, a dark scowl upon his face, fingering coolly the box in which the dice lay, ready to cast without a tremor the little squares on which depended a human life; myself, with face as white as the boy's, as I thought of the great load which rested upon me, and of how much depended upon "Chance," the blind goddess.

DeNortier stood opposite me, only the little light in his dark eyes betraying his excitement. I watched his hand narrowly while he shook the dice in the box, preparing to throw. I have often thought of that scene since, and wondered if I fully appreciated its solemnity as I watched the

Spaniard, and yet I was oppressed by the thought that a human life lay in my hands, either to be lost or to be gained; but as the lad had said, better that he should die than to live a captive in the pirate's hands and at his mercy.

He threw, and with a rattle the dice rolled out upon the table. For a moment I feared to look, and then summoning all my courage, with an effort I looked at the dice—double fours—could I beat that?

I saw the look of triumph in DeNortier's eyes, plainly he thought that he had won; and there as I stood with the box in my hand, I sent up one fervent prayer to whatever gods there be, to fight for me in that hour, and guide the dice aright.

Raising my hand I tossed, and they rolled down upon the table and over to the further side. I bent over them with eyes that feared to behold the result, and I could hear the quick, deep breathing of Oliver Gates behind me, as with beating heart he awaited to hear his fate. The two seamen were bending over the table with eager faces. I straightened myself up—five and four.

"The day is mine, Count," I said triumphantly.

"Yes," he answered, "thou hast it; the fates are propitious. Beware! they will not be ever at thy side;" and turning from me he passed out of the room. The men followed, leaving me alone with Oliver.

"Thy life is safe," I said to him, "and thou shalt be my page. Wilt enter my service?"

"Who art thou?" he asked. "It seems as if I had seen thy face before, yet I know not where."

"Sir Thomas Winchester, of London," I answered.

"I recognize thy face now," he said. "Oft have I seen thee in London, but thou art changed," and he hesitated.

"Say that I have grown older," I replied. "Nay, do not deny it. I know that I have grown older, and that the gray is beginning to fleck my hair; hadst thou been through what I have the last six months, thy hair would be gray too."

"What doest thou here?" he asked, his eyes fixed still upon my face. "Thou hast not joined these ruffians, and become one of them?"

"The saints forbid!" I answered quickly. "I am a captive here even as thou art." And then I related in a few words all I wished him to know of my kidnaping and detention upon the island.



He listened intently, a look of wonder upon his face.

"And why does my Lord Dunraven hound thee thus?" he cried. "What motive has he, that he should detain thee here?"

"Lad," I answered, a bitter smile upon my face, "thou art young yet, and hast much to learn; when thou growest older thou wilt know what a man will do for the love of a maid. Dost know the Lady Margaret Carroll?"

"Aye," he answered, "the loveliest lady in England; as well ask me if I know my master."

"Then," I answered, "is there need to look further than the lady for a cause?"

A look of understanding came into his face.

"I see," he said, "and wonder no longer. A lady so fair would tempt a man to risk his soul, could he but win her."

"But thou hast not answered my question; wilt be my man and enter my service? I have need of such a one here, and when I come to my own again, thou shalt not regret it."

"Yes," he answered, a look frank and true upon his open face. "I owe my life to thee. I am thy man, for better or for worse, and here is my hand on it," and he stretched out his hand to me.

I reached out and grasped it, a mist before my eyes. 'Twas the first friendly hand I had clasped since Steele had sailed away and left me weary months before, and I knew what it meant to be alone and friendless among bitter foes.

"Thou shalt not rue it," I said.

And thus Oliver Gates entered my service. He was a treasure, that boy; he fell to and cleaned my muddy clothes and boots, polished my rusty breastplate, mended the rents in my ragged doublet, and was ever at my elbow, ready to serve me.

He had cleaned the musketoon which I carried, and one morning I came suddenly upon him, his eyes fixed upon the sight, the weapon at his shoulder.

"What art thou doing?" I asked in surprise, seeing no one at whom he pointed.

He lowered the gun, a look of confusion upon his face.

"I was but wishing that my Lord Dunraven walked below," he answered, "and I would soon rid thee of him forever;" and he looked up into my face.

I was strangely touched by his thoughts of me, for I had grown to love him well, with his frank and merry ways, ever with a song upon his lips, ever busy with thoughts of my comfort and welfare.

"Lad," I said, "I know not what I would do without thee."

A tear came into his eye, and rolled down his rosy cheek; he tried to speak, but could not, and turning, hurried from the room.

Sometimes at night as we sat together in my room under the candlelight, I would have him to tell me of London, and what my friends did there, of himself, and of his life before he sailed on his ill-fated voyage.

I learned that my old comrade Drake had sailed for the Spanish Main in search of gold; that Bacon was busy with his law; Raleigh was in high favor with the Queen, and seemed at present to be the favorite; Bobby Vane he did not know. The Lady Margaret Carroll was the toast of London, happy, gay, light-hearted; rumor had it that she would soon become the bride of the Lord Dunraven, who, devoted, gallant, and attentive, was ever her constant shadow, and since I had vanished so mysteriously from London, he had no rival of importance.

Of me, London had gossiped for a few days; the tale of my disinheritance had been the talk of the town, and followed so soon by my disappearance had created quite a sensation, and a dozen different stories had been circulated by way of explanation. Some said I had committed suicide; others that I had gone to the Low Country to assist the Dutch; still others that I had joined the freebooters and become a sea-rover.

It had furnished sensation for the ladies and gentlemen of fashion, as they gathered under the evening candles and sipped their tea, but other things came to engage their attention; what cared they if one poor gentleman, stripped



of his position and fortune, lived or died? I had passed from their world forever, and so with a jest upon their lips they had flitted to some new topic.

Only a few friends had made an effort to find some trace of my fate. Bobby Vane and Raleigh had indeed searched, but could find no clue. It was as though the earth had swallowed me up.

Oliver Gates loved me, I believed. He followed me about like a dog; had searched the island for Father Francis and Dunraven, and was ever vigilant to track the Spaniard in hope that he would discover some trace of my lord, but in vain.

Dunraven and Father Francis I had never seen since they left the island that stormy night in the boat. Sometimes I thought they had gone down in the gale, but they were too wicked to die like honest men. No, I believed they were alive, perhaps in England, engaged in plots to abduct my lady, and at the thought I would pace the floor and wring my hands. At such times Oliver was a boom to me. He would sing some ballad of the olden days, when a knight, brave in his armor, and with his waving pennant, would ride out to do battle for his lady love; and at the sound of his rich, mellow voice, the care and sorrow would fade away from my heart, and I would forget myself and all my woes.

So the time passed, and spring had come; the sun shone brightly, and its beauty had tempted me out of the house. All was light and merry beneath the morning light; the birds were singing, and all earth seemed to lie quiet and peaceful, as though weary of toil and labor, and resolved to take holiday for one brief day.

Oliver I had not seen for several minutes, and I strolled down the lane that led to the little settlement of the natives. A few of them I met as I walked down the path, and with a word of greeting, they had stepped aside to let me pass.

I kept steadily on my way, my head bent, thinking of old England and wondering if I would ever see it again. The grass was green and fresh there, the spring flowers were beginning to bloom, and in the fields the sod lay upturned to the sun. The fresh scent of the turf struck my nostrils. Ah, this was England! It held naught for me,

perhaps only scorn and hatred; still my heart yearned for the Old Country like that of the exile condemned to some prison, far from his home. It was where my eyes had first beheld the light, and it was there, when I finished my weary journey and life's brief sorrows were over, that I wished to rest quietly beneath its green turf, where naught of the world's turmoil and strife could reach; safe from all harm, with only the silent stars to shine down upon me, I would sleep with my fathers.

I was coming into the group of bark huts; only one old woman was visible, her form bent nearly double with age, her hair snow white, her eyes sunken, her face weather-beaten as though by many a storm. Crouched by one of the low entrances she sat, her eyes fixed upon me. There was that look of knowledge, of understanding, in them, which comes only with extreme age; the look of one who has tasted of all life's secrets, and who has known all that it contains.

I paused beside her, struck by the look of withered age upon her face, and by her snow-white hair; for I had never seen a native with white hair before.

"What is thy age, old crone?" I asked her, in the native tongue.

She did not stir, only her sunken eyes were fixed upon my face, and then, in a voice cracked and broken, she replied:

"Neulta has seen the suns of one hundred and four summers, and still she remains; those whom she knew in her youth have long since gone from among her people."

One hundred and four years old! She was mad; but still she was extremely old, her face showed that.

I knew the name too; often when the servants at the mansion had lost aught, or anything had mysteriously disappeared, they would go to Neulta, and she would tell them where to find the missing article. Strange to say, when they had looked where she directed, they would always discover the missing thing.

Wonderful stories were told of her superhuman powers by the natives. It was said that DeNortier always consulted her before embarking on his voyages; that she had foretold to Herrick, months before, that he would meet death



by the hand of a tall stranger, alone in a cavern; he had laughed at her, but lo! it had been even as she had said. The Indians swore by Neulta, and regarded her as a goddess.

I had scoffed at the tales told me by the dead José and the other servants; had told them that the old hag had stolen the things herself, and did but tell them where they were hidden that she might increase their faith in her, but I could never persuade them that I spoke truth. Some thought of the idle tales crossed my mind as she told me her age.

"Thy mind wanders," I answered. "It is not possible; tell me something that I can believe."

The old woman sat still and motionless, then she answered: "Before the Señor's father came into this world I was a middle-aged woman. When the Señor dies I will still be here; for I hold the magic power handed down from my people, who dwelt on this island long before these miserable natives whom thou now seest about thee had landed in this place. Ah," she continued, rising to her feet at the thoughts of the past, "they were a race of men! These are but cattle, who are fitted to wait upon the white man. But why do I talk thus?" she muttered, seating herself again. "My people have vanished, and I alone remain.

"The Señor does not believe me; he thinks that I dream. Let the Señor but come into my hut here, and I will show him things which are not of this world. Does he wish to behold whom he thinks of? But follow me and he shall see what he wots not of. Come!" and she hobbled to the door of the hut and threw it open.

I hesitated; she was mad doubtless, but I was in no hurry. I had naught to engage my mind; perhaps she might amuse me. It might be that this was but a trick of DeNortier's to lure me into this hut and then put me out of the way; for that was a scheme worthy of his master mind.

The old crone stood in the doorway, looking at me.

"Ah! the Señor fears," she croaked. "Afraid of an old woman, alone and unarmed," and she cackled in glee.

My mind was made up; stepping upon the threshold, I pushed the door wide open and entered. The old woman closed the door, and I was in total darkness. She moved

about in the dark, until presently she struck two hard stones together, and going to where three great torches of light-wood were fastened in the wall, she lit them.

Immediately the room became brightly illuminated, and I looked around. There was nothing in the hut; only a rough pile of leaves in the corner, which served as a bed, and a rough stone bench in the center of the room, together with a little wooden chest.

Going to the chest, she raised the lid, calling as she did so to me, "Let the Señor seat himself upon the bench."

I did so, and watched her movements, until finally she drew an article from the chest, and turning, held it out to me. I took it in my hands, and glanced down to see what she had given me. It was a polished disk of silver, perhaps a foot in diameter, curved and embossed with strange and barbarous shapes. I had seen naught like it in all my travels.

"How camest thou by this?" I asked sternly.

The old woman, her back to me, was groping again in the box. "Let not the Soñor be troubled," she said dryly, "for the mirror was handed down to me from my fathers, who dwelt here in the days of yore. It is mine; be not uneasy on that score."

And then from the box she drew a little stone image of a man, grotesquely shaped, with great staring eyes, and with a cold, sinister expression upon his carved face. She set it on the floor in front of me; as I looked at it, the face reminded me of someone whom I had seen. Yes, the same hard, cold look and hawk nose of Lord Dunraven; I was struck by the resemblance, for rough, uncouth as the image was, it resembled my lord.

The old crone had sprinkled a yellow powder in front of the idol, and had lit it, and now she was kneeling in front of the image, crooning a low savage song, her eyes, keen and piercing through the smoke, fixed upon me. I rose in disgust. Was I a fool, to sit through such mummery as this?

She called to me even as I stirred, "Let not the Señor arise; but a moment, and he will behold a sight upon the mirror such as he has never seen before. Let him wait but a moment, and gaze upon the disk."



There was something in that look, eager, commanding, fixed upon me, that I could not resist. I resumed my seat.

"I will remain but a moment," I said. "Quick with thy foolery, I am wearied and would go."

"Look upon the glass!" she shrieked. "Look!"

I looked down carelessly at the mirror in my hand. Unaccountably, marvelously, there was something dim, misty, and hazy, growing upon the polished disk; more and more distinct it became, until wonder of wonders, I looked into the violet eyes of Lady Margaret Carroll!—there, lovely, beautiful, divine, she gazed at me, gowned for some ball, a flower in her hair, the soft curved neck encircled by a chain of precious stones, her lovely dimpled chin, and little mouth curved as though laughing at its own red beauty. For a moment I looked at her, and then I was gazing at the vacant glass in my hand.

I sprang to my feet. "Hag!" I cried, "what trick is this? Beware how thou triflest with me."

The voice of the crone floated across to me through the smoke.

"No trick," she mumbled; "'tis but the magic of the great white spirit. Would my lord behold his rival? Look!"

And there upon the silver disk, with his brave, true eyes upon me, shone the face of Bobby Vane.

"'Tis false!" I cried. "False! He would not act thus."

"Wonder not," replied the crone. "Stranger things than this have happened; men would betray all for love of such a maid;" and she muttered something to herself. "Wouldst behold how thy friend conducts himself in thy absence with thy lady-love? Behold!"

And there upon the glass I saw my lady and Bobby. They were at some dance or merry-making, for I could see dimly the moving forms around them. Suddenly they turned and passed out into a moonlit garden, and seated themselves in the shadow of some thick trees. I saw Bobby lean forward nearer that beautiful face; saw him whisper something into that little shell-like ear; saw the smile upon her face; and then, reaching out his hand, he took one of

Margaret's in his own, and bent down as though to kiss her, looking into her beautiful blue eyes all the while.

It was more than flesh and blood could stand. With an oath, I cast the mirror far from me, and throwing the cowering crone a coin, strode out from the miserable hut into the free air of heaven.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE LAST REVEL

MARCH, 1588, was here; I had been restrained of my liberty since the sixteenth day of September, 1586, Oliver and myself had made many schemes for our deliverance, but they had all come to naught. We could not cross the mighty sea without a vessel; there was nothing but frail canoes here—light, fragile, they would suffice for a brief sail, but they could never live through the thousands of miles of water that rolled between us and England.

I had spent a great deal of my time in fencing and shooting with the lad, until now I felt that I could hold my own against DeNortier himself. My wrist was of steel, and my strength had grown enormously with my exercise in the open air; I could hit a small coin at thirty yards with a musketoon. Oliver, who knew nothing of a sword when he landed, had become a fairly good swordsman under my training, and was getting so that he could bring down the wild fowl on the wing with the gun.

Returning from a long stroll one evening and going up to my room, I found Oliver engaged in holding up to the light a splendid new doublet of light gray silk. It was a beautiful garment, and he was so occupied in admiring it that he did not hear me come into the door.

"What hast thou there, lad?" I asked. "Thou must have at thy disposal the shops of London, that thou shouldst have such a doublet as that. Faith, not but thou dost need one! That thou hast on now is almost in rags."

The boy turned to me, his face aglow.

"Ah, Sir Thomas! thou mayest laugh, but it is full time that we had some new garments. I have mended the one that thou hast on, until I fear that not a piece of the original cloth remains," and he broke into a merry, ringing laugh. "But the doublet that thou jeerest at is for thee.

I have a new lilac one," and turning, he lifted it from a chair and held it up for my inspection.

"What means such prodigality?" I asked in astonishment. "What scheme is on foot?"

"The men hold high revelry to-night," he answered. "Pepin, who came up only a few moments ago, brought us each an entire outfit of new clothing, and told me that the Count sails to-morrow with all his men; that on his return he would resign command to one of his crew, and depart for the great region from whence he came, to return here no more. I asked him whether we were to go with the Count on his cruise to-morrow, and he replied yes, that only the natives would remain behind. He told me also that the Count DeNortier bade us dress in these new garments, and be at the board to-night to join in the feast."

The candles had been lit. Slowly, with the lad's help, I dressed myself in the silks and laces; it had been long since I had been garbed as fitting my birth and station. The clothes brought back to me my old, useless, happy life in far-away London, and the thought of the gayety and pleasure of days gone by, when I had softly spoken into the dainty ears of fair ladies the little useless whispers that went to make up their lives; had moved among the gay throng, the petted plaything of society. It had been sweet while it lasted, but it had passed from me.

Oliver had buckled on my gold-hilted sword, and given me a last touch.

"Thou art prepared, Sir Thomas," he cried, with a grand air and a sweeping bow. "And though thou mayest jeer at me if thou choosest, I will say to thy face, that thou art a goodly sight. Would that the fair ladies of London might see thee to-night; it would create a sensation, I can tell thee."

"Nonsense, boy!" I replied. "I have grown too old and rough to be a pleasant sight for a lady. She would want some fawning tailor's model, sweet-scented and delicate, and not a rude man such as I am."

But, nevertheless, pleased by his light flattery, I stepped forward to where one of the great mirrors hung and glanced at myself. Was this the silent, rough man, clad in his faded doublet, his sword in hand, ready at a moment's notice to defend himself from the foes who sought his life?



There looked back at me from the mirror the figure of a man, clad in splendid silks, a rich collar of lace about his neck, elegantly and richly dressed; his hair, in which the gray threads were beginning to shine, was combed back and fell upon his shoulders. The little pointed beard which he wore, was flecked with gray here and there; and his face, tanned and brown, was one which seemed created to command. The deep lines of suffering had purified and ennobled the face never handsome; the youth and gayety were gone from it, never to return, but 'twas stronger, deeper, better than it had been in the old days. The light hazel eyes, with that look of understanding that only sorrow brings, were more sympathetic and kinder than they had been of yore.

Yet as I looked at myself in the glass, and saw the gray threads in my hair and beard, I felt to-night as though I had reached the summit of the hill of life, and was beginning the long descent down the other side. Yes, to-night I realized that I was beginning to be an old man, with the best in life behind me.

I knew not what the night or morrow held in store for me, but the struggle and toil and suffering of the last year had taught me patience; the fire of youth had burned out, and I would wait, and the morrow would tell.

Oliver had already dressed himself; young and comely he stood there, and I, for the moment, envied him his youth and buoyancy.

Together we descended the stairs, and passed into the great dining hall; both of the large sliding doors between the dining and front room had been thrown back, and now there was but one immense room.

The candlelight that night streamed down on a strange and motley crew. Down the great room there ran three long tables; around them there sat the entire crew of the ship, clad in the silks and satins of the nobles of Europe; with fine collars of lace and gold about their bronzed throats; their long hair perfumed and scented; their faces those of every nationality. It was a scene such as I have never witnessed before or since.

At a small table placed at the head of the room sat DeNortier, stroking his black beard. He arose as we entered.

"Welcome!" he cried. "Welcome to the last revel! Gentlemen, to-morrow we sail for the Spanish Main; who knows how many of us will ever return? Come, be seated here with me," and he motioned us to seats at his table.

There was only one vacant chair left; he noticed my glance at it .

"An old friend, detained by important business; he will not be here to-night. I am sure that thou must regret it," and he grinned at me.

"It is perhaps best that he did not come," I answered. "The night air possibly would not agree with him;" for I guessed that he referred to Dunraven.

He did not answer me, but beat upon his table for silence. The hubbub and noise ceased, and he arose to his feet, goblet in hand.

"My men," he said, "we go on a voyage long and perilous; I know not how many will meet with us again. When we return, I leave thee forever; Davis shall take my place, and be thy chief. I shall return to the Old World and dwell in peace. But before we drink to our voyage, I have one toast that I will give thee in honor of our guest, the Englishman. I give thee the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth of England!—may her years be full of glory and happiness!"

The men had arisen to their feet, glasses in hand; many of them were Englishmen, and, degraded and besotten as they were, they still felt a love for old England and a pride in the achievements of her Queen, whose name and fame rang around the world. As DeNortier ceased, there arose a shout that made the very candles uopn the wall flicker in their sockets; once, twice, thrice it rose and fell, like the deep beat of the surf upon the beach—then it died out.

I arose to my feet, cup in hand.

"My men," I said, "I thank thee in the name of the Queen for thy courtesy, and would give thee in return—King Philip of Spain!"

The Spaniards drank it with a cheer, but it was nothing like the shout that had greeted the name of Elizabeth.

Then there were toasts of every sort and kind; the noise



at the long tables arose to an uproar as some toast was drank of more than usual interest.

I glanced down the tables where the men sat, for we took no part in their merriment, but sat at our own table, quiet and composed. There were the spoils of many a galleon upon the board; goblets and drinking cups of gold and silver; candlesticks and vessels from the monasteries; richly embroidered altar cloths spread the long tables; and the heavy carved chairs of the priests seated the pirates at their revel. Behind the tables the natives, soft-footed and silent, filled the glasses as oft as they were emptied.

Without the night, quiet and silent, brooded; within the lights, the laughter, the song—revelry held high carnival. To-morrow they would sail, and who knew how many would return? They would feast to-night; what mattered the morrow, which might hold for them the halter? But to-night—ah, yes!—to-night was theirs, and the night was young yet; fill up again.

A tall fellow, his face flushed with the wine he had drunk, was roaring out a wanton love song, his fellows keeping time to the tune with their glasses upon the board. He finished amidst a storm of cheers and applause. Far down the table one of the men had already fallen forward upon the board, overcome by the wine that he had poured down.

A feeling of anxiety came over me; what were not the rogues capable of, when later in the night they should be crazed by the liquor that they had drunk, with nothing to hold them in check except the fear of their chief, and he was but one man, no matter how resolute and determined? What could he do against two hundred and fifty drunken, crazed wretches, hardened to every scene of misery and woe, who feared neither God nor man? Would they not, when they had reached the pitch of frenzy, turn upon Oliver and myself, and vent their fury upon us? For myself, I cared not, but I feared for the boy.

DeNortier must have seen the thought upon my face as I turned to him, for he spoke immediately.

"Have no fear," he said. "I have often had such revels before, and no harm came of it; my men know my hand too well to attempt to anger me."

"For myself, I fear not," I answered. "My only fear was for the boy; I would not have him harmed." And I turned my head to look at Oliver, who with wide eyes was surveying the scene before him.

"Thou needst not worry," he replied; "he is as safe as though he were in his father's house."

"Where is the priest?" I asked. "It is strange that he is not here. I would have thought that he would be the first to come."

The Count smiled. "I looked to see him here too," he answered, "but perhaps he would not come for fear that thou wouldst kill him. He fears thee as though thou wert the foul fiend himself," and he finished with a laugh.

"He has good cause to," I said grimly. "If I had but given him his deserts, he would have been now where no revelry could disturb him."

"He is a strange fellow," DeNortier said musingly, as though half to himself, stroking his pointed black beard. "I picked him up in London, five years ago; he had been expelled from the monastery for drunkenness, and was adrift without chart or compass, when I discovered him. But he has well requited me for my trouble, for he is a useful fellow, and true as steel to me."

I looked at him; it might be that I could win him to my side, or if I could but make him distrust Dunraven, it would be a good night's work.

"Be not so sure of that," I answered.

He started and peered at me, a look of suspicion upon his face.

"Why dost thou say that?" he cried. "Dost know aught of what thou speakest?"

I leaned back in my chair, and regarded him with a cold smile.

"Am I a child, that I speak of what I know not of?" I said.

The look of suspicion deepened upon his face; then there came another, a look of anger.

He spoke: "Show me some proof of that which thou sayest, Sir Thomas; not that I doubt thy word, but this is a matter of importance that thou talkest of, and not to be lightly decided."



"And of what advantage will this be to me?" I asked. "Why should I go to the trouble, if it is to be of no benefit to me?"

He answered me, speaking slowly:

"It is of more importance than thou mayest think; thou art held here by my power; did I but say the word thou shouldst go scot-free. Would that be of advantage to thee? Could I think that the fat rogue played me false, I would soon settle his fate. But why should he do that? It would not be to his advantage, and he knows too well where his bread lies to cut his own throat. His hopes are all based upon me; take me away, and they fall to the ground. No, thou art mistaken, it could not be so."

"Thou hast forgotten that Dunraven is rich and powerful; that he has gold in abundance to reward his servants and tools. He wishes to keep an eye upon thee, as well as myself. Perhaps he thinks that thou mightst become a dangerous rival to him, or mightst be tempted to play him false. What better spy could he choose on us both than Father Francis?" I gazed at him, a smile of triumph upon my face.

He brought down his fist upon the table with a blow that made the glasses ring.

"Show me the proof!" he cried—"but the proof, and then I shall know how to act."

"Oliver," I said, turning to the boy, "go up into my room; move that heavy chest which stands next the wall, and bring down to me the bundle of papers that thou findest behind it."

He arose, and ran lightly from the room. I sat quietly in my seat, and gazed at the Spaniard.

"What effect will this have upon my detention?" I asked. "Wilt thou free me?"

"I shall know better how to answer when I see the papers," he replied hoarsely.

The noise at the tables had redoubled. One of the seamen had brought out a couple of flutes and was urging a short, squat sailor to give them the sword dance. After much pressing by his friends, and after drinking off a couple of glasses of wine, "only to steady his nerves a bit," as he informed them, he announced that he was ready to begin.

A space was cleared in the middle of the room, and in it a dozen swords were fastened, blades upward. The man had taken off his shoes, and stood in his stocking feet, his eyes covered with a cloth.

The flute struck up a wild, barbarous air, and springing into the midst of the swords he began to dance, while the men crowded eagerly around him. Up he went, turning, twisting, whirling, all the while chanting a low savage tune, now leaping to the right, now to the left, but always alighting in the space, perhaps four inches in width, that lay between each sword. Now advancing, now retreating, always evading the perilous blades with a skill that was marvelous to me, when I thought of the cloth over his eyes.

A loud burst of music; he had finished, and was untying the bandage from about his face, midst the cries. "Well done!" of his companions.

And now the outer door opened, and from the darkness outside an Indian appeared, leading by a rope a tame bear. Often had I seen the animal about the native settlement. He was a huge, clumsy, good-natured brute, and as he stood in the middle of the room sniffing the air, his little eyes blinking in the light, his head rolling from side to side, he looked anything but dangerous. His master had taught him to wrestle, and as the animal stood erect on the floor, I saw one of the seamen stripping off his doublet to struggle with him.

The Indian untied the rope from about the brute's head.

"The Señor had best treat him gently to-night," he said in his native tongue to the sailor as he advanced, "for he has been in an ugly humor all day, and it has been only within the last few moments that I have been able to approach him."

I remonstrated with DeNortier.

"The man had best not wrestle with the bear to-night," I said. "The Indian says that he is in an ugly humor, and he might do the sailor a harm."

The Count shrugged his shoulders.

"The brute does not look dangerous," he answered. "I have seen him around here for more than a year, and never have I known him to do any mischief."

I looked at the beast again; truly he did not look dangerous. To-night he seemed the same good-humored giant that he had ever been; only he was a little restless, perhaps the light and the unaccustomed crowd made him so. He was a tremendous fellow, standing six feet or more on his hind legs, and with his long curved paws, he could tear a man to pieces as if he were a leaf, should he become infuriated.



The sailor was ready, and advanced to meet the bear. He was as fine a specimen of mankind as the brute was of the animal creation—tall, broad-shouldered, with big corded arms, upon which the great muscles stood out like the ivy upon some gigantic oak. He might well have stood for a statue representing the brute strength of man.

The beast did not seem disposed to meet his antagonist, and it was only by repeated blows with his stick that his master could persuade him to advance toward the seaman, and then he did so very unwillingly.

The sailor threw his arms around the unresisting animal, and bore down his great weight upon him; with a crash they went down, the man upon the bear. The pirate arose lightly in an instant, but the beast lay still, as if stunned by the fall. Angered by the easy overthrow of his pet, the native brought down his heavy stick with a dull thud upon the bear. With a hoarse growl, he sprang to his feet, his little eyes flashing fire, his tongue protruding from his teeth.

"Do not approach him!" I cried out to the sailor.

But he, flushed with his easy victory and by the wine he had drunk, and goaded on by the cheers of his fellows, would not listen to me. With an oath he sprang forward, wrapped his arms about the brute again, and now followed a terrible struggle.

The bear had wound his paws around the assailant's body, and to and fro they moved, each endeavoring to throw the other. Twice, incredible as it may seem, the man had put forth all of his bull strength, and the bear had tottered—had almost fallen—but each time he had recovered himself, and had borne the man back again. Both times the men had raised a cheer as the bear had staggered, and each time silence had fallen upon them as the brute had hurled back their favorite.

And now they were both becoming exhausted by the fury of the struggle. The great drops of sweat stood out upon the head and arms of the man, his shoulders heaved with the effort—but he was game; the little eyes of the brute had grown dull and glassy, he was plainly tired. It was time for the thing to stop. I had already opened my mouth to DeNortier, to ask him to put a stop to this, when the end came.

The brute had almost ceased to struggle, and his victorious antagonist was bending him backwards, when suddenly the bear stepped upon one of the swords, which still lay edge upwards upon the floor, where the dancer had left them. With a grunt of anger he straightened himself, his eyes flashed fire; plainly his brute mind in some way connected his assailant with the pain. In an instant he tightened his grasp about the man's body, tighter, tighter, tighter; and even as a score sprang forward to drag him from his prey, there was a dull crunch, and the man bent double, fell limp and lifeless to the floor, crushed to death in the terrible paws of his foe.

For an instant the beast stood there erect, his eyes upon the man as he lay at his feet; then a dozen blades leaped from their sheaths, and the seamen were upon him. The light flashed upon their swords for an instant—then the beast fell, pierced in a dozen places, and a convulsion passed over him.

The Indian, in a torrent of tears, threw himself upon his body. "Pepin!" he moaned, "they have killed thee—Pepin, speak to me."

The dying beast opened his eyes, as though called back to life by the voice of one whom he loved; a low grunt of pleasure came from him as he recognized his master. Raising his muzzle, he rubbed it against the Indian's face; then the head fell back upon the floor, a low whine, and he lay still.

The seamen had gathered around the body of their companion, who lay upon the floor where he had fallen. One of their number, who possessed some knowledge of medicine, knelt beside him; rising, he shook his head sadly. "He is dead," he said in a low voice.

DeNortier had arisen, and following him, I passed down



to where the sailor lay. The face of the man was stern and set, as he had looked when he was wrestling with the animal. He had had no time for preparation; as he lived, so had he also died. We looked at him for a moment. Only a few brief minutes before he had been among us, in the prime of his magnificent manhood; now he lay there cold and stiff, fit food for the worms and foul reptiles of the earth.

Turning to the pirates, the Count ordered them to remove both the man and the beast, and he made his way back to his seat without so much as another glance. I lingered a moment where the Indian lay upon the body of the animal, his arm locked about its rough head. Here was love, deep and deathless.

The rough sailors were removing the body of one whom they had eaten and caroused with, one who had faced death with them many a time, a comrade and friend, and yet they knew no such love as this. True they stepped softly and spoke in low voices, but that was out of their awe for the unknown; of that cold hand which had beckoned to one with whom they had feasted to leave the board, and he could but obey.

But the poor untaught savage loved the wild beast whom he had trained and fed. His love was something higher, finer, nobler than they could know; and treading softly, I stood by his side with uncovered head and dropped a coin beside him. But he did not move, and quietly I passed back to where DeNortier sat.

Some wise man hath said truly that "in the midst of life we are in death." He was one who knew of the secrets of the soul, had drank deep of the wine of understanding, and who realized how uncertain is our brief hour.

They had carried out both the sailor and the bear, together with the Indian, who had refused to leave his pet, when the door opened and Oliver appeared, the package in his hand.

"I would have returned sooner," he panted, as he extended it towards me, "but the chest was heavy, and I had much work to move it; for the package had slipped under the bottom, and it was some time before I could discover where it lay."

"Why didst thou not call for aid?" I asked, as I cut the cord with which it was secured.

"It was not necessary," he answered, his eye upon me; plainly he thought that I had some reason for remaining behind.

"Here is the proof," I said, as I turned to the Count and laid the bundle of papers upon the table.

It contained the diary and all the notes, save that of my lady, which had lain next my heart ever since I had discovered it. He took the package, and opening it, began methodically to read the papers.

Oliver and myself had resumed our seats, to await the result of DeNortier's investigation. I glanced down the long tables; the men had taken their seats, but, hardened as they were, the tragedy had cast a gloom over their spirits, and they sat in silence, drinking deeply of the wine, only speaking softly among themselves. Their silence, deep and unbroken, was a strange contrast to the mirth and turmoil that only a few minutes before had rung through the room.

There is something in silence that oppresses the mind; we can bear the noise and roar with a good grace, but silence is a quality that strikes dismay within the breast of man. To-night, as I gazed upon these silent men, I felt a thrill of something pass over me—'twas not fear, it was more like dread, that foe I had seldom experienced since I came to man's estate. They were dangerous thus; in the feasting and revelry they had not had time to plot, but now they were silent and had the opportunity.

I was now aroused by Oliver, who caught my sleeve.

"What is it?" he whispered. "Why have the men grown so silent?"

I whispered to him what had happened.

"Awful," he murmured, as he covered his face with his hands, "I am glad that I missed the sight."

The pirate had spoken not a word since he had taken the papers. Slowly, carefully, he glanced over them one by one, but now he had finished. With an oath, he threw them from the table.

"Thou didst speak truth, Sir Thomas," he said. "He is false!—false as hell! And I trusted him, and believed him devoted to me. All the while he played spy upon me, and



reported every motion to his master, Lord Dunraven. He shall pay dear for this," he continued, his voice rising, "for I will hang him as high as Haman. "Thou art free," he said, looking at me, "both thou and the lad. We will join forces against my lord, fool that he is to think he could deceive me thus; but I will settle with him, once and for all. Come," he continued, "this is to be thy last night here. Thou art free—free as the wind. To-morrow we will talk of plans to outwit Dunraven, and to punish this dog, the priest—but to-night we will drink. Fill up thy glass, both thou and the lad. Here is confusion to Lord Dunraven, and success to all his foes!"

"I drink that toast with a good grace," I said, and I drained the brimming goblet, as did Oliver also.

And now the men had resumed their revelry. They had drunk deep, several of them had fallen under the table, and their fellows, flagons in hand, were now roaring out right lustily the chorus of a drinking song. Many of the glasses had been overturned, and the wine ran in little rivulets over the costly covering of the table; but with their faces lit up with mirth, they heeded it not. Their voices rose to a yell that deafened my ears; then died out—they had finished the song.

DeNortier was drinking deep; fooled in his most trusty man, and chagrined and vexed, to hide his anger he had poured down goblet after goblet of the wine. It was in vain I tried to check him; he was deaf to all my words of warning, and heard me unmoved, as without a moment's hesitation he kept up his debauchery. Although his head was as marble, it would have been more than human if the wine had not begun to tell on him. He said nothing, but silently drank again and again, as though he were an automaton.

I had sipped my wine sparingly, as had also Oliver; for I knew not how the drunken debauchery would end. I could not withdraw as yet, but as soon as DeNortier lost consciousness, as he was sure to do in a few moments if he kept up his mad course, I had determined to take Oliver, and barricade ourselves in our room, where we would be safe until the men became sober and the Count was himself.

And now a whisper circulated among the pirates, who,

keyed up to a drunken frenzy by the wine they had drunk, were but looking for someone to vent their insane rage upon, and were ripe for any mischief. I had heard the whispered word: "What do these Englishmen as the guests of our captain? Let us bind them, and string them up to the nearest tree. They are intermeddlers, and have no business in our midst." I heard a burly ruffian whisper this to his neighbor, and saw him pass it on, until now it had gone around the table, and all eyes were turned to me.

They had seen me practice with the sword, and shoot with the musketoon; plainly they hesitated before attacking so formidable a foe. But all they needed was a few more glasses to nerve them up to the work; then, careless of consequences, they would rush upon Oliver and myself and overpower us by sheer force of numbers.

The time had come for me to retire; for DeNortier was asleep, and could take no offense when he found out later what I had done. Bending over, I whispered to the lad to rise and leave the room.

The Count stirred at the sound of my low tones; his head had fallen upon the table and he was wrapped in a drunken sleep, but even as we moved to rise, he staggered to his feet, his eyes red and bloodshot.

"Up, every man!" he cried to his crew. "Up and drink one last toast with me! Fill high the goblets! It is the last that we shall drink together, and the best."

Habit is near akin to nature; and the habit of obedience brought every one of these drunken brutes to his feet, cups in hand. There, lurching and tipsy, they stood.

The Count had filled his goblet high, and as he did so his eye fell upon us where we sat.

"Up, my noble ally!" he cried. "I give a toast that thou canst not refuse. Why sittest thou silent? Up, I say!"

Whispering to Oliver to rise, I stood up, cup in hand. We would leave when we had drunk this toast, as it would take only a few minutes, and I did not care to offend the Count.

He waited, swaying to and fro, until we had arisen, and then, steadying himself against the table, he looked around.

It was a wild and ungodly sight. One of the great tables



had fallen with a crash, and the wine ran down the room in a stream, and over the pirates, as they lay in sodden slumber upon the floor. Some of the candles had burned down to the sockets and gone out; the blood was clotted upon the floor where the man and bear had fallen and died. The chairs lay strewn all about the floor; and the ruffian crew laughed in drunken glee as they swayed, goblet in hand. DeNortier, drunken and solemn, gazed at me, as he reeled opposite. Oliver and myself were the only sober men in the room.

"I give thee a toast," he repeated, a strange smile upon his face. "A lady, the fairest and loveliest upon the earth! My bride—for I am soon to wed," he continued, not noticing the drunken exclamations of surprise which came from the men, "and the lady is the most beautiful in England. Drink! Drink to the noble bride!—drink to the Lady Margaret Carroll!"

I leaned forward, and before he could stir, I gave him a blow with my fist, which sent him sprawling backwards upon the floor. A loud cry from Oliver, and turning quickly, my eyes fell upon the priest, Father Francis, who had entered, and stood by one of the great tables in the room.

Even as I turned, he caught up one of the heavy gold drinking cups and hurled it full at me. I attempted to dodge it—but too late; with a crash, it struck me upon the forehead, and I went down, as though cuffed by the very hand of Hercules himself.

window. Who has done this deed?" and I looked intently at him.

His voice was cold as he replied: "He was a mutinous rogue, and even dared to disobey my orders. The safety of my plans—the safety of us all—depends upon the rigidity of the discipline which I maintain. Did I but loose the reins, even for a moment, the men would break out of all bounds, and our heads would pay the penalty; so I punished him as he deserved."

"No need to hang him to my window, if thou didst!" I cried. "Thou hast done many deeds of bloodshed and sin, but as I live I shall have thy life for this!" and I struck the table with my fist a loud blow.

"It is a warning, Sir Thomas," he drawled, "'a word to the wise is sufficient.' As for thy sword, put it up. I will not fight thee now; I told thee once before, that I could not cross swords with thee just yet. Have no fear, I will meet thee; thou hadst best save thy wind and thy sword too, for thou wilt need them;" and he drummed upon the table with his fingers, unconcerned, though I stood within two feet of him, my sword in hand, and could have run him through before he could have saved himself.

"Dost thou call thyself a gentleman?" I asked bitterly, "and hire a cutthroat to slay a man, whom thou fearest to meet thyself?"

A dull red flush covered the Count's face, his eyes glittered like a trapped beast.

"What meanest thou?" he growled hoarsely. "Explain thyself, for I know not what thou referrest to."

"I refer to last night, when Father Francis tried to knife me by thy command while I slept," I answered. "Oh! thou art a noble of Spain to do such work as this; and then fear to meet the man thou didst try to have murdered. I would disgrace myself by crossing swords with such as thee."

"Have a care," he growled, his face swollen with anger, "have a care lest I forget myself and run thee through. As for the priest, I swear to thee that I know naught of that which thou sayest, until thou didst tell me of it but a moment ago. This much I will say to thee, that I never yet feared man or devil. I have ever done my work in the open,



have never stooped to such tricks as this, and were it not for a matter that I cannot explain I would fight thee now, and forever rid myself of thee."

"Save thy breath for one who will believe thee," I answered. "As for myself, I believe naught that thou hast said." And picking up my hat, I left him there, his face hot and red with rage, and walked out upon the porch.

Looking out I saw two sailors coming up the path, leading a youth between them. He was a stranger, young, handsome, with a sunny brown eye, long yellow locks, a frank, open face, and could not have been more than twenty years at most. As he came nearer I saw him glance at me.

"What hast thou here?" I asked one of the men.

He answered, respectfully enough: "A young gentleman, sir, who was washed ashore last night from the brig that went down. We kept him in the barrack, for he was half drowned, although to-day he is as bright as a cricket, and is the only soul that came ashore alive out of the ship."

"Art thou English?" I asked the youth.

"Yes," the young fellow replied, looking at me out of his frank eyes. "In whose hands am I?"

"Ask those who are better acquainted than myself," I replied. "The Count is in the dining hall, my men."

"Come," said one of the sailors, and they led him in to where DeNortier sat.

I watched him as they carried him into the hall; his was a fresh, young face, virile and strong, a captive too, like myself, and I naturally felt an interest in his fate. Turning, I passed back into the dining hall, where the Count, silent and moody, still sat.

He was questioning the lad when I entered.

"What is thy name?" he asked, speaking in English.

"Oliver Gates," the boy replied in the same tone, his head held high.

"What art thou doing in these strange seas?" the other said.

"I was page to my Lord Lamdown," the lad answered brightly; "but I had grown tired of the soft, idle life, and being an orphan, with none of kin in England, I embarked with Captain Jones as a gentleman adventurer for the coast

## CHAPTER X

### THE BLACK FLAG GOES UNDER

THE cold morning light shone through the windows and lit up the room about me. It fell upon the walls, all spotted and stained with wine; upon the overturned tables and the golden goblets, which lay here and there upon the floor; upon the figures of the pirates, as they snored where they had fallen among the chairs in last night's bout.

I was lying flat upon the floor where I had been struck down by the goblet thrown by the priest. Putting my hand to my head, I felt a great bruise upon my forehead, which was clotted with blood. Sitting up upon the floor, I gazed around me; the Count was nowhere to be seen, nor was Oliver.

A sound at the door caught my ear, and I looked toward it—ye gods, did my mind wander? There standing sword in hand, looking into the room, his men behind him, stood my old acquaintance and sometime friend, Sir Francis Drake.

"Francis!" I joyfully cried, "Francis!—thou here?"

He started, a look of surprise upon his face.

"I could swear that I had heard that voice before," he muttered to himself, his eyes glancing down upon the fantastic scene upon the floor until it fell upon me, as I sat up among the slumbering pirates, still weak and faint from the blow that the sneaking priest had dealt me.

He looked at my face a moment—that gayly dressed gallant, with the bloodstained ruff and sober face, where had he seen him before?

A look of recognition came into his eyes.

"'Fore God!" he shouted in sudden joy, "it is Sir Thomas Winchester!" Then throwing up his hands sorrowfully, he cried: "Then it is true! Would to God I had





not seen it!" and he turned his face away, as though to shut me from his sight.

"What's true?" I exclaimed, disappointed and alarmed at the change in his countenance, and painfully I staggered to my feet and faced him.

"That thou hast joined these pirates," he answered. "The report was circulated in London after thy disappearance, but thy friends would not credit such a tale. Never would I have believed it, had I not seen thee with mine own eyes," and he finished with a groan.

"Art thou so easily persuaded to think ill of one whom thou didst once believe in and trust?" I answered coldly, for in truth I was grieved and wounded that he should so readily think this of me. "Shame on thee, Sir Francis! Is it the part of a man to convict on such slight testimony and without a hearing? A few idle words of an empty brain, and thou wouldst turn thy back forever upon me, and tarnish the good name of a man of noble family, and one whom thou didst once love," and I looked at him indignantly.

"Slight testimony," he replied bitterly. "What wouldst thou call overwhelming then, if this is but slight? Lo! I look into the hall where the ruffians held their drunken feast last night, and I find thee here on the floor with them. Yes, by the saints, thou hast on the very sword of Sir Samuel Morton, who sailed away two years ago to search for gold on the coast of Peru, and who never returned. It was rumored that he was slain by the hand of Count DeNortier. I cannot be mistaken, for oft have I seen the sword in London. It is of a curious design, and thou couldst search the world over and find no other like unto it," and he pointed to the gold-hilted sword that lay at my side.

A young gallant had entered the room behind Drake, and now stood regarding me with a supercilious air.

"He even wears the gray silk doublet of Sir Samuel!" he lisped breathlessly. "Thou didst see it at the Queen's palace, Sir Francis, when Sir Samuel appeared in it that night for the first time, and how the doublet was praised for the beauty of the cloth and the shape of the garment. As for the sword, there are a dozen gentlemen here who can swear to it."

He was a dainty creature, this gentleman who had spoken, slender, wiry, with a colorless face, and little black beard; his doublet and hose all of the latest cut, and made of the finest material. He might have just stepped out of some London coffee-house instead of a ship commanded by the rough soldier Drake.

I turned my face towards Drake with a bitter look of scorn.

"If thou believest not the word of a gentleman, ask some of these men," I said. "Even they, besotted as they are, have left in them some sparks of justice; they will tell thee that I was held a prisoner here against my will and had naught to do with their adventures," and I seated myself in one of the carved chairs.

"A likely story indeed for one to believe!" the gallant behind Drake cried out shrilly.

"Peace, Sir James Mortimer!" said Sir Francis. "Prick one of yonder snoring rogues with thy sword, and see what he will say about the man. In truth I am loath to believe ill of one, who, when I knew him, ever bore himself gallantly and nobly. But we will see," and he seated himself, with a sigh.

His men were moving about the room, picking up the weapons from the floor and binding the prostrate pirates hand and foot.

Suddenly I remembered I had not seen DeNortier nor Oliver. Where were they; had harm befallen the lad?

"Sir Francis," I said, "there is a lad here, who has been a fellow captive with me. I should grieve if aught had befallen him, and I do not see him here. Hast thou seen a tall, fair, smooth-faced lad, with golden hair?"

"Aye," he answered, "we caught him outside with drawn sword, after the fat priest who guided us here. Faith! It is well that we came when we did. A moment—and then the bulky rogue had been in paradise, for the lad had caught and was about to slay him."

So it was Francis who had betrayed the pirates; this would account for his long absence. He was probably dickering then with Drake to deliver his comrades into the Englishmen's hands, and what better time could he choose than when they drank and caroused? 'Twas an idea worthy



of such a rogue, and even as I thought of it the door opened and Father Francis glided in.

He leered at me in the old way.

"How is the noble sir this fine morning?" he cried. "Ah, he will sail no more the blue seas to scuttle the rich galleons! 'Tis a pity, but all good things must cease," and he heaved a mock sigh, with a rueful countenance.

"Priest," said Drake, "listen, and answer me truly. What part did Sir Thomas Winchester take in these enterprises of which thou dost speak?"

I interrupted him.

"It is useless to question this rogue, for I have no more bitter enemy than he is. Why, he even tried to murder me as I slept."

The priest still looked at me, a smile upon his face, the look of a cat as he plays with a mouse in his paws. Here was a triumph, golden and pleasant, surpassing all his dreams—and revenge was sweet. He had long waited for such a moment as this; had lain awake at night to plot how he would achieve it, and now the time had come.

He spoke deliberately, the words coming slowly from his lips:

"Ah, Sir Francis! the gentleman does not like me. Oft have I remonstrated with him at his deeds of blood, but he turned ever a deaf ear to me. I implored him, when in cold blood he slew Sir Samuel Morton, to spare his life, but he would not. I saved from his foul clutches a beautiful Spanish maid that he had marked out for his prey, and since then he has hated me with the fury of a demon. Have I not many a time prayed for him until morning? Prayed that the light might break into his darkened soul, and that he, even then, would return again into the bosom of Mother Church; but he would have none of it. I forgive thee freely for all the threats and curses that thou hast heaped upon this weak head of mine, and would fain refrain from testifying against thee, but duty, Sir Thomas—my duty will not allow me to shrink from this painful task," and he groaned piously. "Ah! how I have longed to stop thee in thy career of blood and crime, and now, through my prayers, I have been made the humble instrument of thy overthrowal. Sir Thomas, I have implored, but thou didst drive me from

thee. Truly the wicked have fallen into the pit that they digged," and he cast up his eyes with a look of patient suffering, beautiful to behold, upon his features.

"Peace, thou ruffian!" I cried, "or as I live, I will beat out thy brains with the hilt of my sword," and I made as though to rise.

With a loud yell he rushed through the door.

A group of gentlemen had entered, and now stood around Sir Francis as he sat at the small table, his fingers idly drumming upon it, and his eyes upon my face. As they gathered around him, I saw several that I knew. There was Sir William Stone, old and bald; Henry DeGarner, with his disdainful air; Captain Martin Lane in his armor; the little coxcomb, Sir James Mortimer; Peter Graham, and some six or eight other gentlemen—men whom I did not know—who looked at me coldly, and whispered among themselves.

The pirates had been dragged to their feet; their hands were tied behind them, and they now stood in a long line against the wall.

Sir Francis turned to them.

"What of the Englishman, Sir Thomas Winchester?" he inquired. "Did he engage in the expeditions with thee, or did he remain here as a captive?"

They raised a loud shout.

"He is the ringleader," they cried as though with one voice. "Did he not slay Sir Samuel Morton?" one cried, midst the approval of his fellows. "He wears his doublet now!" another shouted. "And his sword!" roared another. "He knew no mercy!" screamed a burly villain in a green doublet. "He would have taken the Spanish maid had not the priest dissuaded him," said another.

Drake turned to me; his face had hardened.

"What more couldst thou ask, Sir Thomas? They corroborate the priest in every detail with one accord. Here is evidence enough to hang an angel of light."

Then turning to old Sir William Stone.

"Take them out, Sir William," he cried; "stand them up against the wall, and shoot them down. "As for thee, Sir Thomas, thou shalt go back with me to England, and let the Queen pass upon thy fate."



"One word," I said, "there is among them the lad Oliver Gates; he is but a boy, fresh and innocent, and has had naught to do with these deeds of which the ruffians speak. I would not that he should suffer harm."

"He is safe," he answered, "and shall go back to England with thee. Hast thou the lad secured outside, Sir William?"

"Aye," rejoined the grim old soldier. "And now right about, you rogues." And he marched them outside, surrounded by his men.

We sat in silence a few minutes—a volley of shots, and they had passed into eternity, the lie fresh upon their lips.

This was the priest's work that the men should testify against me. Dunraven had doubtless planned the scheme, and had through Francis paid these men to swear against me, telling them, not indeed that they would fall into the hands of Drake, but had arranged so that whatever happened they would swear away my life.

They had seen the priest in favor, their promise had come back to their minds, and they thought—or perhaps he had promised beforehand—that at all events he would save their lives; and so they had spoken as he had commanded them. The end had come, before they could retreat.

Drake glanced up as the sound of the musketoons died away.

"Hast thou aught to say for thyself?" he asked.

"Simply that I am innocent," I answered. "I have been a captive here for months, and have had naught to do with the forays of these men. The priest is my enemy; these men swore as they did by his command. If thou dost not believe me, ask the boy Oliver Gates."

I said naught of Dunraven, for I knew that if I did it would simply make my tale seem the more incredible; and, too, I said naught of my adventures, for I saw that he would not believe me. I would save that for the ear of the Queen herself.

Sir James Mortimer leaned over to Drake, and murmured:

"Thou dost remember that the priest warned us of the lad, that he was a sworn henchman of this man."

"True, Sir James," Drake answered; then turning to

me, "Thou surely dost not expect me to believe this, Sir Thomas?"

I arose and bowed.

"In that event, I wait only to be shown the room in which I am to be confined," I said.

Unbuckling my sword, I laid it sheathed upon the table.

"Can I leave it in thy hands until I claim it again?" I asked. "I have endeavored to keep the blade bright and spotless since I have worn it. Some day, when I have cleared myself from this false charge, I will ask it back from thee."

He bowed his head gravely.

"When thou askest for it again, it shall be thine. I pray God that thou mayst be innocent of this charge, but——" and he shook his head gloomily.

And so between two men I passed up the great stairs and into the room which I had left last night; the star of the pirates had waned and set for aye, and the isle was now in the power of the English. Events had transpired quickly, but still I was a prisoner. The door closed, and I heard the key turn in the lock.

Someone ran forward from the corner of the room—it was Oliver, his face radiant with delight.

"It is thou!" he cried. "I had not thought to see thee again," and he almost embraced me in his joy.

I put forward my rough hand and stroked his yellow curls, as though he were a babe and I his mother.

"Ah, lad, we are still prisoners," I said mournfully.

"Yes," he replied, "but we are both alive, and that is more than I had hoped for at one time. When the priest felled thee with the cup, I whipped out my sword and ran at him. He turned and fled out of the door with me at his heels; catching his foot on a stone, he tripped and fell. I was upon him before he could arise. Another moment—and it would all have been over. When lo! these men arose from the ground around us, where they had been lying, and overpowered me. Tying my hands, they took my sword away, and bringing me up to this room, guided by the priest, they unbound and left me. I did not know what had become of thee, and was almost mad with anxiety when thou, too, wert brought in."



"What of DeNortier?" I asked. "He was not below when Drake took the hall."

The lad grinned at me.

"I left him on the floor, where thy buffet had sprawled him, for he was as though dead when I ran after the priest."

"He must have recovered himself and escaped," I said. "He is as slippery and cunning as a fox, and doubtless he lies hidden in some of his secret caves about here."

"What was the volley that I heard but a minute ago?" he asked.

I seated myself upon a chair, and crossed my legs comfortably.

"'Twas the death of the pirates. Drake sent them out and put an end to them in short order."

"And then we will both be set free!" he cried. "Why do they keep us here?"

"The fates fight against us," I answered. "The priest has sworn, and the men, bought by him, have corroborated his statement, that I was the ringleader of the pirates; that I slew Sir Samuel Morton, and I know not what else. To bear them out, it seems that the clothes I have on and the sword that I wore belonged to Morton. They all recognize them, and have persuaded Drake that I am guilty," and I arose and began to pace the floor.

"Infamous!" the boy cried indignantly. "But I will tell them the truth," and he arose.

"It is useless," I replied sadly. "The priest has told them that thou art a boon companion of mine, and they will believe naught that thou wouldst say. In truth it begins to look like the halter. I care not for myself, for I have run my race, but thou art young and thy life lies before thee. I would mourn should harm befall thee. It may be that Drake will free thee, and I will see what can be done."

The lad had risen, and stood facing me, his eyes flashing fire.

"And dost thou think that I would take my own life, when thou dost lose thine? I owe mine to thee—dost think that I would leave thee?"

The moisture stood in my eyes as I looked at him. When all others had deserted me, he had stood faithful and true;

there was left some drop of balm in existence while it held such souls as this, few though they be.

"I shall not drive thee away," I said smilingly, "for I am but too glad to have thee with me."

An hour—two—and then the door opened, and Stone entered.

"Sir Francis wishes to see both of you," he said.

We followed him down into the room where Drake sat alone. He motioned us to chairs.

"Sir Thomas," he said, "dost thou, on the honor of a gentleman, know where the plunder of DeNortier is hidden? If either of you will but tell me, you shall have a liberal share, and so can perhaps buy your liberty from the Queen."

"Sir Francis," I answered, "I know naught of it; none but the Count knew where it was concealed."

"And he has escaped," he muttered. "I regret that I must leave without finding the gold, but time is precious. It may be that this fellow will bring a swarm about our ears, did I but linger here a day. The Spaniards would be but too glad of an excuse to repay me for the blows that I have struck them before now, and we have but one ship. No, we must go," and he arose.

"And now, gentlemen, give me but your word, that you will not attempt to escape, and you shall be free to come and go without a guard."

"Thou hast it," I answered; "that is if Oliver assents," and I looked at the boy.

"Aye," he said, "if Sir Thomas gives the word, so will I."

Drake walked over to the window and looked out, his back towards us.

The lad plucked my sleeve.

"Look," he whispered, "everything of value has been taken by these vandals."

I glanced around me; it was true. The gold and silver goblets, the candlesticks of precious metal, the draperies and statues, the paintings and ornaments, even the very skins and rugs upon the floor were gone. Naught but the heavy furniture remained. I doubted not that they would take that, did they but have a way to carry it on the ship. I glanced through the open door, it was the same in the



other room; even as I looked, I saw the men descending the stairs, bringing the booty from above and stripping the hall as they passed through.

Drake had made a clean job of it, yet even now he mourned because he could not discover the treasure of DeNortier. He turned from the window.

"Tis a pity that thou dost not know where the treasure is hidden," he said. "The gold would have more weight with Elizabeth in freeing thee, than would the innocence of Saint George himself," and with these words he waited silently a moment to see what effect they would have upon me.

But I stood cold and unmoved, and growling out indistinctly a word or two, which I could not understand, he picked up his hat and strode away.

I felt a touch upon my arm; looking around, I saw Father Francis behind me.

"Dog!" I shouted, "and dost thou think to slink here thus to taunt me, and after thou hast sworn away my life?" and with a threatening look, I lifted my clenched fist.

"Hush!" he whispered, drawing nearer to me, his face grave and serious. "I have something of importance for thy ear alone. Come but into the next room. What! And when thy very life hangs in my hands, and I can save thee at a word? I offer to say that word even now for thee, and set thee and the lad free." And he pointed to Oliver, who upon seeing the priest had turned his back, and was gazing intently out of the window.

"Thy life is thine own, to throw away as thou choosest," he continued, "but the boy, so young and innocent—wouldst thou send him to his death? His blood would be upon thy head."

I hesitated, it would take but a moment after all, and I would save Oliver if I could.

"I will listen to thee," I finally replied, "but look thee—beware how thou dost trifle with me. Thou shalt pay dearly for it, if thou doest so," and I looked at him threateningly."

"I do not seek to trifle," he answered. "I talk but business for thee alone. Come!" and he crossed into the next room.

Hesitating I followed, and seated myself in a chair opposite him, which the plunderers had left.

"Out with it!" I cried impatiently. "Say quickly what thou wouldst and waste no time about it!"

"A moment," he mumbled, "only a moment. "Dost know this handwriting?" And running his hand into the folds of his robe he brought out a paper and held it out to me.

Did I know it? Would I know my own heart beats, as they throbbed within my breast? I knew that delicate flowing hand. Did not there lie next my heart at that moment a yellow paper in the same writing?

I took it in my hand, and looking at its address a moment, broke the seal and opened it. It was addressed to Lord Dunraven, and ran as follows:

London, England.
Nov. 15, 1587.

Lord Dunraven,
London, England.

My Dear Lord:

I received thy note only a few moments ago and make haste to answer it. I have thought over thy flattering offer, in which with vows of eternal love thou askest me to be thy wife. Thou dost not know how much this means to a woman. Man has much else; love in his life plays but a little part, and if he should be disappointed, he has his estate, his business, and his friends. He can sail the wide seas, and with his sword carve out for himself a name and fortune. But a woman, if she mistakes the tinsel for pure gold—ah! hers is a wrecked and miserable existence; there is naught but sorrow left for her. I wonder if thou dost realize this, James? That I am putting into thy hands, trustingly and unafraid, my life, my love, my all? Dost thou appreciate the gravity of this step that I am taking? I am afraid that thou dost not, but I will hope, and try to believe that thou wilt come to a future realization of all that this must mean to me, and that thy love will ever be all that thou sayest it is. And so my answer is—yes.
Good-night,

Margaret.



I looked at the paper in my hands; from it there floated that subtle odor that so often heralded the approach of my lady. I could not mistake that delicate perfume, nor the paper, for there were the dainty initials intertwined at the top of the sheet—M. C. Yes, it was in her handwriting—it was hers! Every letter seemed branded into my brain with a hand of fire. My head swam. So this was the last blow; cast off and spurned by my family; kidnaped and detained in captivity; my life in hourly danger—so that when I lay down at night I knew not whether I would awake again—scorned and distrusted by my friends; condemned to die as a pirate, alone, friendless—my sun about to set in disgrace and despair.

Yet I could bear all these things, sustained by my love and trust for her when all else failed. She was to me as the North Star to the storm-tossed mariner, ever calm, serene, lovely—what though she gleamed far away and distant, I could yet see her in memory and guide by her my tempest-tossed bark.

When that light failed, then indeed I was adrift without chart and compass, at the mercy of the winds and waves. This was the last drop that filled my cup to overflowing. There was naught left for me—all was lost! Night, black and inpenetrable, seemed to rise before my tortured eyes; the roll of the ocean beat and moaned in my ears; something within me seemed to snap and break; my breath choked and ceased; I dropped upon the floor, and all else was a blank to me.

Someone was sprinkling water upon my face, and looking up, I saw bending anxiously over me the priest, a look of concern upon his red face.

"Leave me," I moaned. "Canst thou not let me rest in peace? Go! Go!"

"I tell thee I cannot," he said. "Dost thou not remember that I had a proposition for thy ear alone?"

"I care not for thy proposition!" I answered. "Let me die in peace! I would not turn my finger for life or death—go!"

"Remember the lad then," he replied. "If thou dost care not for thyself, remember him. He has a life that even I, besotted as thou dost think me, would grieve to see lost.

Would thou cast it from thee, when by one word thou couldst save him? One good deed thou wilt not regret."

"Help me to a chair then," I replied, "and I will hear what thou hast to say."

Bending over me he put his fat arms around my body, and lifting me as though I had been a child, he bore me to a chair. I felt as some careworn man, bending beneath his years, and tottering with feebleness and age; all my strength and energy had left me. Even the fat priest, hardened and bloodstained as he was, seemed to feel some sparks of pity as he looked down upon me.

"Had I known that the paper would affect thee thus, I would not have shown it to thee," he muttered.

"It matters little," I replied lifelessly. "What is thy offer?"

He hesitated—then spoke:

"Several days ago the Count showed thee a paper in which thou didst purport to formally renounce all claims that thou mightest have to the hand of the Lady Margaret Carroll. Not that thou hast any interest after that paper," he chuckled, "but this matters not for the present. He told thee if thou wouldst but sign that document, thou shouldst be free, with a purse of gold. I offer thee this additional proposition besides what has already been offered—that is thy life, and the boy's (which are as good as gone) to deal with as thou choosest. Not only this, but I will increase the five hundred pounds to one thousand pounds. It is a noble offer. What sayest thou?" and he tapped the floor nervously with his foot.

"My reply now is as it was then. Not though thou offerest me the wealth of the Incas, the lives of a thousand men, though I suffered a dozen deaths by all the tortures that human ingenuity could devise, and my body rotted in the ground, would I sign the paper. Thy master has the lady. What more can he wish? Go back, and tell him once for all what I have said—begone!"

An ugly light had come into the priest's eye as he had listened to me; his bloated face was purple with baffled rage. With a snarl he sprang towards me, drawing his hand from behind his back, and I saw a dagger flash in the light.



"Then die!" he shrieked, and he raised the gleaming weapon above his head and brought it down.

At that moment there was a rush, and a blade flashed under the descending dagger and caught it—'twas Oliver's. Father Francis with a yell dropped the dagger, and rushing to the open window, sprang out of it. The lad, who was close behind him, lunged at him even as he went through—with an exclamation he held up his sword, it was streaming with blood.

"'Tis only a scratch; would that it had been through his breast. What ails thee?" he asked in alarm, as he saw my face. "What is it, that thou dost look as though thou hadst seen thy end?"

"Yes, my end, lad," I repeated, "it is in yonder paper."

He picked it up from the floor and read it through.

"'Tis false!" he cried, the red blood of indignation dyeing his cheeks. "It is only some trick of that fiend Dunraven."

"No," I answered, "'tis her paper, her crest, her handwriting, even the very perfume that she uses hangs about it. It must be true—I would not have believed it had I not seen the paper with mine own eyes. I loved her with a love that knew no distrust, faithfully, devotedly. The night, calm and silent, was not purer or more innocent than her soul; the stars as they peeped out from the distant sky, were no brighter than her eyes, azure, deep, serene; the gold of the sunset was like the glimmer of her hair; the fleecy clouds, white and snowy, were not lovelier than her neck and throat, and yet—yet—she weds Dunraven. Why hast thou forsaken me?—Margaret! Oh, Margaret!"

The lad looked at me, the great tears of pity running down his cheeks.

"Come," he sobbed, "come, we must go," and he led me by the hand from the room.

My mind, numbed by this last great shock, refused to serve me, and I was as one in a trance. Dimly I saw the room, heard the babble of Oliver's voice, my feet moved mechanically under me, but it was as though I were in a dream—a hideous and frightful phantom of the night that in a moment would pass away, and I would wake and find it false.

Oliver chatted on:

"I did but go out into the yard to look at the vessel, and lingered longer than I thought, when remembering that I had left thee with the priest, I hastened back just in time to save thee."

"Yes," I answered, "in time to save me."

He looked at me anxiously.

"What ails thee, Sir Thomas?" he said. "Shall I have a leech attend thee? Perhaps thou hast fever and wouldst feel better for his attendance."

"'Tis useless—he cannot mend a broken heart, lad," I replied, rousing myself from the spell which hung over my senses. "If he is able to do that, thou canst call him."

We had passed down the path to the landing where Drake's vessel lay, and the men were coming and going as they loaded her with the spoils of the mansion. The last party was preparing to leave the house, as we passed from its portals. They were all ready and had gathered in front of the great white mansion.

At Oliver's request I listlessly turned to look at them, and could see Drake's golden beard as he strode among his crew arranging them into rank. The black flag with the ghastly skull and cross-bones still floated over the roof of the house, but even as we looked there arose a shout from the men which was echoed on board the ship. A single culverin boomed out, then slowly, as though reluctant to descend from where she had so long floated, supreme and invincible—the mistress of the isle—the flag lowered until it touched the roof. She had finished her course; her day here was done.

Then there arose a roar that made the other weak and puny in comparison, and lo, there floated high above her the cross of Saint George. Proudly and triumphantly she spread her folds and streamed out bravely in the breeze; the mistress of a hundred hard-fought fields and scenes of carnage, she now counted another among her many victories. The culverins upon the vessel opened their bronze throats and screamed a greeting to the noble banner, and then she too came down.

The men had left the splendid house, and were coming towards us, their hands laden with the last spoils.



Even as I looked at that stately home, Oliver touched my shoulder, and pointed towards it.

"Look!" he cried, "it is on fire!"

'Twas true, both the barrack and the house were in flames, and as we looked they burst out of one of the windows of the mansion, and licked their fiery tongues upwards as though rejoicing in their mad fury at the disaster they were creating. Higher they crept—higher, as if to climb upwards to their friend the red sun, as he hung above them—embracing the great white house in their fiery clutches, like the eager lover as he catches his cold lady in his passionate embraces, and presses her to him, while she hangs listless and silent in his arms.

The sailors had reached us, and the boats were ready to put out for the ships.

Drake approached me.

"Art ill, Sir Thomas?" he asked uneasily, "if so, my leech will attend thee."

I shook my head, for I could not speak. I was faint and sick; my head reeled as though I had been struck down by some heavy hand; my feet trembled under me from weakness and exhaustion—I was almost finished.

The lad spoke up:

"Aye, Sir Francis, if thou wilt but help me with him to the boat. He is ill, and when we reach the ship thy man shall attend him."

And so with hair dishevelled, and bloodshot eyes, like an old man, trembling and feeble, I staggered to the boat between Drake and Oliver. Laying me upon a seat, they pulled off. I glanced back only once; the fire had ascended to the roof, and the whole house was wrapped in flames; the barrack had burned down to the ground and lay in ashes.

So I left the island forever; the noble home ruined and gutted; the pirates dead; DeNortier I knew not where; behind me somewhere concealed a princely treasure, the spoils of a hundred galleons, the fruits of five long years of bloodshed and carnage. Perhaps some unborn explorer of some unknown people may sometime in the dim and misty future sail out upon these seas and find this deserted isle, with its crumbling ruins and hidden gold. I know not; it may be

that it will lie forever deep down in the bowels of the earth, for no good can come of treasure won as this.

I know only this, that not for the wealth of the earth would I touch foot again upon the shore of this isle Eldorado. For me it is a page in life's book finished and closed—past forever. Other regions might I explore, other isles might I look upon, but I knew that I would never again see Eldorado. And thus we left its shore forever.

Often since have I thought of the island, and wondered if it still lies in ruins and silence, broken only by the cries of the birds and the call of the natives. Often in the long winter nights, my pipe in hand, as I sit in my great chair in front of the blazing fire, watching the white clouds of smoke and hearing the wind groaning and whistling about the house, have I mused of its tropic clime and starlit nights, and of the noble white mansion.

Often have I seen in fancy the faces of DeNortier and the fat priest; lived over the stirring scenes of the past, and reveled again, as on the night we held high carnivals; have half turned to where the patient Indian José stood behind my chair with a cup of the King's wine. Lo! I start, I am dozing here, my head upon the cushion of my easy-chair.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE GREAT ARMADA

WE sailed for three long months; July, 1588, was here when we neared England. I had been sick with a fever, brought on by the life of peril that I had lived for so long; the last stroke had been too much for my enfeebled system. I had rolled and tossed for six weary weeks, day and night, and prayed to die, but it was not to be.

Oliver had been ever with me; did I moan he was up in an instant to change my rumpled pillow; did my head ache he would stroke it for me. Gentle, light-footed, tender as a woman, he nursed me day and night. Sometimes when I would grow quiet, he would throw himseif upon his cot and doze for a few moments, but when I stirred he was upon his feet instantly again. I know not how he lived, but pale and serene he moved about as usual; I know I would have died, had it not been for his care of me.

At last after six weeks I began to mend, and would lie weak and exhausted, listening as he would sing to me some old ballad, or give me the news of the ship as he learned it from the gentlemen; for he was a general favorite with all on board, from Drake himself, down to the humblest man who walked the vessel. His bright sunny ways and laughing face had endeared him to the hearts of all.

I was resigned now to my lot. I had prayed for death, had wished to die, and had rebelled when I began to improve. There were so many happy young lads and lovely maidens, for whom life semed to hold so much, it stretched out so beautiful before their eyes; and yet the grim old reaper had garnered them in and left me here. I had ceased to fear death; it had lost its sting for me, and the dread of it was gone. I thought of it now as some old friend, long lost and loved, whose face I had not seen for many years, and whom I longed and yearned to behold once

more. To lie down in its open arms and wake no more—only quiet, peace, oblivion, only the snow of winter to lie above me, and the dew of heaven to fall upon the mound where I lay. Ah! rest after toil would be sweet. But now I was resigned; I would bow to the inevitable. It was the will of God that I should live, and with it I was content.

Oliver, whistling some merry tune, came into the room where I lay one bright morning. I had been thinking of the island, and had idly wondered what had become of the pirates' vessel, for I had not seen it when we left. I looked up at the sound of his footsteps.

"Lad, what has become of the ship of the pirates?" I asked. "I have not seen it for months."

"Drake put some of his crew upon it, and she sailed before us," he answered gayly. "On it I have since learned were my Lord Dunraven and the priest. The gentlemen tell me" (he dropped into one of the chairs) "that the Spaniards are about to fit out a noble fleet, called the great Armada, to invade England. Philip has sworn to humble her pride, so that she will trouble him no more. This is why Sir Francis has put on full sail for the last few days. He wishes to be in at the death," and he whistled in a trifle louder key.

"I but hope that we will arrive in time to help put down these Dons!" he cried, breaking off in the middle of a measure, his eyes flashing. "They have long tried to rule the world with an iron hand, and 'tis full time that old England should show them a thing or two."

"Thou dost talk strangely, Oliver," I answered, with a laugh at his vehemence. "We are most likely to lose our heads if we reach England safe; 'twould be best for us to fall into the hands of the Spaniards as prisoners of war. Perhaps we might escape from them to some place where we would be safe; at any rate our necks would be saved, and that would be something to be thankful for under present conditions."

The boy's face had grown long as he listened to me.

"I had not thought of that," he said, his brow puckered. "'Tis a strange situation to be in," and with that he betook himself thoughtfully on deck.

I had now almost recovered my strength, but I kept closely



to my cabin. I had been on deck a while, a few days after I had gotten able to stir about, and I could but remark on the conduct of the gentlemen; my former comrades had turned the cold shoulder to me, and I had been met on all sides with cool looks and scornful faces. It had fretted me at first, but after all it was the way of the world.

Even Drake had not seemed overly joyous to see me. He inquired after my health, and told me he was glad to see me up again, but his voice had been so careless and perfunctory that I saw it was a distasteful duty, and I had turned away and gone down to my cabin. Occasionally I went on deck, but I avoided the men, and wrapping myself in my cloak would stand apart, a pariah among my fellows.

Sometimes I would be joined by Oliver, and we would pace the deck together. A strange pair we must have looked—I, grave and silent; the boy, bright and merry; I, with gray hair and sad face; he with his curls blowing in the breeze, and a song upon his lips as he walked beside me, his tongue running all the while like a weaver's shuttle.

Often at night I would slip away from my cabin, and would silently stride the deck for hours, my eyes upon the tossing sea. Oliver I did not see so much of lately. Heaven knows I did not complain, for he was young and needed society. The gentlemen kept him a good deal of his time in the great cabin; he amused them, and was good company. I could hear them as they sung together, or tossed the dice; and at such times the loneliness of my life would descend upon me with bitter agony, and I would groan aloud and writhe with anguish as I fought with my traitor soul until I was calm again.

Oliver the gallants could forgive for his crimes, he was bright and innocent; if he had wandered astray he was too young to realize the error of his way. The pirates moreover had said little against him, and if he had done aught he had been led by me.

We had passed several merchant vessels within the last few days; one we hailed was the "Betsy." I recognized her short, stout skipper, who nearly two years ago had conveyed me out to meet the pirate vessel. The man did not know me; I had changed too much.

And now, as I leaned against the rail, I heard the conversation between him and Drake. "The great Armada had sailed from Spain," he said, "several weeks before. It was doubtless even now upon the coast of England; the whole country had arisen as one strong man, and stood ready to meet the Spaniards. If the English were defeated, it would mean the ruin of the country." On hearing this much, Drake had sailed on and left him there.

We were in sight of England now. A frightened fisherman, whom we had picked up, told us that the Spaniards were upon the coast only a few miles away. As dusk fell, a cry went up. Looking, we could perceive through the darkness the gleam of the many lights upon the galleons of the foe, as their ships rose and fell upon the waves. To-morrow the English would join forces with them, and would fight such a battle as had seldom been fought before; one upon which hung the destiny of a great people, and which the world would gaze upon with bated breath.

A voice at my elbow startled me. Drake was leaning upon the rail near my side.

"'Tis a noble sight," he said, pointing to the lights, "those great ships yonder, laden with men. Many of those on board doubtless toss to-night as they think of their homes and friends. Some of them before to-morrow's sun sets will sleep sounder, I doubt not," and he stroked his yellow beard as he glanced at me.

'True," I answered, "they have a hard fight before them, ere they conquer England. Dost think they can accomplish so great a task?"

"I know not," he replied thoughtfully. "This much I will say, that before they conquer England they must face a united people, such as there hast not been since the time of William the Norman."

"Where lies the English fleet?" I asked. "I see naught of it, though it must be near."

"Behind yon acclivity," he replied, pointing to the left of us, where I could dimly see the jagged outline of the coast.

We were swiftly sailing towards that point; a few minutes passed and we rounded the promontory. There in the still waters lay the English squadron, their decks alive with men,



lights gleaming everywhere as the boats moved hither and thither between the vessels. The rough commands of the officers floated out to us upon the night air; the bustle and stir of preparation were everywhere, as ammunition was piled upon the decks, the guns were cleaned for action, and all was gotten in readiness to meet the foe on the morrow.

The long roll of the drum upon our ship met my ear. Drake had aroused his men, and in a few moments our deck was as busy as any of those of the vessels around us. Sir Francis had gotten into his boat, and pulled out to where Lord Howard, who was in command, lay.

Our men ran to and fro upon the vessel, preparing, strengthening, arming, putting everything in order.

Naught had been said to me, so I looked on. Yet I would put in a blow for England to-morrow; though she spurned and disowned me, I would yet strike for the life of the country of my fathers, that had given me birth, and for which my ancestors had fought, bled, and died.

I paced the deck and watched the men, who, perspiring and grimy, were cleaning the great guns, stacking cutlasses and swords in huge heaps upon the vessel, and bringing up ammunition from the hold. Some of them were singing rude songs as they toiled at their work; others, grim and silent, were staggering under the weight of the iron balls for the guns. Everywhere there were hope and courage, even in the face of the overwhelming force they were to face in a few hours. Not for a moment did I see any trace of despair and discouragement.

"Let them come," growled one burly fellow, as he whirled a great cutlass and made it hum about his head; "we will give them such a dose that they will ne'er come back for a second." A low murmur of approval came from his fellows, as with set and determined faces they stopped work an instant to look at him.

All the short summer night the boats came and went, until when the great light of morning broke, everything was prepared for the fray. Oliver had been with Sir Francis Drake, running to and fro carrying messages and commands, and now he pulled back with him at daybreak from the vessel of Lord Howard, where Drake had been in con-

sultation all night. Sleepy and red-eyed the boy scrambled on board.

"Thou hadst best catch a minute or two of sleep, lad," I said, as he came near me. "Thou wilt need it before night, or I shall be mistaken."

"Aye," he answered, "I shall lie down in a moment," and he passed down the ladder.

Drake lingered a moment by me.

"Wilt strike a blow with us to-day for the honor of old England, Sir Thomas?" he said. "Or hast thou enough of England?"

I faced him as he stood there in the dim light of the morn.

"I will fight with thee," I answered.

"Good!" he replied. "We will need all of our stout arms before night, for we are few compared with the Spaniards. I pray God will defend the right and give us victory," and he passed forward among his men.

And now at the sound of the culverin from Howard's ship the noise ceased. The seamen and gentlemen who gathered on the decks of the vessels knelt with one accord. 'Twas a solemn sight as they knelt with bared heads, and the holy men of God lifted their voices and prayed for England, now sorely beset by her foes.

"And if it be thy will, O Lord, we ask that she may emerge from this calamity now upon her with increased glory and honor, and that the strength of the wicked may be utterly put to flight, like the chaff before the wind. Wilt thou, O Father, stretch forth thy hand and smite them root and branch." So prayed our chaplain.

The men cheered as they rose to their feet. Then we sailed out, one by one, to meet the Spaniards, who were only five miles away—on that summer morning, the 19th of July, 1588.

The Spanish fleet lay in the shape of a broad crescent, as they sailed on towards Plymouth; a noble fleet, the great galleons towering above the water, and the sails seemed endless, as ship after ship, one hundred and forty-nine in all, stretched out as far as the eye could see. Truly it seemed folly in the little English fleet with only eighty vessels, some of them mere pinnaces, to attack these great



vessels. It was as though a bulldog, little and plucky, was about to spring at the throat of a great bull.

As we sailed down upon them, Sir Francis motioned for silence, and springing upon a huge cask of powder, cried:

"My men, we are about to strike a blow for liberty to-day, that shall ring around the world. Is there a man before me, so base, so fallen, that he would not defend his home, his family, his land, his Queen? If there be any such here to-day, let him stand out from among his fellows," and he paused.

No sound, the men stood stern and silent. He resumed:

"The Spaniards boast that they will sleep in London to-morrow night, and that they will sack the town. If every one among this crew stands true and firm, and will do his duty to his country and his God, many of their men shall sleep to-night in a warmer clime than London."

A deep roar of laughter went up from the men about him at this sally.

"If each one of you will but remember this, when you strike at your foes, we will deal such a blow to Spain, that it will be ages ere she recovers. Give back but an inch, and you will forge a link in the chains of your slavery; bear yourselves bravely, and you will put a nail in the coffin of Spain. I swear to you that the first man of mine who shall give way but an inch, I will run him through with my sword, though I fight my way through the ranks of the Spaniards to do it. Should you fall back, I will blow up the ship and all on board, rather than she should fall into the hands of the enemy. Stand firm, strike hard and fast, and the day is ours," and he stepped down and wiped the sweat from his brow with his hand.

With a cheer the men responded, "Drake forever!"

With our flag nailed to the mast, as Sir Francis had ordered, we bore down upon the Spaniards. Then began that long fight, immortalized in song and story, which will be told wherever English blood flows, and wherever pluck and courage are known and honored among the sons of men.

We sailed under a great galleon, her decks thronged with mailed soldiers; as we ran beneath them they jeered long and loud, for we looked so little, so insignificant as they towered high above us; it seemed so foolhardy that we

should attack the huge vessel. Silence reigned on board our ship; half-naked gunners, lighted matches in hand, stood by the culverins waiting for the word of command; the soldiers, musketoons in hand; the little knot of gentlemen gathered around Drake—it was in strange contrast to the Spaniard, which rang with laughter, with taunt, and gibe.

I stood a little to one side of Drake, my breastplate on; in my hands was a great ax, for I had not asked for my sword, and had chosen this weapon for the fight. We almost touched the enemy, their tier of guns hung high above us; I could have tossed a biscuit easily on board.

"Now, cried Drake, "Let them have it, boys!"

At the sound there arose a deafening roar; the vessel rocked like a leaf upon the water; the smoke in a dense cloud hid us from the foe. I could hear the crash as the balls struck the ship; could hear the exclamations and oaths of the men; and our sailors, leveling their musketoons into the smoke, fired. Another chorus of yells and curses—we had evidently struck them somewhere.

The noise and uproar around us were deafening, as ship after ship wreathed in fire and smoke closed with the galleons; oaths, curses, and shouts filled the air; volley after volley sounded as the vessels exchanged broadsides; the smoke hid everything from us in a dense cloud. Hoarse words of command, prayers, the screams of the wounded and dying, the shouts of the victorious, the clashing of swords as some ship was boarded—and over it all a dense pall, dark and impenetrable.

Now and then a breeze would blow aside the smoke, and I could see vessels, English and Spanish, around me; could see the men fighting hand to hand on the deck of some great galleon that had been boarded—rising and falling, cutting and thrusting; the Englishmen now advancing and bearing their foes before them, now borne back by some desperate rush. Then another vessel would sweep up to the side of the ship on which they were struggling, and would discharge a load of men. With a yell they would bear down upon the Spaniards and beat them back, and then the smoke would settle, and like a dark curtain shut out the scene.

The Spaniards in the great vessel under which we lay



had endeavored to train their culverins upon us, but in vain, we were too far below them. So they had given that up, and with a volley of small arms had swept our deck. Many of our men had fallen under the storm of lead, and we had replied with another broadside, and then another.

The galleon was sorely hit; we could hear her as she reeled from the shock of the shot, and the smoke clearing showed us the great rents in the side of the ship where our balls had torn through her. At close range the destruction was terrible; her decks were strewn with the dead and dying. It looked like a slaughter pen as the blood ran in great streams down the rough planks.

Then another great ship sailed alongside of us, and our deck swarmed with Spaniards; at the same time the stricken galleon poured what remained of her crew over into us and we were boarded from both sides at the same time. We divided our ranks, fore and aft, with a volley that dropped many a man; then sword in hand we stood firm and steadfast.

Ah! that was a good fight that day. Though they outnumbered us three to one, yet they had not the stern stuff in them of our men. Drake seemed to bear a charmed life; he was here and there—now in the midst of the foe, a dozen swords aimed at him, now back among our men; one moment in front, now on the other side. Wherever the Spaniards pressed our men the hardest, there might be seen his yellow beard and bloody sword.

But I had short time to observe him, for a dozen Spaniards were at me. With a shout, I brained a couple with my great ax, and the others gave way before me; but in an instant they were back, cutting at me with their swords. Oliver was by my side, and right nobly did he play his part; I know not what I would have done without him. Gay, debonair, smiling, he met them and with me drove them back.

With a rush, a new reënforcement came over the rail and made for us, led by a sturdy fellow with a long tawny beard. Then for the first time our depleted ranks gave back, and I was left almost alone; only Oliver and a dozen more stayed by me. I cut down the first fellow, and dropping my ax, for I was too hard pressed for that,

I caught up his sword. "Come!" I shouted to their leader as he neared me. "Cross swords with a man!" With an oath he cut viciously at my head; I parried his thrust and lunged at him; and then with a rush a score bore down upon me, and I stood alone among the foe.

It had gone hard with me, had not Drake come to the rescue; with a shout he cut his way into their ranks, and to where I still fought doggedly on. A thrust had grazed my forehead, I had another cut in the back of my head, but they were scratches and I felt them not; turning, twisting among them, I evaded the myriad blows aimed at me.

With a yell the enemy gave way before us; a score of Englishmen had followed Drake, and were now hacking at them. To add to their confusion our men had driven off the boarders on the other side, and now streamed down to the rescue with loud cries of "Drake!"

A moment of fierce hand-to-hand struggle, as we fought to and fro upon the bloody deck; many slipped and fell in the pools of blood, and they fought among themselves and hacked at the legs of the men as they trampled over them. Some who went down were trodden to death; others struggled to their feet and fought on.

The Spaniards wavered, hesitated, and then with a rush we swept on and over them, as the great waves over the sinking ship. A few little groups remained, struggling stubbornly until they were cut down.

Drake stood wiping his red sword, and looking at the bloodstained floor, all piled with gory bodies. Finally his eye fell upon me.

"Art hurt, Sir Thomas?" he asked, noticing my bloody face.

"No," I answered, "'tis but a scratch," and I wiped my face with my sleeve.

"Thou hast borne thyself right gallantly in the fray," he said. "I almost feared to look, when I saw thee alone in the midst of the foe. But what has become of Oliver? I saw him but a moment ago."

I looked around; he was nowhere in sight.

"I hope no harm has befallen him," I replied anxiously. "But I lost sight of him in the fray, and I know not where he could be."



"Oliver!" shouted Drake, raising his voice, "where art thou?"

"Here," answered a muffled voice, which sounded as though it came from the bowels of the earth.

"Where?" I shouted. "I can see naught of thee."

"Up near the mast," he replied. "I am under a pile of bodies, which, from the feeling of my back, must be at least a mile high."

Treading among the dead, with which the deck was covered, we at last reached the place from which the voice proceeded. There, from under one side of a huge pile of the slain, protruded the legs of the lad. 'Twould have been laughable, had it not been for the gravity of the surroundings. The lad's head was on the other side from us, his body pinned down under the dead, who had fallen crosswise over him, and had doubtless protected his life in the fight by concealing him from view.

I smiled as I saw the spindling legs.

"Thou seemest comfortable and easy where thou liest—no doubt resting from the fatigue of the day. We had perhaps best leave thee where thou art; 'twill keep thee out of mischief."

"Comfortable!" he shouted. "My back is almost broken with the weight upon it. I feel like Atlas bearing the world upon my shoulders. Pull them off, I tell thee!"

Drake had roared when I had teased the boy. He now lent a hand, and we pulled off the six or eight bodies that lay upon him, the last one being that of the tawny-bearded Spaniard who had led the attack upon me. His face was still hard and fierce, as when he had fallen in the heat of the fray. We lifted the last one aside and helped Oliver to his feet; he was sore and stiff, but unhurt, as he informed us in answer to our anxious inquiry.

"Had it not been for yonder red-bearded fellow," he said, "it would have gone hard with me. I tripped as they came down upon us, and as I fell he rushed at me. One of our men cut him down, and he fell upon my body. Before I could arise another had fallen, and so they kept piling up until I was so weighed down that I could not get upon my feet again."

"Half of my men have fallen," Drake said sorrowfully,

as we walked aft, and he stopped to survey a pile of the dead.

In truth 'twas a scanty crew that greeted us as we stood among them. Of the three hundred men who had gone into the fight only about seventy-five bloodstained survivors remained; but they were undaunted and unconquerable, as waving their gory swords, they gathered around us.

A crash—and a great ship, floating the yellow flag of Spain, her decks crowded with men, emerged from the smoke, and spurting fire and death, as though some Titan of the deep bent upon our destruction, she bore down upon us. The men around me were falling thick and fast; one by my side sprang into the air with a loud cry, and then fell, struck down by a ball. A few of the crew were endeavoring to answer them with some of our culverins, but it was in vain; they were shot down where they stood, before they could fire a single gun.

The biting scent of the powder was in my nostrils; the smoke stung my eyes until they ran water; bloody and grimy, I waved my sword and cheered on the men, as they fired their guns at the foe. "Steady!" I shouted. "Stand firm! This cannot last!"

With a last volley, she swept up to our side, and a throng of armed men sprang upon our decks. The smoke cleared for an instant—there was not an English ship in sight, that I could see. Away to the west, about a mile distant, the roars of the guns resounding showed that the fight still raged, but as far as we were concerned, we must work out our own salvation.

And now, sword in hand, the boarders charged down upon our little band as they gathered around Drake, and there we made our last stand. With a rush they were upon us, and then ensued a wild mêlée. Borne back by the weight of numbers the English stood an instant; and then, broken and scattered in little groups, they were swallowed up in the dense mass of their foes. Only the rush and swarm where they fought showed that they were still standing at bay, undaunted and unafraid.

Cut off from the others, only a seaman or two with me, I fought like a tiger for my very life. All around me there



swept a fierce sea of angry, hostile faces; every hand seemed to hold a weapon and to be bent upon my destruction. I could see nothing of the English; I was alone save only for the two sailors.

But the enemy were handicapped by their very numbers; many slipped and went down on the bloody decks, and their companions in blind fury cut and struggled over them in their endeavor to get at me. Many of the wounded were trampled under foot and perished. Cursing, shouting, and fighting among themselves, the Spaniards tried to cut me down. But I had kept perfectly cool as they closed with me; the two men, their backs to mine, guarded my rear, and we held them at bay for many minutes.

I was silent, and made no answer to the cries of the Spaniards; every now and then there would come to my ears the hoarse shouts of Drake, as somewhere in the press he fought and struggled. But save that, I could hear no sound from my friends.

Among the many heads around me, I could see a steel cap with a white plume in it, which marked the chief who had led the enemy when they boarded the ship. As my eye caught sight of him, he made a last charge upon a little group nearby. Cutting down those who resisted, he turned and caught sight of the steel as the Spaniards rushed upon me, and I beat them back.

He made his way through the throng towards me, the men giving way before him. There seemed something familiar in his bearing as he came nearer to me, but I had no chance further to observe him, for with a yell the men whom I had hurled back temporarily were hammering at me as though determined to end the struggle.

One of the men at my back was dragged down and I saw him no more; but turning and thrusting at them, I kept on my feet. My breastplate stood me in good stead; if it had not been for its protection I would have been cut to pieces long before; but my body to the waist was hidden by the pile of dead that lay in front of me, and I had only to guard my head and shoulders and I was safe. A cry behind me, and I turned in time to see the last sailor fall. I was alone now.

The wall of the cabin was only a few feet away; if I

could only reach that, with my back against it, I could hold them at bay for a few minutes longer. Slowly and painfully, inch by inch, my face to the foe, I made my way to it. My arm was weary with cutting; I was almost exhausted; several flesh wounds were bleeding freely, and it was only a few minutes until I would be overpowered by sheer force of numbers. It was only a few feet away now—would I never reach it? The seconds seemed like hours—days—as at a snail's pace I crept nearer to its protecting shelter. I had almost reached it now, nearer, nearer; at last, thank Heaven, my back was against it, and I faced them for the last act of the scene.

A moment thus we faced each other—the Spaniards yelling and shouting, I silent and still. They seemed to be in no hurry to meet the sword that had cut down so many of their fellows, but jostling and pushing they faced me, even as a pack of hounds, baying, gather around some grim old monarch of the forest, who, with antlers poised, stands ready to meet them.

A cry met my ears; a few feet from me the Spaniards were cutting and hacking at someone. A voice called "Sir Thomas!" With a shout I cut my way through them, as a she bear aroused by the cry of her cubs rushes upon the hunter, and with claws bared and flashing eyes, deals out destruction to those who dare to meet her. I knew the voice—it was Oliver's.

Raising my sword, I whirled it about my head with both hands, and cutting down the men who stood in my path, I made for the lad. Cutting and slashing all in my way, I cleared a path through them, the men giving back at the fury of my charge, until I stood above Oliver.

He lay in a pool of blood, the clotted gore all over his bonny gold curls. Stooping, I picked him up as though he had been a feather, and tucking him under my left arm, protecting him as best I could from the enemy's blows, my sword in my right hand, I began my journey back to the friendly shelter of the wall.

How I reached it I never knew. I was crazed with fury as I saw their angry faces, saw them cut at me, and slashed back right and left at them, the lad under my arm lying quiet and limp. I knew not whether he was alive or dead.



Finally I stood once more against the wall, and dropping the boy on the floor behind me, I faced them again.

"Dogs!" I shouted, "do you fear to meet one man? Come on, and I will show you how an Englishman can die."

A moment they waited, and then from out the ranks sprang the tall Spaniard with the white plume, whom I had seen but a few moments ago. Bowing, he faced me with a drawn sword.

"Ah, Sir Thomas!" he cried, "we meet again."

It was the Count DeNortier. For a moment I stood spellbound in astonishment. DeNortier!—I had left him on the floor, on that last night upon the island, and had thought him dead, or at least stranded and alone on that far-away island, and now I saw him here, leading the charge against me.

"DeNortier!" I cried. "What dost thou here?"

He laughed as he answered:

"As soon as I recovered from the buffet that thou didst deal me, I rushed out into the open air, and hearing Drake's men outside, I evaded them. Crossing over to the other side of the island, I boarded a fleet schooner that I had concealed there, ready to sail at a moment's notice, her crew in readiness. We sailed away, and met a galleon going to join the Spanish fleet. They were glad enough to promise me a pardon for my past misdeeds to secure my services. So here I am. Gods! It is well that I recovered myself when I did on that last night—a few moments later, and I would have been in Paradise," and he laughed loudly.

"But if thou dost remember, twice have I promised to meet thee, and settle all our differences—that time has come. On guard!"

We crossed swords; the others, clearing a space and leaning upon their weapons, watched us; the senseless body of the lad behind me. DeNortier cut at me furiously, but I met his blow, and returned it with a vengeance. Gone was my fatigue of a moment ago; it was as though the strength that I had felt in the old days had flowed back into my veins. I was bleeding from a dozen wounds, but I felt it not, for the glow of some wondrous wine seemed to warm me through. I was master of myself; my wrist

as strong and supple, my eye as keen and cunning as it had ever been, for I was determined to kill this man.

He had kept me confined for months. I could have forgiven him that, but I could not forget that he had insulted, on that memorable night, Lady Margaret Carroll, by coupling her name with his. What though she was to be the bride of Lord Dunraven, I would avenge this insult to her; she could not prevent me from doing this. Ah! it would be sweet to fight once more for her. Her hand and love were hers to bestow where she wished, but she could not say me nay in this matter, and so with a right joyful heart I faced the Spaniard in the gathering gloom.

Thrust after thrust he tried, but I met them all with a readiness that surprised myself. I had not fought such a fight as this before; had not crossed swords with a man so worthy of my steel. Trick after trick he tried, some I had never seen before, but the gods fought with me, and as though by intuition I met him and sent him staggering back again. A look of black wrath was upon his face; piqued at being met at every point, he was losing his head at my swordsmanship.

"Ah!" he said, as we struggled upon the slippery deck, "the gentleman fights well. Perhaps he thinks that beyond the water there waits for him a lovely lady. Let him not fool himself. She is ere now the bride of a noble lord, who holds her fast in bands which she cannot break."

But I kept my temper. I had only to keep cool, and the victory was mine, and so I only lunged at him with all my strength. The sharp point of my blade touched his cheek, and with a turn of the wrist I laid it open from ear to neck. With a scream of pain he came at me like a wild cat, but I met him and cut him in the side, so that he staggered back again; pressing forward, I lunged at him once more. He recovered himself, the blood spouting from his cheek, and met my blade with a cut, that, had I not sprang back quickly, would have run me through and through.

Pressing upon me, he rained blow after blow with point and blade. I had never seen such fury. It was as though he were a madman, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that I protected myself. The smile had passed from



his face, and a look of awful anger had replaced it. If he could only reach me, he would give his black soul.

"So Dunraven has outwitted thee," I taunted. "To the victor belongs the spoil."

"The furies take thee!" he cried furiously. "If I have lost, so also hast thou. I would rather that my lord should win than thou. Curse thee!" and he struck with all his force at my head.

"He has used thee well, has done his work with thee, and then, when thou art of no further use, has cast thee aside like a squeezed lemon," and I laughed in his face.

"I will have her yet," he replied, beside himself with anger, his eyes almost starting from his head. "I swear that to thee, though I have to cut Dunraven's throat, and fight my way through all England with her in my arms. Then ho! for my ship, and away to some far-off clime, whre I shall reign a king, and she shall be my queen." His face lighted up with a savage smile.

"Fool," I answered, "thou babblest. Thinkest thou that Dunraven would let thee have the lady? He would slit thy throat at first sight, and then what?"

"He would if he dared," he answered, "but he fears to attempt it. With what I know I could send him to the gallows. No, believe me, he thinks too much of his own hide to try such a scheme as that."

His eyes wandered for an instant.

"Look!" he shouted in alarm to his men. "An English ship to the rescue! Meet them while I finish this fellow."

I heard the shout as the Englishmen clambered over the rail behind me; and the sound of many feet as they rushed at the Spaniards. I raised my sword and lunged forward at DeNortier's breast. It would have finished him for good and all, but the Englishmen were upon me, and the sword was knocked from my hand in the mad rush.

The Spaniards dashed forward to meet their assailants. I was in the midst of a mad vortex of men, arms, swords, weapons, cries, oaths, as with a crash the two parties came together. Like a feather I was thrown from my feet, and lay upon the deck unable to rise as they fought and struggled above me; tramping and stepping on my limbs until I felt as though I were verily beaten into a jelly.

How long they fought there I do not know. It seemed long to me, as I lay under the feet of the struggling men, and heard the crash of arms as they still fought fiercely on. The noise was receding from me, evidently one side was fleeing, but which was it? Then a good old English cheer broke forth, and never had I heard a more welcome sound in my life than that hoarse cry, "Hurrah! Hurrah!" Then the hubbub ceased and the only sound was the splash of the water as the Spaniards sprang overboard.

I slowly and painfully crawled out from among some of the bodies, which lay pell-mell about me, and got on my feet. A round-faced, jovial-looking man who stood near me turned around at the sound, his red sword in his hand. I had never seen him before; around him stood a group of seamen.

"'Tis the brave fellow that we saw holding them at bay when we boarded the ship!" he cried. "Pray, sir, what is thy name?"

"Sir Thomas Winchester, of London," I answered.

A frown was on his face as he looked at me.

"'Tis a pity that so fine a fellow should hang like a dog, but it cannot be helped," he murmured. "Sir, I shall report thy gallant conduct to the Queen. I am sorry I can do no more. Sir Francis Drake related thy story to me last night. It is a passing strange one, incredible and unbelievable, and I would I could believe it. I am Howard."

I had never seen him, but I recognized the family favor. I had known his father when I was but a lad, and had loved the bluff old gentleman.

"Let me congratulate thee upon thy great victory," I said, bowing low. "It is one with which the world will ring, and in which her majesty will rejoice. Truly, 'twas a splendid fight, but I believe it is over now, as I see several of the ships around us." And I looked out to where there lay a dozen shot-riddled vessels.

"I thank thee," he answered. "The credit is to my men, and not to me. The fight is, as thou sayest, won. The Armada has turned tail and flown; our ships are after her as hard as they can go."

"What has become of Sir Francis?" I asked, looking about me. "I fear that he is slain."



"No," he answered, "we found him, with about a dozen of his men, holding the Spaniards at bay upon the other side of the vessel. He has even now made his way out to one of yonder ships to pursue the foe. He left his report concerning his voyage and thyself with me last night, and but just now charged me to send thee, and the boy, Oliver Gates, by the first ship to London, together with the report."

"Oliver!" I cried, my thoughts instantly upon him. "Where is he—hast thou seen aught of him?" and I turned to look behind me where I had left him.

Yes, there he lay, still limp and quiet, his eyes closed, breathing heavily, a pool of blood around him, which flowed from a great cut in his breast.

I knelt beside the boy.

"I would ask that thou let the leech attend him," I said to Lord Howard, as he stood looking down at the body of the lad, "for I fear that he has received his death-blow."

"I trust not," he answered gravely. He turned to several of his men: "Take him down to the cabin, and let Dr. Robbins attend him," he said.

Carefully they picked him up and bore him through the piles of the dead and wounded, that lay upon the deck, down into the cabin.

Lord Howard spoke to me as I passed him, behind the boy.

"Thou shalt leave for London on this ship to-night," he said. "I will send the news of our victory to her Majesty by Sir William Stone, who will command the vessel. Our wounded also go with thee, and I will get aboard another vessel and join Drake in harrying these dogs, so that this will be their last invasion of England."

Bowing my head, I passed down the ladder and into the room where Oliver lay. A fat chubby-faced little man was bending over him. He turned his face as I entered.

"A bad wound," he said, shaking his head and screwing up his eyes.

"It is not fatal?" I said anxiously, as I approached the bed.

"I know not," he replied. "It depends upon the care

and attention he receives. With nursing he may recover. I have seen as bad cuts before, and yet the men recovered."

"Doctor——?" I said.

"Robbins," he answered. "Doctor Robbins, of London, at thy service," and he bowed.

"Doctor Robbins," I continued, "I know no one in London that I would trust him to at a time like this."

"Ah! sad," he replied, "sad," and he shook his little round head like a monkey, a look of sorrow upon his face. "I heard thy story last night, when Sir Francis Drake related it to the gentlemen in the cabin. It is incredible—wonderful!"

"Thou must take the boy to thy house," I said, thoughtfully. "There is no one else, and I will repay thee well."

He started.

"My dear sir—my dear sir, I cannot take the boy. Thou art dreaming. I have no time—no place——"

"Thou must," I interrupted, "there is no one else. Either thou wilt take him, or his death be upon thy hands. I can do nothing for him confined in prison, probably to die."

"I pity thee," he answered sadly; "from the bottom of my heart I pity thee. But I have nowhere to put him; no one to look after him. What would I do with the lad on my hands?"

"Art married?" I asked.

"No," he answered, a faint smile upon his face. "I live with one sister, a maiden. What would she do with a boy sick unto death?"

"Dost thou believe in a God?" I asked. "Art thou a Christian?"

"Surely," he replied indignantly. "Dost thou take me for a heathen, that thou shouldst ask me such a question?"

"Well," I answered, "dost thou remember the tale of the good Samaritan, how the poor man, stricken by his wound, fell by the wayside, and how the priest with holy look passed by on the other side, then the Samaritan, seeing him, took pity upon him, and binding up his wounds, put him upon his own beast, and carrying him to the inn, paid for his lodging and left him there? Thou hast thy choice. Wilt thou be the priest or the good Samaritan?"



The tears were in his eyes as he answered:

"I will take the lad and keep him until he is restored to health and strength."

"I thank thee," I answered. "I know not whether I will see thee again, but I shall not forget thy kindness. May thy God reward thee if I cannot, and as thou dealest with the lad, so may he deal with thee," and I put into his hands my purse. It had some money left in it.

"Tell the boy that my thoughts shall be of him, and that I shall ever treasure in sweetest remembrance his friendship and love. It will brighten the pathway, and if I do not see him again, may God be with him." And turning, I passed to the door.

The little Doctor followed me, and stretched out his hand.

"Thou art a man," he said, "whatever thy faults. I will hold ever sacred the trust thou hast given me, and will deal with the boy as I would with my own."

I wrung his hand, and crossing the room, I bent for a moment and pressed a kiss upon the cold forehead of the boy; then I passed from the room.

The ship had turned, and was moving up the Thames at a rapid rate of speed towards London. I had gone upon deck, and wrapped in my cloak, stood watching the twinkling lights on the banks of the river, that marked where some pleasure house or dwelling lay. Someone touched me upon my arm, and looking up I saw the war-worn face of Sir William Stone.

"Nobly didst thou bear thyself," he said. "Thou hast fought as becoming a gentleman of thy house. Would that it might save thee."

"I have done my duty," I answered. "I leave the rest; I can do no more."

He looked at me in admiration.

"Sir Francis Drake left me thy gold-hilted sword," he said, "and bade me give it to thee, for he knew not when he would see thee again. What wouldst thou have me do with it?"

"Take it to Sir Robert Vane," I replied, "and give it to him with my compliments. It has never been drawn in a cause that would stain it since I have worn it."

"I will do it," he replied, and he looked out again at the lights. Then he touched me. "Look!" he said, pointing to where far before us there twinkled and sparkled many tiny lights—"It is London."

London—and so twenty-two months after I left it I was to enter my native land a captive, my life forfeited, old, broken, gray-headed, my heart bowed down with grief, alone and friendless, the only friend that I had on earth lying below at death's door. So I set foot again upon my native heath.

Nearer we came, for the wind had risen to a gale, and we rushed through the water as though propelled by the hand of a giant. Turning a curve, the lights burst full upon us. Before us a few ships lay at anchor; only a few, however, for most of the vessels had gone out to meet the Spaniards.

Upon the wharves was gathered a great crowd of people; as far as the eye could see, there stretched a great black sea of heads, awaiting, no doubt, to hear news of the day's fight. As we came into sight they raised a great shout which reached to where we stood; our men sprang to their culverins, and with a blinding crash they roared back a greeting. So with ringing bells and roaring guns, amidst the shouts and cheers of the people, we came into the harbor and dropped anchor.

The cries of the people rang across. "How went the fight? Did the Spaniards run? How many of the ships were sunk?" A perfect babel of shouts and questions arose.

Several boats had put off from the shore, and were making for us at full speed. Springing upon the rail, Sir William, his head bowed, held up his hand. Instantly a great silence fell upon them—a silence deep and oppressive.

"The Armada is defeated!" he shouted. "Many of their ships are sunk, and they are now in full flight, our men after them. Three cheers for England!"

Then there arose a shout, deep, full, deafening—it fell upon the night air like the roar of a thousand guns; once, twice, thrice, it rose and fell. Then, "Three cheers for Drake and Sir William Stone!" someone cried, recognizing the old soldier, and the mob gave them with a will.



"The boat is ready, Sir Thomas," the old warrior said, his face lighting up with a proud smile of joy.

Stepping into the boat, we were rowed ashore. Silence fell upon them as we neared the great throng, but as we touched the wharf, they rushed forward, and would have borne old Sir William aloft in triumph.

He waved them back impatiently.

"Back!" he cried. "Would you hinder me? I am on my way to the Queen with tidings of the victory. If you value your heads, you will not delay me."

At this they gave way, for they cared not to arouse the imperious Elizabeth, and we passed through the mob, a little band of soldiers following. Many were the curious glances that were cast at me, but no one recognized my face. It would have been strange if they had. I had left London a care-free, gay, and laughing gallant; I returned gray, haggard, and old.

I could hear the murmur of the crowd as they looked at me.

"It is a Spanish nobleman!" one fat old woman cried to her neighbor.

"Nonsense!" said a butcher in his greasy apron, who stood near her. "It is Sir Henry Cobden, who commanded one of our ships. I know his face."

"Thou art mad!" another shouted. "It is the commander of the Spanish fleet; he goes even now to the Queen to implore mercy and save his neck."

"It is the Earl of Essex," said a tradesman, as I passed him. "Look at his bloody sword."

"Fool, it is the Bishop of Dunham," said a burly baker. "Do not I know his gray beard and pious face? Right bravely has he borne himself, look at his dented breastplate." And he bared his head as I passed.

At the next corner Sir William halted and spoke to me in a low tone.

"I will send some of my men with thee to the Tower," he whispered. "I grieve that I should have to do this, but those are my orders, and I durst not disobey them. I trust it is only for a short time, and when the Queen hears how thou hast borne thyself in the fight, she will pardon thee."

"It is thy duty," I answered. "Worry not about it. Let

but two men accompany me, and I will go on quietly to the Tower."

He turned to the sailors.

"Do ye, Giles and Henry, go with Sir Thomas," he commanded.

"Ay, Sir," they replied.

With them in the lead I passed on to the grim old fortress of London, in which had been confined the bravest and noblest of England. How many, as the heavy doors shut behind them, had breathed for the last time the breath of freedom? It had almost become an adage, "That he who goes to the Tower leaves hope behind him." It loomed dark and gray before me now. Crossing a narrow courtyard, one of the men beat upon the great door studded with nails.

"Who is it?" a voice asked from the inside.

"Friends," he answered. "A gentleman to see Sir Henry DeGray."

At this the heavy bolts rattled and the door opened. A man, a candle in his hand, peered out at us.

"Why canst thou not come in the daylight?" he grumbled. "Thou hast all day, and yet thou must worry us at night."

"We have just arrived in England to-night, my friend," I answered, "and could not have come sooner."

At this the fellow looked at us closely and saw the blood upon our clothes, our disheveled and disordered appearance.

"What news of the great Spanish fleet?" he inquired eagerly. "I heard only a moment ago a great shouting, and wondered if it could be news of the fight."

"The Spanish are defeated," I answered, "and even now are in full flight, our men after them."

"God be praised!" exclaimed the rough old fellow, as he lifted up his hands in joy. "Many a one of them will see the bottom ere morning, or I am mistaken, for there is such a storm brewing to-night as London has not seen for many a year."

"But go into yonder room, Sir," he said, pointing to the door in front of me. "Sir Henry is in there."

"Come, comrades!" he cried to the two sailors who stood behind me. "Come with me, and we will celebrate this



victory in a flagon of good wine, and you shall tell me of the battle," and he hobbled off with them.

I turned the knob and entered the low room. There, seated at a table, was Sir Henry, whom I knew well, for I had served with him during my brief campaign in Ireland, and with him, a glass in his hand, his dull, watery eyes fixed upon me, sat my brother Richard.

## CHAPTER XII

### MY LADY

I KNEW him the moment that I put my eyes upon his face, though I had not seen him in years. He was still the same as when I had seen him last—dull, watery, pale blue eyes, little and stupid like those of a pig; his lean face mottled by hard drinking; his peaked beard shot with gray. Ah! he was the same; a little older, that was all.

He knew me, too, despite the change in me, for even as I looked at him, a gleam of recognition came into his eyes, and he arose to his feet.

"So thou hast met thy deserts? Years ago when we were boys together, I prophesied that the gallows would be thy end. Thou didst laugh at me then, but it has come to pass even as I said," and he stood grinning at me.

"Peace, fool!" I answered, "or I will crack that empty pate of thine with a chair," and I made as though to seize one.

He dropped back into his seat in an instant, his face pale, for he was ever a coward.

"Sir Henry," he stammered, "I am thy guest, wouldst thou see me murdered before thine eyes?" and he cowered away from me.

"Tut, Sir Richard," rejoined the bluff old warrior. "What dost thou fear? Thou art as safe as though thou wert at Richmond Castle. But this cannot be Sir Thomas Winchester?" And he turned to me in astonishment.

"The same, Sir Henry," I answered. "Hadst thou been through but half what I have, thy hair would be as gray as mine."

"Sit thee down, and tell us about it," the good knight said, as he pushed a chair toward me.

"Another time, Sir Henry," I answered. "I am faint





and weak from my wounds, and weary from the long voyage; some other time I will tell thee with pleasure. But one of the men had a note for thee, if I mistake not. He has been in such a hurry to swig down thy good wine, that he even forgot his errand."

"The rogue," he mumbled, and turning he strode to the wall and touched a great brass gong that hung there. "Thou didst speak of thy wounds," he said. "How camest thou by them; wert in the fleet that met the Spanish Armada?"

"Yes," I answered, "I was, then——"

"How did the fight go?" he eagerly interrupted me. "Do the Spaniards even now sail up the Thames to sack the city?"

"Hardly," I answered. "They are beaten and scattered, with Drake and Hawkins in hot pursuit."

"Good!" he shouted joyously. "But thou—why, we thought thee dead long ere this."

"'Tis a long tale," I replied, "and I will tell it to thee to-morrow."

"I forgot," he said hastily, with red cheeks, "and I beg thy pardon; for once curiosity got the better of my manners."

"Where is the note that the seaman had for me, Sam?" he asked, as the old man who had opened the door for us appeared.

"Here, thy honor," he said, as he handed a paper to Sir Henry. "The man begs thy pardon for not delivering it at once, but I dragged him away to drink a glass with me, to celebrate the defeat of the Spaniards, and I am sure that thou wilt forgive his remissness," and he smiled with the ease of an old favorite.

"Begone!" said Sir Henry. "I pardon thee at such a time as this, but let it not occur again."

"No, Sir," mumbled the old man, and he shambled quickly out of the door.

Sir Henry was reading the note, a frown upon his face, and as he finished he looked up.

"Right sorry I am to hear this, Sir Thomas," he said. "Thou shalt have such comforts as the place affords while thou art here, which I trust will not be long. I have a

leech in the house who shall dress thy wounds. But come, I will show thee to thy cell," and rising, he took from his belt a large bunch of keys, and motioned me to follow him.

I did so, leaving Richard, his head bowed as though in thought, in his chair by the table.

Corridor after corridor we crossed; stair after stair we ascended and descended, winding in and out the long, silent halls as though we would never reach our destination. DeGray trod them with the ease of one who knows every nook and cranny by heart. We met only a few people, seemingly guards, and just as I had almost given up in despair, my guide halted in front of one of the innumerable doors, and fitting the key in the lock, opened it, motioning me to enter.

The windows were secured by a heavy grating, and there was only the simplest kind of furniture in the room, only a bed, a rough table, and a chair or two, that was all. The room was fairly large and clean though, but that was about all that could be said of it.

Old Sir Henry entered with me, and locking the door, seated himself on one of the chairs. He was a blunt, rough old fellow, but with a heart of gold, and he had thought much of me in the old days in Ireland. I had saved his life there once, when his horse had been cut down, and he had been left on the ground in the midst of the wild Irish. Seeing him thus, I had turned my horse and had ridden back, and catching him up across my saddle, had dashed forward to join our men, the savage kerns at my heels. He had not forgotten this, his first words told me that.

"It was fourteen years ago to-day that thou didst save my life at the risk of thine own, when the rest of the men had left me to the mercy of the Irish," he said thoughtfully, his eyes absently fixed upon me. "I have the scar with me yet, and will bear it to the grave," and he laid his finger upon a great seamed place on his neck, where a rough scar ran half-way around it.

"It was a close shave," I answered, as I threw myself upon the bed, "but yet thou didst pull through."

"Yes," he replied, "thanks to thee. But, lad, I hope that thou wilt pardon the curiosity of an old friend, and



tell me why thou art here. It is not all curiosity, believe me, for perhaps I can be of assistance to thee," and he lowered his voice to a whisper, and glanced around cautiously at the door.

"Listen," I answered, "perhaps I will tell thee many things that thou wilt not believe. Thou hast asked for the truth, and thou shalt have it." And beginning from my abduction, I related the whole story of my captivity and adventures, omitting nothing, save only the part concerning my lady.

When I finished he gave a low whistle of astonishment.

"It is almost incredible," he exclaimed. "Had it not been thee, I would not have believed it. But why does this Dunraven wish to keep thee out of England?"

"The same reason that has inspired hatred since the beginning of time," I replied—"a fair lady."

"Ah!" he said, his shrewd old eyes upon my face. "And now I remember to have heard some talk of the rivalry for the favor of one of England's loveliest ladies. If she is as beautiful as they say, it is no wonder.

"It is a strange thing," he mused, his rough hand upon his head—"this love of a man for a maid. For her he will do all things; will shed innocent blood; will stoop to any low and ugly deed; would walk through hell bare-footed, as I once heard a gallant say. Many have I seen turn their back upon wealth, honor and fame, upon home, kindred and friends, and leave all to win a woman—'tis strange. It has grown to be an adage that, 'all's fair in love and war,' and the little god has missed but few victims.

"It is ten years since my wife died," he continued, in a low voice, his worn old face softening, "and yet I have not recovered from her death. I think each day that I miss her more and more, and there is an aching void in my heart that naught can fill. It was only a few days ago that I came upon a little piece of needlework that she had sewed upon and left unfinished, and though thou wouldst not believe it, I fell upon my knees in front of that bit of cloth, and burst into tears. Dear, patient Jane! It is only when we have lost the gem that we prize it most. A noble woman, my boy, is God's best gift to man, a bad

one his worse curse. A woman, true and sweet, can raise a man's life towards heaven; can be a benediction to him that will last as long as life; and an unfaithful and nagging woman is as near a hell on earth as man ever gets.

"How stand thy chances with the maid?" he asked, raising his head with a smile upon his rugged face.

"She weds Lord Dunraven," I answered quickly, for he had touched a wound yet fresh and bleeding.

"Pardon me," he replied. "I would not have asked, had I known. But never give up, my lad, fight on until the last shot in the locker. 'None but the brave deserve the fair,' I have often heard, and if that be true thou wilt win her. If rumor can be believed, the lady is the fairest of Eve's daughters, and as for thyself, I know that thou art 'the bravest of the brave.'"

"Thou dost overrate me," I answered, with a gloomy laugh, which I endeavored to make cheerful.

"And what of the Spaniard?" he said. "Does he love the maid, too?"

"Yes," I answered. "He, too, is in the same boat."

He laughed as he arose and made ready to leave.

"I pity the maid," he said. "Between you she is in a pretty fix; whichever way she turns she must run into one of you—a pirate, a rascal, and a gentleman. Were I in her shoes, it would not take me long to make my choice," and he chuckled as he looked at me.

I smiled back at him.

"Would that thou couldst make up her mind for her," I said. "If that were the case, I would lose no sleep over the situation."

"Lose no sleep as it is," he answered; "'twill all come out right in the end. 'Truth is mighty and will prevail,' I once heard a wise man say, and he spoke truly—but I must go. Is there aught that thou dost wish?"

"Naught," I answered, "save if any of my friends should call to see me, I would wish to see them. Not that any of them will come," I said somewhat bitterly, for the lash will sting sometimes. "Thou knowest how the rats desert the sinking ship."

"Aye, my lad," he rejoined, "none know better than I. Have I not had my ups and downs, and been almost at



the end of my tether? I know the traitor smile when the wind is fair, and the terrible frown when the gale blows hard. It's up with thee, when the sun shines brightly, and all stand ready to put their shoulder to the wheel and help thee up still higher, and it's down and a kick to help the cause, when the clouds hang heavy above. Ah! well I know them—a curse on their heads!" and with a growl he strode from the room.

Only a few moments elapsed, when the key grated and the door opened again to admit the prison leech. A pleasant-faced young fellow, who chatted like a monkey as he dressed the dozen flesh wounds that I had received.

"That was a rough cut, sir," he said, as he pointed to my shoulder, where I had a clip of a cutlass as I bore Oliver back to the cabin wall. "It must have pained considerably."

"Not much," I said rather gruffly, for I was weary, and his chatter grated upon me.

This silenced him somewhat, and I had an opportunity to think in peace. What was Richard doing below? No good, I knew. It might be that his friend Dunraven had told him that I would be here to-night, or it might be that it was only a trick of Dame Fortune that she had played me, though it seemed improbable. No, he had some scheme in being here to-night, I was sure; perhaps he would show his hand.

The leech had finished, and with a cheery good-night he opened the door and stepped outside. As he turned to lock the door, I heard the voice of Sir William Stone, and in a moment the old knight entered. His face was hot and angry, and flinging himself in a chair, he looked at me in silence.

"What news?" I asked.

"Bad," he answered. "I saw the Queen and told her of the defeat of the Armada, at which she was of course greatly pleased. Seeing that, I thought it a good opportunity to broach the subject of thyself, and putting into her hands the report Drake had made in thy favor, I begged that she would read that, and afterwards hear me. She did so, and then looking up at me, her eyes flashing, asked what I had to say. I knew not what to make of her face, and

was going on to relate thy gallant conduct in the fight with the Spaniards, and to beg that she would free so valiant a gentleman, when she interrupted me.

"'Sir William!' she cried, 'had it not been for this noble fight for England, and that thou hast grown old in our service, and even now bring news of great joy, I would hang thee with him. What does Drake mean to send me such stuff as this? He shall answer for it when he returns;' and she tore the paper in pieces.

"'After this ruffian DeNortier has murdered my people and sacked my ships for five long years, then thou dost ask me to spare the life of his stanchest captain, who personally murdered one of my bravest gentlemen, Sir Samuel Morton, and who led these expeditions of blood and crime? Shame upon thee! He shall hang, though he were of royal blood! Get ye back to him, and say that on the day after to-morrow, he shall hang by the neck until he is dead. To-morrow is his to make his peace with God. Get thee out of my presence,' and I hurried away as fast I could, for in truth she is too much like her royal father, for it to be pleasant to be around when she is angry," and he groaned.

"It is but what I expected," I answered. "But I thank thee for the effort that thou hast made for me—from the bottom of my heart I thank thee." And I arose and gave him my hand.

He caught it and wrung it with both of his own.

"I would that I could have saved thee," he said hoarsely, "and I wish thee to know that I now believe that thy tale is true. It seems strange, incredible, but thou art a gentleman, and I believe thee. 'The truth is often stranger than fiction.'"

I was pleased at this sign of his trust in me.

"I thank thee, Sir William," I said, "and say again that I spoke only the truth. Should we not meet each other again upon this earth, I hope we shall meet in another sphere."

"God grant it, Sir Thomas!" he cried. "It is but a few more short years for me now, and the time is still shorter with thee. Somewhere beyond this world we will meet again, that I feel sure of—until then, farewell!" and



the old soldier opened the door and passed out, locking it behind him.

Throwing myself upon the bed, I closed my eyes, and only awoke when the gray light of the morning was streaming into the rough cell. A man brought my breakfast, coarse though bountiful, and after eating, I walked to the window and looked out. Only the narrow court-yard met my view. I could see nothing beyond it. To-morrow morning at this time I would be standing upon the scaffold, preparing to make the last long journey into the beyond. A little more and the journey would be over.

The door opened again.

"A gentleman to see thee, sir," said the man who waited upon me.

I turned eagerly, perhaps it was Bobby Vane, or—no, only the crafty features of my brother Richard met my view as he limped into the cell.

"Get out!" I cried angrily. "Quick! Or I will dash thee against the wall. Art deaf?" and I moved toward him.

The jailer had already locked the door and left us.

"Listen, Thomas," he answered. "I have come to save thee, if thou wilt but listen to me a moment."

"Dost thou expect me to believe that?" I said. "Out with thee! Wouldst thou come in to annoy a dying man, and to distract his thoughts from his devotions? This is my last day—wouldst thou spoil it for me?"

"I would save thee," he replied, "if thou wilt but listen to me."

"Be quick then," I answered, "my time is short." And I seated myself opposite him, and leaning my elbow on the table, waited to hear what he would say.

"Our father is dead," he said, clearing his throat and speaking in a low voice.

"Is that so? Well, thou couldst not expect me to shed many tears over him, the way he has treated me. Thy news, while interesting, is not of sufficient moment to disturb me at this late hour."

"Wait a moment!" he cried. "He left me the estates and title, but thou art my brother, I cannot forget that, and I would deal generously by thee. Though thou hast

no legal claim to the estate, if thou wilt but sign this paper, renouncing all right which thou mayst have to the estate, and also another trifling matter here, thou shalt have the Devonshire lands with the house, and I will see that thou dost go free," and his watery eyes glistened as he looked at me.

"Thou art promising too much," I replied. "Art promising what thou canst not perform, and——"

"Not so," he broke in eagerly. "I swear to thee that if I but say the word thou shalt go scot free."

"And what is the other trifling condition in the paper that thou speakest of?" I asked.

"That thou dost renounce all right and pretension that thou mayest have to the hand of the Lady Margaret Carroll," he said.

I laughed scornfully.

"Thou hadst best save thy breath," I said.

"Thou hast no claim—no hope," he rejoined, rising to his feet. "The lady is about to become the bride of the Lord Dunraven. What difference can it make to thee if thou signest away the right to something that thou hast not, if by doing so, thou canst save thy life?"

"Why dost thou wish me to sign the paper, then?" I asked. "If the estates and title are already thine, and the lady Dunraven's?"

He hesitated a moment.

"There are reasons," he finally said. "Reasons that I cannot explain to thee, but sufficiently weighty for us to give thee thy life, if thou wilt sign this document. More than this I durst not say."

"Us," I repeated. "Why not say Dunraven and thyself? It would sound better thus."

"Well," he replied defiantly, "if thou dost wish it thus, have it thine own way. This much is certain: sign this paper and thou art free, a competency in thy hands sufficient to support thee in comfort—refuse, and thy head will pay the penalty," and he stood, his back to the door, leering at me.

"Get out of my sight!" I replied. "Or I will forget myself and do thee an injury," and I advanced on him.



With a yell, he turned and beat fiercely on the door with the hilt of his sword.

"Open!" he cried, "quick!"

The door opened so suddenly that he fell out into the hall at full length and sprawled upon the floor. The door was shut and fastened, and I heard his voice as he shrilly cursed the jailer for his carelessness. The voice died away, and I knew that he was gone.

The dull day dragged away. It was noon, the last I would spend on earth, and I lay upon the bed and wished for the morn. I was weary, and the slow hours wore upon me until finally I arose and began to walk the floor. They had all deserted me, left me like a rat in a trap to die. Of the many who had fawned upon me, there was not one to approach me with a kind word.

London was doubtless amusing herself with talk of me at this moment. The wine was going around the table, and the small talk, as light and frothy as their empty pates, was beginning to be heard; they would doubtless discuss me from the beginning to the end. "Poor Winchester! he used to be a right amusing fellow before he ran away to join the pirates. I wonder how he looks now?"

The little world of fashion—how I had grown to despise it! What cared I for its painted smile or frown; whether the fashion was silver buckles or bronze; whether they talked of me or not? I cared as little for it as I did for the chatter of the sparrows that hopped about the courtyard below.

Did the Lady Margaret Carroll think of one who had known and loved her? Did one sigh of pity come from her heart and darken those azure eyes; or had she serenely forgotten my very existence? And Bobby—this was the most unkind cut of all. Bobby, whom I loved as I did a brother, and whose heart I thought was as true as steel; he, too, had turned his back and left me to my fate. Such was the way of the world.

Nine o'clock, and the dusk was beginning to fall, the long July day was ending. As I lay there I heard someone pause at my door, and then it swung open. I still lay there, my eyes fixed on the dingy ceiling. It was the

jailer probably bringing my supper, for it was about time for him.

"Well, my friend," I said, "this is the last supper that thou wilt bring for me. To-morrow I will be where they do not eat, or at least not such stuff as this that thou dost bring."

"Sir Thomas!" a voice cried. "Is it thou?"

And springing to a sitting posture, whom should I see but Steele, whom I had last left on board the ship with the Spanish maid.

"Steele!" I cried, "Steele!" And leaping to my feet, I almost hugged him in my delight. "Then there is still one friend left to me."

He was as glad to see me as I was to see him; the great tears of joy rolled down his face as he answered:

"Yes, one friend who will stay with thee to the last. I have been out of London to my country place in Hampshire, and only returned to-day. As soon as I arrived I heard the news and came immediately, without stopping to change my clothes," and he pointed to the mud upon his boots.

"Sit down," I said, "and tell me about thyself. But first, what has become of the Spanish maid?"

He colored deeply beneath his ruddy skin. With a smile he answered:

"She is now Mistress Steele."

"Is it possible!" I cried in surprise. "Let me congratulate thee. She is a lovely girl, and I have no doubt is as amiable as she is beautiful. Dame Fortune has indeed smiled upon thee," and I shook his hand heartily.

"Thank thee," he replied. "We were thrown together a great deal during the voyage, and I grew to know and love her for her courage and beauty. We came a short distance in the pirate ship, and then they transferred us to a Spanish merchant vessel in which we went to Cadiz. I found there that I had lost something of value—my heart—and that a Spanish maiden was the finder. What could I do but ask her to give me back hers in exchange? She consented, and we were married there, and then we came on to England. She had a good deal of property, and with it we have bought a splendid home in the country,



where we live most of the time, and I am as happy as a king.

"Often have we talked of thee, and have wondered whether thou wert still alive or not. Twice have I set sail to find thy whereabouts, and each time have been driven back. Once by shipwreck, in which I narrowly escaped with my life; the second time we sailed out into the west for two months, but finally we had to give up the search and come back, as I had no idea where thou wert."

"And where is Mistress Steele?" I said. "Is she in London?"

"No," he replied. "She is in Hampshire. I grieve that she is not here, for I know that she would wish to see thee."

"And didst thou give my message to the Lady Margaret Carroll?" I asked. "And if so, what did she say?"

"Yes," he replied, his face brightening. "I gave it into the hands of the fair lady herself. She blushed as prettily as the dawn, and wept when I told her the situation in which I had left thee; and her eye kindled as I related how thou hadst given thy life into the hands of the Count DeNortier that an unknown Spanish maid might go free. When I had finished, she said no word, only sat in silence for a moment, and then she raised her head, and I saw her bonny blue eyes were full of tears. 'He is the knightliest gentleman that I have ever known,' she said softly, and then she gave me this trinket." He took from the pocket of his doublet a little gold pin and held it out to me.

"I would ask a favor of thee," I said, as I took the little ornament in my hands. "Once thou didst think thyself under some little obligation to me. Wouldst thou cancel the debt?"

"If I could," he replied. "Ask anything in my power and I will do it."

"'Tis a simple thing," I said. "I would only ask thee for this pin."

"It is thine," he replied. "I saved it for thee, should I ever see thee again, for I guessed that thou wouldst wish for it. The lady loves thee," he said, his eyes upon my face.

"Nay"—as I would have interrupted him, "do not raise

thy hand. I have seen maidens before now. Did I not watch her as I told my story, and see the soft color come and go in her cheeks, and the tears in her beautiful eyes? A lady looks not thus but for one man, and that him whom she loves. Believe me, I have seen many damsels. This one loves thee," and he looked at me sagely.

I laughed bitterly.

"It may be so, Steele, and yet if she does she has a passing strange way of showing it. Why, even now, man, the rumor is that she weds Lord Dunraven! How dost thou account for that?"

He bent his head as though in thought for a moment.

"I know not," he said with a sigh. "Many strange things have I seen in my journey through this life, but the strangest of all, I think, my friend, is a maid. One mind to-day; another to-morrow. I had as lieve try to account for the storm, as to say what a lady would do to-day or to-morrow. I cannot say what the maiden will do—perhaps she will marry Dunraven, but this much I repeat, deep down in her heart she loves thee."

I mused a moment, my head upon my hands. Could it be possible?—but no; Steele was mistaken. The lady was interested in the fate of a friend; was perhaps touched that I still thought of her—that was all. And then I thought of a question that I had pondered on so often since Steele left me, and had determined to ask if I should ever see him again.

"What became of the women and children that were taken prisoners when DeNortier captured the galleon with the Spanish maid? I never saw them again, and have often wondered at their fate."

His face darkened with a frown as he replied:

"They went with us on board the ship, and when we had almost gotten to our destination, just before the lady and myself were transferred, we were hailed one day by an English merchant vessel, and the women and children were put aboard—to be sold as slaves to the Barbary pirates, a sailor afterwards told me."

"Didst thou catch the name of the ship?" I asked. "This should be put a stop to, once and for all."

"Yes," he replied, "'twas the 'Betsy' of London."



"It was the very same ship on which we were carried to the pirate's vessel," I said.

"The ruffian!" he answered indignantly, "he should be drawn and quartered. I sought high and low for some trace of the ship when I returned to England, but though I inquired in every city, nowhere could I hear of such a vessel. They told me there was no such ship. The name was probably a disguise."

At that moment there came a knock upon the door, and the rough jailer thrust in his head.

"Closing time, sir," he growled. "Thou must go."

Steele arose to his feet, and we clasped hands in one last, long grasp. The honest fellow was almost overcome by his emotion.

"God bless thee!" he said huskily. "I shall never forget thee, and what thou hast done for me and mine."

A great lump came into my throat. When all others had deserted me, there still remained one friend, who was with me to the last.

"I am glad that in my life I have been able to be of service to thee," I replied. "'Twill perhaps balance that long list of errors and harm that I have brought to many. The memory of it will be sweet to me at the last. Give my best wishes and regards to thy wife, and tell her that she has chosen well. Farewell!"

Stepping closer to me he looked around him; the jailer stood in the hall, fumbling impatiently with his keys.

"Do not despair," he whispered in my ear hurriedly. "Thy friends will not see thee die. Be watchful." And with this he hurried from the room; a wave of the hand to me, and then the great door creaked on its hinges, and I was alone.

I threw myself upon my bed. What did Steele mean when he said that my friends would not see me die? Perhaps they would make one more attempt to persuade the Queen to pardon me. They did not know her as I did, if they had the courage to try again. Her mind when once made up was as adamant, and they might probably go to the gallows for their pains; for Elizabeth was of an imperious temper, and brooked no restraint. He could only mean to use persuasion; they could do nothing by force,

even though he could raise a band who were so reckless as to attack the Tower. Its walls were high and strong, and were garrisoned by hardy veterans commanded by a warworn general, who had only to hold them at bay for a few moments, until reënforcements arrived from the city. Perhaps he only meant to cheer my spirits, and to arouse me from the gloom into which I had fallen.

An hour passed; a man knocked at the door, but he bore only a message from old Sir Henry, saying that a priest waited below to pray with me, should I desire it.

"No," I answered, "tell him that I shall have no sniveling priest around me. If I die, it shall be like a man, undaunted and unafraid." And I turned my face to the wall.

Below in the courtyard I could hear the sound of hammer and saw, as they reared the gallows on which to-morrow I would take my last leap. The workmen with jest and laughter were discussing the execution. "He will meet it like a man," I heard one say, "for old Giles told me that he fought the Dons like a demon."

It availed me little now, I thought as I lay there; my life's book was about to be finished and closed, and they would forget that I had fought for my land, and risked my life in her cause.

Would that I might see the Lady Margaret Carroll once more, ere I closed my eyes forever. What though she had promised to be the bride of a ruffian and knave. If I could catch one more glimpse of her face, pure and sweet, but one sight of her dainty head, I would die content. It was too much to be in England, alone and forsaken, my life to-morrow to be forfeited, in the same city with her, to see the same sky and breathe the same air, and yet not be able to see her; and at the thought I arose and began to pace the floor in agony, the damp sweat of anguish upon my brow. My God! was I to go down into the grave and not catch one last glimpse of her face?

I could appreciate in that bitter moment the story that I had heard years ago from the lips of my old nurse—poor old Alice, she had been dust these many years!—of how the Son of God, alone and forsaken, in anguish and agony sweated great drops of blood, and at the last moment of



pain cried out those heartrending words—"My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The nails had torn the flesh of my hands, as I writhed in sufferings, and the blood from the bruises was dripping from my fingers upon the floor, as I paced to and fro in that accursed cell; my tongue, hot and dry, almost cleaved to the roof of my mouth. My very soul cried out in rebellion, that I should drink the cup of bitterness and anguish to the very dregs.

It seemed to me that I had felt the sting of all else, and this was the last and bitterest; earth could hold nothing more of torture for me. The morrow was as naught beside it. I could imagine how the damned must feel, as they writhe in agony in the burning flames of hell, and realize that they must suffer for countless ages; that there has gone from them all hope—that shining star that guides our groping feet through life's scenes of bitterest woe, and remains our brightest blessing from the cradle to the grave. When hope has fled, there is nothing left.

I must have walked thus for hours, for it was eleven o'clock of the night, when worn out and exhausted, I threw myself again upon the bed. I had reached the point where my tortured soul could suffer no more, and I was now comparatively resigned. The storm and struggle had left me weak and worn, but I had spent myself with its fury and now lay quiet and composed.

Another tap upon the door, and I heard it softly open. Perhaps it was old Sir Henry coming to cheer my drooping spirits. I did not turn my face from the wall; the candle was burning low upon the table, and cast its flickering light throughout the room. I lay there a moment, no sound came from the intruder; and then I became conscious of some faint, familiar perfume. Delicate and subtle, it penetrated my nostrils as though some far-famed wine, buoyant and life-giving.

I sprang to my feet in an instant; there was only one who used such perfume as this. There, standing by the table, wrapped in a dark cloak that concealed her face, one little jeweled hand resting upon the table, stood a lady. I could not see her face; but that radiant hair that sparkled like gold in the light, that proud bend of the head, the little

foot that peeped out from the folds of her dress, they belonged only to one of earth's creatures, and she—Margaret Carroll.

"Margaret!" I cried. "Is it thou?" And I would have caught her in my arms in my delight.

But she drew back from me, the cloak falling from her as she did so, and raised her hand.

"Stop, sir," she said hurriedly. "Thou must think me bold and unmaidenly."

"Say rather divine!" I cried. "Like some ministering angel, to bless poor mortals," and I took a step nearer where she stood.

The faint color had deepened on her rose cheeks at my words.

"Stop," she said. "Thou dost misinterpret my visit, as I feared thou wouldst; but I knew not what else to do. There was no one I could trust, so I persuaded Sir Robert Vane to bring me. He awaits outside," and she turned as though to call him in.

"A moment, Lady Margaret," I said—"a moment before thou dost call him in. I have something of importance for thy ear alone. Wilt thou not hear me, before thou callest Sir Robert?"

She looked at me a moment doubtfully.

"No," she murmured. "Thou canst have naught for my ears that Sir Robert should not hear." And she turned again and took a step towards the door.

"Margaret!" I cried, "hast thou no pity for me? To-night is my last on earth, and thou wilt not hear me one moment. Is that all that thou dost think of one who knew and admired thee in the old days? To-morrow thou canst hear others, but if thou hear me not to-night, thou never wilt. I would tell thee of my strange adventures since I left London," I finished artfully, with an imploring look.

She turned, and then coming back towards me, seated herself upon one of the rough chairs near the table.

"I will hear thy tale," she said, a smile upon her lips. "But list to me, sir, the moment that thou dost digress from that I am gone, and thou mayst depend upon it.

"And what is this marvelous tale of thine?" she continued gently, her azure eyes upon my face. "Sir Robert,



who was out of town, only returned this evening, and I immediately sent for him, and told him that thou wast here, condemned to die. He waited not a moment, but came at once with me here, and a time we had getting in I can tell thee," and she laughed, a little ringing laugh.

I said nothing, I was feasting my eyes upon her as she sat opposite; as the starving beggar looks with eager gaze upon the shop windows, filled with dainties, so I feasted my soul upon her and watched the light come and go upon her lovely face. She was more beautiful if possible, than when I had seen her last. There was an air of maturity, of the ripened fruit, that she had wanted in the days gone by. She was dressed for some ball or rout, in a clinging gown of shimmering pale blue stuff that set off her marvelous beauty to perfection. Around her white throat was clasped a sparkling necklace of diamonds, and the low cut of her gown revealed the soft beauty of her lovely neck. She looked as though she were a creature of some other world—too fair to be one of Mother Earth's daughters.

"Art dumb," she said, "that thou dost sit silent and gaze at me as though I were a ghost? Thou wert better company in the old days," and she looked up at me archly.

"In truth, my lady," I answered, "I did but marvel at thy wondrous beauty and——"

Up she arose in an instant.

"Did I not say that at the first hint of this I would go?" she cried. "I am as good as my word," and she would have gone.

"Margaret!" I cried in dismay, "I most humbly crave thy pardon. I did not mean to offend again."

"I do not trust thee," she answered with a frown. "Remember, sir, I shall not say a word, but at the first intimation of this again—out I go. Thou art changed," she said, and she hesitated.

"Thou meanest older, Margaret," I replied. "Yes, older—much older. I have been through much since thou didst see me last, and my sufferings have, I believe, made me a better man."

"I am glad," she said softly, tears in her eyes.

"Margaret," I said, "didst thou learn who was responsible for my captivity?"

"How long has it been Margaret?" she cried impatiently, tapping her little foot. "'Twas not Margaret when I saw thee last, and though I would not be hard upon thee, still I have overlooked it several times," and she looked up at me imperiously.

"I crave thy pardon," I said, coloring to my ears, for I had not been conscious until she spoke that I had called her by her given name. In my joy at seeing her again I had forgotten all else. "I did but call thee, in the confusion of the moment, as I had thought of thee so often. Habit, thou knowest, Lady Margaret, becomes a part of one," and I looked boldly at her.

The imperious look faded from her face; she met my admiring gaze, and dropping her eyes, she hid them behind her long lashes, and a deep blush mounted her cheeks.

"I see thou hast lost none of thy old boldness," she murmured, "and still art as persistent to gain thy point as ever."

"What I am about to say may seem strange to thee," I said—"incredible. But I have always told the truth to thee—have I not?"

"Yes," she answered gravely, raising her eyes, "I believe whatever thou mayest say."

"It was Dunraven who kidnaped me," I answered quietly. She started, and I thought her face grew paler.

"Impossible!" she cried, her eyes wide open with astonishment.

"I stand too near death's door to lie to thee now, Margaret," I said, "did I wish to."

"Forgive me," she answered quickly. "I was astonished, though I never doubted what thou didst say. But Lord Dunraven?—what motive could he have for so black a deed?"

"Margaret!" I cried, "look at me."

She raised her eyes to mine bravely, but the tell-tale color was in her cheeks.

"And thou dost ask me that?" I cried. "Thou knowest as well as I why Dunraven did this."

She did not reply, but bent her head over the table, so that I could not see her face.

"To-morrow," I said, "will end my career, and I——"

She interrupted me eagerly.



"Thou wilt not die to-morrow; thy friends will save thee."

"My friends can do nothing," I replied slowly. "I am beyond man's help now. I would ask thee one question, and only one. Wilt answer me?"

"I will try," she replied, without raising her bent head. One little hand lay on the table near me, and I had hard work to keep myself from striding forward and closing my own over it.

"I would not wish thee to marry one unworthy of thee," I said. "Thou art too sweet and beautiful to be tied to such a man as this; he would be a blight upon thy young life, that would grow and deepen as the years go by. Such a soul as thine should be mated with one congenial, a man that thou couldst love and trust."

No answer; only silence, the beautiful head bent low over the table. She looked so young and helpless, as I looked at her, that my great love surged over all barriers, and swept everything before it, as the angry ocean beats down its puny bulwarks and breaks upon the land.

"I have a story to tell thee," I said, in a low voice—"one that I have treasured long."

"No!" she cried, lifting her head, and I could see her wet eyes and the tear stains upon her cheeks. "Spare me now—it is useless," she said hurriedly.

"I know it is, Margaret," I said sadly. "But it is because it is so useless that I wish thee to know it, it can harm no one. To-morrow I will have passed from thy life forever; will be as last summer's flowers faded and gone, and yet I wish thee to know of what thou hast been to me. How when I was tempted sorely, and ready to yield, thy pure, sweet face would rise before me, and I, strengthened, would overcome the temptation. How often in the watches of the night, when all was quiet, with none but the silent stars to keep me company, I would think of thee, glad that the same sky hung over both, that we breathed the same air, and that the same sun shone above us. Wilt thou not hear me?"

"How can I help myself," she moaned, "if thou wilt force me to hear thee. But I warn thee beforehand that it is useless."

"I had never been a lady's man in my youth," I said, rising and beginning to pace the floor. "I was ever too rough, too shy, to please little lasses. They laughed at me and mocked my uncouth ways. Even when I was a mere lad, when I would bring the small maid whom I admired my little presents, and offer them to her, I felt a great admiration for her that bound my tongue, and I could only hold them out awkwardly. She would take my gifts from me, and then would turn and mock my awkwardness among her playmates, until they shouted with glee. This taught me my first lesson of woman; that she would use thee while she could, and then cast thee aside like a worn-out garment.

"When I had grown larger I went to college, and finishing there, went out into Ireland, and stayed there a year or two in a brief campaign. When I returned to London I had not seen a woman of my own rank for years, but I plunged at once into the gay whirl of London society, and soon knew all the ladies of fashion. There I learned all the tricks of the men of fashion; learned how to play the flirt; how to regard woman as without heart or soul, her mind occupied only with the latest gown from Paris, or the last ball or rout; cold, heartless, only angling to entrap some gentleman, and after entangling him in her net, to calmly show him to the door when he clamored for something more than friendship. If she, to obtain rank or fortune, should finally marry him, it would be only a cold, matter-of-fact trade, a simple transaction of business—her beauty for his title or gold.

"I had seen these newly-wedded husbands remain at home for a few weeks, and then frequent the taverns more assiduously than ever; had heard them tell in their cups of the vixenish temper of Mary, or the nagging tongue of Jane. What wonder that I soon regarded all women as flirts and coquettes, bent only on enjoying themselves, no matter at what expense, and then away to some other flower to sip the honey. For ten years did I linger among them, the gayest of the gay, the petted and humored of the bright dames of fashion. I could cast the most languishing glances, whisper the most burning words into soft ears that bent to listen, and yet it was only Winchester—he



was a witty fellow, but he meant nothing and was harmless.

"And then one day I met a maiden, beautiful, lovely; she lured me on by her very beauty, I grew to know her better from day to day; the admiration deepened as I saw her—pure, innocent, and true, never deceiving, never trifling with men's love, always noble, unselfish, and unaffected, never seeming conscious of her great beauty which turned the heads of men. As I knew her better I admired her more, until one day I awoke and found my admiration had ripened into love. Shall I tell thee what it meant to me?—how it brightened life's pathway; how if I could but see one bright face my heart was full to overflowing; how if one was absent from the room it was deserted for me, and how when I was by her side earth was heaven enough for me; how I watched the streets day and night to see her pass, and counted that day well spent when I had seen her face? I treasured her smile as the miser does his gold, and at night counted them over one by one.

"One morning as I arose early, I saw her out for a morning stroll with a companion, and watched her as she tossed a coin to a beggar upon the corner. I bought that coin from her, and now wear it next my heart," and I pulled a little gold chain from around my neck, and laid it upon the table.

No sound from the silent figure with her head upon the table.

"Margaret!" I cried, "I love thee. I know not how to express my love, I can only sing like the bird, only one song by night and day—I love thee."

"Don't," she said, "I am not worthy of such love as this."

"Not worthy!" I cried. "Why, a king upon his throne would step down gladly for thy love," and I bent toward her.

"No, no," she murmured, her shoulders rising and falling with her sobs.

"Margaret," I said, "dost thou love another?"

No sound save that of her low sobs.

At that moment I remembered the mirror in the crone's hut in that far-away island, and what I had seen in it.

It was possible that it might be true after all. Bobby was by her side here in London, was constantly thrown in her company; would it be strange if he had grown to love her?

"Is it Sir Robert Vane?" I asked.

She sprang to her feet, her eyes flashing through her tears.

"How darest thou?" she cried. "How darest thou ask me such a question as that? Who gave thee the right, sir?" and she gazed at me a moment in her anger, as though she would strike me down, and then, sinking into her chair, she cried as though her heart would break. "I hate thee," she wailed.

"Forgive me," I said gently. "I would not have asked thee, had I known. He is a gentleman, brave and true, and will make thee a kind and upright husband. Thou wilt be happy in the days to come, together. I trust thou wilt believe me, when I say that for thee I wish all good blessings. May thy future pathway be strewn with flowers, and may not a shadow fall athwart it to darken its happiness. Sometimes when thou art happy, leaning upon the strong arm of him whom thou dost love, wilt thou not give one thought to one who once knew and loved thee? And now—good-by!"

Bending my knee, I pressed that little white hand to my lips, and taking her arm I walked with her to the door and opened it—there, pacing the hall, was Bobby.

He turned when he saw me, and running forward, caught my hand.

"Thomas!" he cried, "I never thought to see thee alive again."

I returned his cordial grasp.

"Bobby," I said, "take Lady Margaret home, and then come back again, for I have something to say to thee. Care for her tenderly," I said to him, as with the weeping lady upon his arm he turned to go. "Thou hast won the loveliest and fairest woman that I have ever known. It is a priceless jewel, Bobby—guard it well. May God watch over both of you now and in the days to come!" And turning I opened the door of my cell, and passing inside, closed it behind me.

## CHAPTER XIII

### I SAIL FOR VIRGINIA

IT was near midnight when my door opened again. I was still in the chair by the table, where I had seated myself when I had left them outside, staring vacantly at the place opposite, where she had sat so lately. Only a few brief minutes before her dress had pressed yonder chair; her elbow had touched the table; it was still wet with her tears.

"Bobby," I said, arising as he entered, "I need not say that I am glad to see thee; it seems like ages since we roamed London together."

He seated himself opposite and looked at me. I saw no change in him since we had been together twenty-two months before, save perhaps a few wrinkles about his forehead, otherwise he was still the same frank, sincere friend.

"Thou hast changed," he said at length.

"I know it," I replied, "but thou hast heard of my adventures."

"Yes," he answered, with a ringing laugh. "The Lady Margaret told me of them. I marvel not that the Queen did not believe thee—it is almost beyond belief."

"Bobby," I said, "often have I thought of thee in the long nights and wished to see thy face. I had not thought sometimes to see it again."

He looked up at me, his eyes moist.

"I have searched far and wide for thee, everywhere that I could think of, but it was as though thou hadst been caught up in the clouds; nowhere could I find a trace of thy whereabouts. I had almost given up hope."

"Dunraven was at the bottom of it," I said. "He thought that, with me out of the way, he could win Margaret, but I thank Heaven that his plans have miscarried, and that she has bestowed her love upon a noble gentleman of worth

and merit. Old friend, this is no time for concealment or coldness between us—from the bottom of my heart I congratulate thee, and wish thee joy!" and I held out my hand to him.

He took it, and squeezed it between both of his own.

"Thank thee, old man," he said huskily. "None but a heart of true steel such as thine could bear this grief so nobly. But I fear that thou art mistaken, for never has the lady given me any cause to think that she regarded me as more than a friend; thou hast misinterpreted her words."

"No," I answered, "she loves thee; she as good as told me that. What didst thou expect—that the lady would propose to thee?" I smiled at him. "Pluck up courage, good sir, make one brave charge, and the field is thine."

"I would I thought so," he said doubtfully.

"But," I said, "'faint heart ne'er won fair lady.' Put on a bold front, I have never found thee timid; corner her and force her to listen to thee."

He looked at me, his face flushed and happy.

"And thou dost think of me with thyself at death's door!" he cried, "while I sit here like a mummy. Listen—old Sir Henry DeGray thinks much of thee, as thou dost know, and he has consented to aid us in thy escape. The plan is this. After I have left, dost thou wait about fifteen minutes, then beat upon the door. The man who will open it is drunk. Knock him down, take his keys away from him, and put him in thy place; then don his cloak and walk boldly out into the hall. Sir Henry awaits thee there. Say nothing, but follow him to the door. I shall be outside and will guide thee to where Governor White lies at anchor in the Thames, ready to set sail for the golden Virginia. Once over there thou art safe, and canst remain until the coast is clear here; then thou canst return to England."

"'Tis a bold scheme, Bobby, and I thank thee. But why should I go? Life holds naught so precious for me, that I should cling to it so strongly. There is nothing for me beyond the seas, in that strange and barbarous land, with its painted savages and fierce beasts of prey. What could I do, should I reach it alive? No, leave me to my fate—and go!"



"Thomas!" he cried, "if thou carest not for thyself, think of thy friends. Spare me this last blow—spare me, or I shall go mad! Think of Margaret, and for her sake go," and he stretched out his hands imploringly to me.

Silence reigned in the little room. I was thinking of her; what would she care? Why should I go out into a strange and unknown land to begin life anew, with no one besides me save only the Indians and wild beasts; to drag out a few miserable years of pain and sorrow. A life such as this was not worth the effort—no, the game was not worth the candle.

"Thou dost not know what thou askest of me," I replied finally. "What would a life such as this mean? It would be a living death. Better one quick leap and then forgetfulness and oblivion. As for Margaret, why should she care?"

"Thou art mad," he replied, "that thou talkest thus. It will be only for a few months among new scenes and men; 'twill be a diversion for thy mind. As for my lady, thou hast no right to speak thus. Thou dost not know how much she cares; in truth, as I led her home she wept as though her heart would break, and she implored me to save thee as I left her."

"And so thou dost beseech me to leave England, so that I may be out of the way," I answered bitterly.

"Thomas!" he cried reproachfully, "I have not deserved this at thy hands—as God is my witness, I have not. I have ever loved thee as a brother, and there has been no time when I would not have given my life to have saved thee, and yet thou reproachest me thus. Truly those we love most are the first to turn their backs upon us."

"Forgive me, Bobby!" I cried penitently. "My grief has almost turned my brain, and I know not what I say. I did not mean to offend thee, and would beg thy pardon."

"Then go," he answered, pacing the floor in his excitement. "A few more minutes and the watch will be changed, and 'twill be too late. Come! for my sake if thou lovest me; for Margaret's sake; for the sake of thy old friends, whom thou didst once know and cherish." And he turned to me with a look of entreaty upon his face.

"If thou dost put it thus," I said, "I will go. It matters

little where I drag out the few remaining years left to me. For thy sake I will go."

"Good!" he cried joyfully. "Remember what I have told thee. I will wait for thee on the outside. I pray that our plans may not miscarry. Be brave, and fear naught. I must hurry," and he opened the door and left me.

I could hear the sound of his feet upon the floor as he walked rapidly down the hall. I waited in silence a few minutes, then with both fists I pounded upon the door, and kicked upon it with my heels.

An unsteady voice answered me from the outside:

"What-cher-want? Can't-yer-be-quiet?" and then a hic-cough.

"Open!" I cried. "I have a sovereign for thee if thou wilt do an errand for me."

I heard him fumbling with the lock, and then opening the door, he thrust his head inside, and gazed carefully around the room from the ceiling to the floor, until finally his eyes fell upon me, as I stood within three feet of him.

"What-yer-want?" he muttered again. "Can't-yer-lemme-sleep?" And a threatening look came over his drunken face.

"I have a dozen bright gold pieces for thee," I said. "Come inside and thou shalt have them," and I thrust my hand into my pocket, as though to draw them out.

He lurched inside and towards me, his hand outstretched. "Lemme-have-em," he cried in tipsy glee.

With a bound I caught him by the throat and threw him upon the floor. With his own doublet and some of the bedding I swiftly and quietly bound him hand and foot and gagged him. Then picking up his helpless body in my arms, I threw it upon the bed as though he were a bundle of goods.

"Listen," I said in a low voice, my face within a foot of his own; "make but one sound or attempt to escape, and I will kill thee, for I am just outside."

Unbuckling the belt around his waist, in which hung a long dagger, I fastened it around my own, and picking up his dark cloak and steel cap, which had fallen upon the floor when I sprang upon him, I prepared to take my departure.



One last look at the bound man upon the bed—yes, he was secure. A sudden thought struck me: where were the keys? There were only a few in his doublet, but they were small ones, evidently to the doors of the cells. Nowhere could I find those which belonged to the great front door, nor to the doors which led into each corridor. Well I must trust to chance for my salvation; I would make the attempt, I could do no more.

Crossing over to the door which stood slightly ajar, the key still in the lock, I pushed it open and stood in the corridor, which was deserted. I turned the key in the lock, thrust it into my pocket, and with the cloak around my face, strode down the hall. The long passage seemed to re-echo my footsteps as though I trod with feet of mail. It seemed to me that all must know a prisoner was escaping. The very walls semed to cry "Stop!—stop!" to me as I trod by; my heart beat as though it would burst. The jailer must hear its muffled beat—but no sound greeted my ears, as I kept steadily on my way and stood at the first heavy door that barred my passage.

My feeling of terror had left me, and I felt a strange exultation. If I should escape from this black hole, I would be the first for many a year. Of the many who entered its gloomy portals, few ever left them alive again. They were doomed to pass their days in some dark dungeon within its recesses, shut off from the world and all it contained.

I beat with the hilt of my dagger upon the iron-studded panel.

"Open!" I cried.

The growl of old Sir Henry answered me.

"Is it thee, Jack? Thou scoundrel! Thou shouldst have been here an hour ago. What kept thee so long, thou dog? I will lash that lazy hide of thine," and grumbling to himself he unlocked the door. "Why stand like a struck boar?" he shouted at me. "Thou fool! hast thou all night to stand there?"

And with a curse he locked the door again, and strode away with me at his heels, leaving the man who had stood by him during his brief monologue staring after us as we left him. He walked at a rapid gait, I at his heels, down

the long passage, speaking never a word. We passed several guards lounging in the hall, who straightened up, all attention, as we neared them. Evidently the old soldier kept his men under strict discipline.

As we neared a little knot of guards, he cried out:

"Come on, thou fool, I will teach thee to sleep at thy post again! I will tear the very flesh from thy bones!" And with that he unlocked the door which barred our passage, and passing the man who stood beside it, he kept on down the hall. I could hear the men on the other side mutter to themselves as it swung to, but what they said I could not catch.

We were alone now in the hall, no one was in sight of us. Peering around him the old warrior halted a moment, and turning to me, one eye closed, he winked; then with a growl, he resumed his journey. Several more doors we unlocked and passed through, meeting a dozen little groups of men in the hall, but Sir Henry said not a word, only as we neared them, he would curse me for my tardiness and laziness, and swear to tear me limb from limb.

With my cap pulled down over my face and wrapped in the great dark cloak, I followed him, my head bowed as though in dejection and fear; and so we traversed the great building, until finally we stood at the huge door that led out into the open air, where he halted. There was no one there, and unbolting it, he motioned for me to walk out.

"Forget not to deliver the message that I gave thee to Lord Pendleton," he said, in a loud tone of voice, for the benefit of any who might chance to see us, "thou dog, and waste no time about it, or I will trounce thee well with my stirrup—begone!" And with a kindly look upon his old face, he pushed the door to, and I heard the chain rattle as he secured it.

I stood alone in the low courtyard of the prison, the cold night air blowing against my face. Carefully I picked my way over the uneven stones, with which the yard was paved, until I reached the gate which led into the street. It was unlocked, and opening it, I stood once more upon the street of London—free.

A man started from the shadow of the wall, and came toward me, his head muffled in his cloak; as he neared me, I saw that it was Bobby.



"I had almost given thee up," he whispered. "But come, we have no time to lose. It will be only a few hours at the most until they discover thy escape, and they will search all England thoroughly for thee." And catching me by the arm, he hurried me down the street.

"Where art thou going?" I asked in a low tone of voice.

"To the river," he answered. "I have a fleet boat there, and we will row down to where Governor White lays. He has consented to conceal thee for a day or two, until he gets out of England, and then thou canst reveal thyself, for it will not matter then. He is under great obligations to Raleigh, and I persuaded Sir Walter to ask this of him; it was the only way we could save thee, and White would cut off his right hand for Walter."

Down the dark streets we hurried; I could hear Bobby panting as he rushed along. This was violent exercise for one who had lived an idle life for years. Every moment I expected the dark tower behind us to twinkle with lights and ring with shouts, as they discovered my flight and made haste to pursue me. But no sound came from its black depths; it lay still and gloomy. We passed only a few belated nighthawks and wayfarers, as they staggered home after a night of revelry, and they endeavored to give us a wide berth, for we were two able-bodied men, and they cared not to tackle us.

Finally, turning into a dark lane, we stood by the river's brink. Bobby, putting his fingers to his lips, gave a shrill whistle; an answer floated back from the dark water, and I heard the sound of oars as a boat came forward to us.

"It is manned by four tenants from my estate near London," he whispered. "True as steel they are; rather would they be cut to pieces, than to say one word of to-night's work."

The boat swept up to the dark wharf where we stood.

"Careful," he muttered, "watch where thou dost step. Do thou go first," and he motioned towards the boat.

I stepped down into it and he followed. Without a sound the men pushed off, and bent to their work with a will;

the little boat hummed through the water. I could not see the faces around me, only four dark forms, pulling with all their strength upon the oars. They rowed on in silence, uttering no sound as we passed through the twinkling lights where the vessels lay at anchor, rising and falling with the tide.

Behind us stretched the city; before us the silent river, and I knew not what beyond that. God only knew when I would see England again; an exile, with only one true friend beside me, I was hurrying from London like a thief, from the land where I had been born and reared. Engaged with such thoughts as these, I sat silent and moody; beside me Bobby, his face upon his hand, sat as preoccupied as myself. We had left the ships now, and were pulling down the river, with no glimmer of light in sight.

"Where art thou going, Bobby?" I asked. "Thou hast left all of the ships behind thee, and art making down the river."

He roused himself and looked around him.

"Where art thou going, Bill?" he cried. "This is not where the vessel lies," and he bent forward to peer at the silent figure near him. As he did so he sprang to his feet, his sword in hand. "What have we here?" he shouted in alarm. "This is not my boat!"

I was just about to rise beside him, dagger in hand, when from the stern of the boat, among some oilskins and packages, a man arose. At the first sound of his voice I was up, for I knew the curt, ironical tones.

"My dear gentlemen, pray be seated," he said. "You are my guests, and I beg that you be not alarmed; I will watch over you well." With a mocking smile upon his face, stood Lord Dunraven.

The men had dropped their oars and sprang up to overpower us. As one hardy mariner caught my left arm with both hands, I raised my dagger and plunged it full into his brawny breast; with a groan he rolled down at my feet, knocking down his companion in his fall. Bobby was struggling in the grasp of the other two men behind me; Dunraven was coming at me with drawn sword—there was no time to be lost. The seaman who had been knocked down struggled to his knees. I raised my foot, and kicked him



full in the face, with all my might. With a cry of pain he fell back, and I, losing my balance, sprawled over him as he went down.

I heard Dunraven's sword whistle over my head as I fell; it would have caught me full in the throat had I not done so. He stumbled for an instant as, carried away by the force of his blow, he sought to recover himself. Leaning forward I caught him by both knees, and rising to my feet, I swung him high over my head a moment, and then cast him far out into the water, as though he had been a log.

The two men had Bobby down in the bottom of the boat, and were tying him securely with ropes, he struggling to release himself. Catching up a cutlass, I sprang forward, and cut at the head of one of them who had turned to meet me. The blade caught him full on the neck, and almost severed his head from his body. He stood erect for an instant, the blood spurting from his throat, and then with an awful yell he went down, both hands clutching blindly at the bottom of the boat in his agony. The other rogue waited for no more, but in an instant was over the side of the boat, and I heard him as with vigorous strokes he swam down the stream.

"Thomas, for Heaven's sake, untie these cords from my arms!" Bobby cried, at my feet. "These rogues have bound me as though they thought I would fall asunder; the cords cut into my flesh like a sword."

Bending over him, I cut the rope with my bloody cutlass, and helped him to his feet.

"Where are we?" I asked.

"God only knows," he answered, "I do not. We will miss the ship!" he cried, wringing his hands. "What a fool I was, not to be sure that I had gotten on board the right boat. Dunraven must have caught wind of my scheme somewhere, and laid this trap into which I walked like an idiot."

"Thou couldst not know it," I answered. "Do not blame thyself. Yonder goes an oar!" And one of the oars, loosed from the socket by the struggle, floated out into the stream. I jumped forward and caught another as it was about to follow suit. "Catch yonder one, Bobby!" I shouted, and quickly he did so. Only two remained out of

four; one of the others had floated away, probably when the seamen had loosened it.

"Where dost thou say we are?" I asked. "We had best turn back upstream, and make for the ship."

He was standing up, and peered around him.

"I know yonder house," he said finally, pointing out to where a great many-gabled house gleamed far away in the darkness. "'Tis Sir John Norton's house, and it is five miles from where Governor White lies, and the tide is against us; we shall never make it before morning," and he groaned hopelessly.

"Do not despair," I said cheerfully. "Take one of the oars and we will have a try at it. We will go under if we must, but first we will make a game fight," and seating myself, I began to tug at one of the oars.

Years ago I could row, but I had grown older now, and rowing was more difficult to me. Slowly we turned, and began to pull against the tide; it was about three o'clock in the morning, and we had only two hours at the most to make the ship, for she sailed at five o'clock, as Bobby informed me. He, tugging opposite, cursed his luck, as with a groan he bent to his task. Of Dunraven and the sailor we heard nothing. They had disappeared, and the dark river told no secrets.

I shall never forget that night's work, as with aching back I pulled for my life, and not only mine, but for Bobby's as well; for to my repeated offers to put him on shore, and let him strike through the country for his estates, he turned a deaf ear.

"Leave thee to thy death?" he cried indignantly. "No, I have not sunk so low as that. Thou couldst never make the ship alone, and to remain in England is but to invite certain discovery. They will scour all England to find thee, and there is no place that thou couldst remain in safety. No—we will both sink or swim together."

My hands, unaccustomed to the hard work, had blistered, and every stroke gave me pain. The sweat stood in large drops upon my forehead, and ran down my face; my back seemed as though it would break, as I bent to the work; my breath came in quick gasps. Two miles gone—and it was four o'clock. I stopped for an instant, and tearing



off the sleeves of my doublet, I handed one in silence to Bobby, and wrapping the other about the handle of my oar, resumed my task.

It was only a question of a few moments with me; we were crawling slowly upstream, the tide beating against us as though in league with Dunraven, and eager to hold us back. It seemed to me that I had rowed always; that I had done naught from my birth but tug with bleeding hands at some heavy oar against the belated tide.

My mind was a blank; I had forgotten all else, save that we must pull three miles in one short hour, or Bobby was lost. In all broad England there was no spot where he could safely lay his head, for the Queen would punish with iron hand one who dared to beard her in her palace, and to pluck from the very gallows a felon whom she had doomed to die.

And so I pulled as though an empire hung upon my efforts. How much longer would this last? Half-past four, and we had pulled a little over a mile, and must rest. Fastening my oar, I threw myself flat upon the bottom of the boat. Bobby fell beside me, and with throbbing hearts we lay there.

Every breath that I drew gave me pain; a mist came before my eyes; the world seemed to whirl and circle in a mad dance about me; the river sucking at the boat seemed to my fevered brain to be a thing of life; the dark trees upon the banks seemed to beckon to me, as though a company of cloaked monks.

Afar down the east, a light streak was beginning to broaden, the sun was about to rise. Aboard the vessel all was bustle and hurry; they were preparing to hoist sail, and at the thought I tottered to my feet, and bent once more to the oar. By hard work we made another mile; it was five o'clock now, and we were still some distance from the ship. There was no use to work longer.

"Bobby," I muttered weakly, "the ship must have gone —let us rest."

"No," he answered, "pull! It will wait for us a moment —pull, man! we may yet reach it," and he redoubled his efforts.

I bent again to the oar, though it seemed as though my

exhausted arms would wrench from their sockets at each stroke. Around me danced the river; the roar of the ocean was in my ears; little specks of fire glimmered in front of my very eyes. How long was a mile?—a mile—a mile—I had forgotten why we rowed so madly, I only knew that something terrible would befall us did we not reach a place, I knew not where, by five o'clock.

Bobby was speaking:

"It is past five o'clock now, and we are nearly there."

"Yes, nearly there," I repeated vacantly; "nearly there." Where was "there"?

The sun was rising like a ball of flame; red and angry, he was preparing for another day, and he scowled down upon us with threatening look, as though we had wronged him, and he but waited to avenge himself. We turned a curve in the river—there, nearly a quarter of a mile away, by the side of a dock lay a great vessel, her decks alive with men. She was about to spread her white sails, and fly out into the trackless ocean; even as we looked, she came slowly around, and, the wind filling her great sheets of canvass, began to move slowly through the water.

Bobby dropped the oar and sprang to his feet.

"It is our ship!" he cried.

And then he raised his voice and shouted with all his might, I joining him, but in vain; we were too weak from our long efforts, and our voices could not reach the ship. I waved my doublet above my head, and Bobby, putting his cap upon his oar, moved it backward and forward, hoping to attract their attention. But no sound came from the vessel, steadily she kept on her way to join her two consorts at the mouth of the river.

The vessel lay below the city, at an old deserted wharf, probably waiting for us, and her going attracted little attention; only a small crowd of people stood upon the wharf, idlers and friends of the adventurers, who had come to say good-by. My companion had thrown himself upon his face on the bottom of the boat and was sobbing like a child. I listlessly kept up my efforts to attract the attention of the vessel, for, though I had despaired of succeeding, I would not desist until it had passed out of sight.

The great ship keeled as she came round to the wind, and



lay motionless. A culverin boomed, and lo! a boat put out from her and made for us where we lay. I gave a shout of joy—we were saved.

Vane looked up at my cry of astonishment.

"What is it?" he asked wonderingly. "Art thou mad?"

"We are saved, Bobby!" I cried, and I caught him in my arms and hugged him in delight. "Saved!"

He had arisen, calm again.

"We had best toss these rogues overboard," he said; "their bodies might excite suspicion. We can get into their boat, and turn this adrift; perhaps it will serve to throw our pursuers off the track."

And with my help, he tossed the dead bodies into the river. Two of them were dead, cold, and stiff; the third, whom I had kicked in the face, lay as though dead. We had no time to examine him; alive or dead he must go into the stream, for it would mean certain death to Sir Robert to leave this fellow behind, to tell of his share in my escape. So we cast him overboard.

The boat had neared us; a spare, gaunt man, wrapped in a dark cloak, with a worn, patient face, stood erect in the stern, and as he came in speaking distance, shouted to Bobby.

"What means this, Captain? I expected thy brother an hour ago, and have lost time waiting for you."

"I could not help it, Governor," he answered. "We were set upon by robbers down the river, our men were murdered, and it was only after a hard fight that we saved our lives. We rowed for two hours and more against the stream, as though the furies were at our heels, to catch thy ship."

He said nothing as the boat reached us, and we clambered aboard.

"It is Governor White," Bobby whispered in my ear.

"What wouldst thou have me do with thy boat?" White asked, eying us closely.

"Turn it adrift," I answered. "It has done its work." And leaving it, we pulled towards the spot where the ship lay awaiting us.

"You must have had a time of it," he said. "Your faces

are dripping with sweat, and the blood is all over your doublets."

"Such a fight as I have never made before," Bobby replied. "I had given up hope several times, but still we kept on. How camest thou to wait for us?"

"I suspected something of the sort," he answered quietly, "and so we waited for a while. But I had given you up in despair and was about to sail, when one of the sailors spied your boat, and called my attention to it. I knew at once who it was, and so came back to pick you up. But pull, men!" he cried—"pull! We are much delayed as it is."

He was plainly worried, and I did not blame him. All London doubtless knew of my escape by now, and they were scouring the country high and low for me; at any moment we might come upon a party of the searchers, and then good-by for White and his voyage. It was light now, and we could be plainly seen from the banks of the river; the bustle and hum of the city came dimly to our ears. They would probably search the ship before they would let it sail—no wonder White's cheeks were pale.

A few moments, and we neared the ship; a crowd of eager faces peered down at us, sailors and adventurers, men of all sorts and conditions, they jostled and pushed each other, and the hum of their voices reached my ears, as, assisted by two sailors, I stumbled up the ladder, and down into the cabin, followed by Vane. Concealment now was useless, our only safety was in flight. Should our ship be stopped, all on board knew of our arrival, and discovery was inevitable.

White closed the door behind him.

"I am risking much for Walter Raleigh," he said. "We must take to our heels now, and evade them as best we can. Do you both stay below, until I send for you. I will set Sir Robert off at some point further down the river, where he can reach his place without suspicion," and with that he hurried out of the room.

The wind had freshened, and with all her sails set, the vessel flew through the water. We were passing among the shipping docks now, for I could see the sides of the vessels from the little open window where I stood.



A hoarse shout struck my ears—"Stop! in the name of the Queen, I command thee!"

"What is it?" I could hear White answer. "We are delayed, and are making all speed to join our consorts—we cannot stop."

"Thou dost go on at thy peril!" the voice roared. "A prisoner doomed to die has escaped from the Tower, and we are to search each vessel. It will take but a moment, and my orders are to fire on every ship that disobeys. Wait but a moment."

White shouted back: "I will go on a little further down the river, and stop at yonder wharf."

"No!" shouted the man, his voice becoming fainter, for the ship was staggering through the water with the speed of a race horse. "Stop! or I shall fire on thee."

White did not answer, only I heard him urge the men to put on more sail. A moment—then a dull roar, and the culverins crashed, as somewhere behind us they fired. A scornful laugh from the deck. Evidently we were out of range now. Then I heard a cry from above: "The man-of-war is making sail for us!" And there was the sound of hurried steps, as the men ran to and fro upon the deck in fear. If we could only keep this up but for a few minutes, we would soon be upon the high seas. The wind was blowing a very gale, as with every stitch of sail set, the vessel plunged through the water. It was broad daylight now, and every moment was golden to us; at any instant a vessel might block our way, and all would be lost.

Four long hours passed; several merchant vessels had gone by on their way to London, their crews pointing at us and staring in wonder as we dashed on at full speed. One or two had attempted to hail us, but we had paid no attention to their repeated shouts, and had kept steadily down the river. Our pursuer had fallen far behind us and was out of sight; only the rippling Thames lay before us.

A man knocked upon the door and informed us that Governor White awaited us on deck, and we followed him to where White stood, a little apart from his men.

"We have almost reached the ocean," he said as we approached him. "If Sir Robert desires to land, he had best

do so now; but say the word and thou shalt go ashore where thou dost wish."

Bobby turned to me.

"I have half a mind to go with thee, Thomas," he said in a low voice. "It would be a change of scene, and I would be company for thee in that strange land."

I shook my head.

"No," I replied, "thy duty is here; there is enough for thy hand to do, without wandering out into an unknown wilderness. Thou must watch over Margaret," I whispered in his ear. "What will she do here at the mercy of Dunraven? No, thou must remain. We have come to the parting of the ways—thine lies in England; mine in distant Virginia. We will walk as best we may, nor murmur though the task seem hard, and dark the way before us. Thy boat awaits thee—we must part.'

"Thomas," he replied, "I cannot see thee go thus, for I feel that it will be years before I see thy face again, if ever. That land swarms with hidden dangers and I cannot see thee go alone."

"It is best," I answered. "Thou couldst do no good. Tell the Lady Margaret that I remain as ever her humble servant—and may the good angels watch over you both."

White came forward. "I grieve to interrupt your parting, gentlemen," he said, "but time is precious, for I know not what moment our pursuer will round yonder bend, and cut off our retreat."

"Thou art right," I answered, wringing Bobby by the hand once more. "Over with thee, old friend, and remember all I have said to thee. Keep up a brave heart, and all will be well."

He made no answer; perhaps some thought of what I had been to him choked his voice; he only clasped my hand tighter for an instant.

"Would that I could go with thee," he said brokenly. "I will think of thee often, as thou dost wander in exile beyond the sea," and turning, he descended the ladder into the little boat that awaited him.

Swiftly they carried him to where a great and majestic oak stood overhanging the water, like some forest monarch, with its sturdy head upraised against the sky. I watched



him as he sat with bent head, his face turned towards the shore. A few moments and the boat touched the bank. He sprang out; the men had turned back, and with rapid strokes were coming toward the vessel, leaving him standing looking at me as I leaned upon the rail. He was only one hundred yards away, for the river was narrow at this point, and raising my voice, I hailed him.

"Remember the trust I have confided into thy hands," I shouted, "and stand stanch and true."

"I shall not forget," he answered, with a wave of his hand. "It is of thee that I think."

The adventurers were crowding around me with bulging eyes; evidently they were swelling with curiosity as to what this strange occurrence could mean, but they said naught to me. The boat had returned, and with a rush the vessel spread her sails and pursued her journey. I watched as long as I could see the solitary figure, standing by the giant oak, waving his sword at me. Finally I could no longer see the glimmer of the sun upon the steel; only a tiny black speck, and at last that too faded from my view—I had left him.

We passed the mouth of the river and struck the ocean. In front of us, a mile or two away, two vessels rocked and tossed upon the bosom of the Atlantic.

I heard White's voice by my side.

"It is the Dart and the Goodwill," he said, "our two consorts. We will soon overtake them."

Like a seagull that plumes her feathers, ere she takes some long flight across the blue sea, the vessel seemed to hesitate and waver, as though uncertain of her course. Striking the long roll of the surf, she quivered and rocked a moment, and then spreading her wings, she took her departure out into that great unknown—the boundless ocean.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CROATAN

FOR long days and nights we rocked to and fro, rising and falling with the waves, only the blue water stretched around and about us. No vessel, no land in sight, nothing but water, water, water all around, and afar the distant horizon as it seemed to stoop and blend with the ocean.

The second morning out I stood leaning on the rail, gazing far out in front of me. "Ugh," said someone, and raising my eyes, I saw standing near me a savage, red and fierce in his paint and skins, the feather of an eagle in his coarse black hair, his dark gleaming eyes upon my face. It was the Indian whom I had seen with Raleigh one night at Lady Wiltshire's.

Margaret had sat by me that evening, and had been kinder than her wont. Several times as her clear laughter had rung at some jest of mine, I had seen the piercing eye of the Indian wander from Lady Wiltshire, who was questioning Raleigh about him, and rest for an instant upon Margaret's face, wonder and admiration upon his own; and then meeting my eye, he had turned his face hastily away.

Sir Walter, on leaving, had halted by us an instant.

"Manteo has been spellbound by thy wondrous beauty, Lady Margaret," he cried gayly. "Thou hast added one more victim to thy long list," and he cast a teasing look at her.

A slight flush had crept into her pink cheeks at his words.

"Since when hast thou turned flatterer?" she cried, archly tossing her golden head. "I had thought thee more sincere, Sir Walter."

I thought of that merry evening, as I saw the Indian upon this vessel.

He uttered some guttural words in his native tongue, a





few of which I understood, the dialect being very similar to the one I had learned upon the island Eldorado, although some of the words were different. I could not put the words together that I understood. There were the words "night" and "maid," that I comprehended, but I could make no sense out of the two, so I shook my head, and tried a few words in the language of the natives of the island.

He seemed much excited when I spoke to him in something that resembled his native tongue, and stalking forward to where a group of men stood, he said something to one of them, and catching him by the sleeve, conducted him to where I stood. The man was a strange-looking individual, with pale hollow cheeks and little green cat eyes, that could not meet my own, but shifted to and fro whenever they caught my look; gaunt and hungry he seemed as he stood in front of me, dressed in a long black doublet.

The Indian, grave and stately in his skins, spoke several words rapidly in his own tongue.

The man translated. "Manteo would know where thou didst learn a language that resembles his own?"

"Tell him that I learned it long ago in another region—perhaps in the sun," I answered; "who knows?"

"What foolery is this?" said he, and as he spoke to the chief again, he sniffed indignantly.

"Translate what I have said," I replied sternly, "without any more words, or by the gods, I will teach thee a lesson that thou shalt not forget," and I frowned at him.

His knees quaked under him at this, and he spoke to the chief quickly in his own language.

"Ugh," grunted the savage, his fierce eyes upon my face, and again he uttered a few words.

The white man interpreted. "Where is the beautiful one, who sat with the white chief in the lighted wigwam many moons ago, when Manteo saw them in the camp of the pale men?"

"Tell him," I said, "she is far away, and I am alone." He did so.

"And now," I said to the white man, "who art thou?"

"John Marsden," he answered, cringing low, "a poor apothecary at thy lordship's service, who seeks his fortune in the new region beyond the sea."

"And how camest thou to know the Indian's language?" I said sternly. "Answer me that."

"I have been in the household of Sir Walter Raleigh for the last two years or more," he replied, "where the savage was; and having little to do much of the time, I amused myself by learning the native tongue. I expect it to be of service to me in Virginia." And he bowed with a pale smile upon his hollow face.

"I doubt not that thou wilt find it so," I said, turning my back upon him, for I distrusted his knavish face. If ever Dame Nature had stamped upon a mortal countenance the brand of a rogue, that one was John Marsden.

I saw much of the Indian in the long days and weeks that followed; he had taken a strange fancy to me, and dogged my footsteps, as though he were some tame animal, and I his master. One morning he brought me a little basket that he had cut in the shape of a wolf's head from a nut. As I looked at the beautiful carving, I realized how much work and labor it must have cost him, and was touched by his thought for me.

"The Eagle is pleased," said the Indian.

"Yes," I answered. "I thank Manteo, and will wear it around my neck," and I fastened it in the little gold chain with the coin and trinket of my lady.

The savage's eye flashed with pleasure.

"It is well," he answered, a look of delight passing over his dark face for a moment, as a bolt of lightning flashes for an instant over the lowering clouds, and then vanishes. "It is enough." And as though ashamed of his emotion, he left me, and disappeared down the companionway.

I learned to speak the tongue of Manteo; it was very like the one that I had learned before. I amused myself by talking with the Indian, becoming more fluent in his language. We had grown to be fast friends, and I had begun to think much of him. He was a strange creature; he never forgot a kind word, and he loved his friends almost to idolatry, and despised his foes with a deep implacable hate, that was a revelation to me.

He called me "the Eagle." Why I never knew, unless it was from some fancied resemblance that he thought he saw in my face to that bird.



"Why dost thou call me the Eagle, Manteo?" I asked him one day.

"My brother is like the Eagle," he answered gravely; "he flies far above the dull realms of earth. The Eagle is the chief of birds, lordly and courageous, even as my brother is a chief among his fellows," and he scanned my face with his dark eyes.

"Manteo is mistaken," I answered with a laugh, "I am no chief."

"Manteo was not born yesterday," he replied. "He knows the royal blood when he sees it. My brother is a great chief."

I did not reply; if he chose to think me a chief, well and good; and rising to my feet, I walked to where Governor White stood, looking out over the water.

"Governor," I said, "hast thou an extra hatchet that thou canst spare me?"

"Surely," he replied, for he was a kindly, thoughtful soul, ever ready to lend a helping hand to his friends. "Sam," he shouted to one of the sailors who stood near, "get thee down below, and bring up one of those new hatchets. What dost thou want with it?" he asked gently.

"I wish to give it to the Indian," I answered. "It will please him much."

He smiled sadly. "Thine is a strange fancy," he said, "that thou shouldst love the savage."

"He is a man," I replied; "a true and noble soul, stripped of all the dross that eats and corrodes the pure metal from the heart of his brother, the white man, who calls himself his superior. He has not learned to forsake his friends when they have fallen into misfortune, or to crowd with fawning smile around the great and powerful. He has much of worth, Governor, that we, who laugh at his barbarous ways, might do well to imitate."

"Yes," he answered absently, his eyes fixed upon the distant horizon, "he has much of good in him.

"I was thinking of my little granddaughter, Virginia," he continued wistfully; "she will be three years old in August, a bright happy baby when I saw her last. Now she is just beginning to totter around and to lisp childish prattle—that is if the savages have not murdered her with all the

rest of the colonists. Often at night, during the two weary years that I have been in England, endeavoring to get men and ships to sail back, have I awakened, dreaming she was being slain by the Indians, with her screams in my ears, her baby hands clutching my garments. Even now I fear to touch foot upon the island, afraid that they are gone. It is terrible, Sir Thomas—awful," and he shuddered, his face pale. "If I should find them alive and well when I arrive, I shall thank God upon my knees.

"But here is thy hatchet," he said, as the sailor appeared with it in his hands. "Only take care that thy friend does not brain us in our sleep," and he tried to smile at me.

"Have no fear," I answered, "I will vouch for him." And taking the weapon in my hand, I retraced my steps to where I had left Manteo.

He still sat alone where I had left him, for he would have naught to do with most of the men; only with White and myself, and one or two others, would he mingle at all, the others he treated with cold scorn and contempt. His head was upon his hands, as I approached him and seated myself opposite on the deck.

"Manteo, I can give thee naught that is as valuable as the little basket that thou didst carve for me, but here is something that my brother can use and remember me by," and I put the bright new hatchet into his hand.

He glanced up at me, a look of wonder upon his savage face, for Raleigh would never allow him to have any weapons, fearing that he would become enraged at some fancied insult, and would kill his tormentor.

"Is it for me?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered. "It is for thee, a chief and warrior."

He took it in his hands, and felt of its sharp edge with his fingers.

"Manteo will never forget," he said. "The Eagle has treated him as a brave; these others think of him as a woman." With that he betook himself away, and in a few moments I saw him at the grindstone, putting a razor edge upon the weapon.

Save for the Indian and White, I saw little of my fellow-passengers; for in some way my story had gotten out among them, probably some of the men had seen me in London,



and I felt the chill in their bearing towards me. As I would near a group of men laughing and talking, the noise would cease, and they would stop to peer and whisper, until I had passed on. They said no word, uttered no gibe; they knew of my swordsmanship too well for that. Wonderful stories had been told of my valor and daring; of my matchless skill with the sword in the great fight with the Spanish Armada. So they feared to cross me, they could only gaze and whisper among themselves. That was enough though, and I shrank from contact with them as though they had the plague; only White, kind and gentle, ever the same, and the Indian remained.

White had spoken to me of the rumor only once. One night as I strode the deck impatiently by myself, for the Indian had gone below to mend a broken arrow, the Governor joined me. We had talked of different things, until finally he had said gravely:

"These stories that have been circulated about thee, Sir Thomas—they are false?"

"Yes," I replied quietly, "they are lies of the whole cloth."

"I am glad," he said gently. "I should grieve if they had been true of so gallant a gentleman," and then he had turned the subject to other things. He had never spoken of it again.

The Indian had observed the demeanor of the men too, though he made no sign. Once when I stood moody and dejected, alone and apart, oppressed with the bitterness of my life, he came up noiselessly to where I stood, and touched me upon the arm.

"The curs bark at the heels of the gray wolf, the monarch of the forest, but they dare not touch him, lest they feel his fangs." And looking down into his dark eyes I knew that here at least was one who understood, and in his savage way sympathized with me, and I was comforted.

Much company had Manteo been to me during the long winter nights, when we sat in the cabin together; I, busy polishing my sword or mending my belt, he sitting opposite, the long stem of his pipe between his lips, blowing out the curling wreaths of the fragrant tobacco from his teeth. Wonderful tales would he tell as we sat there; tales of

savage warfare and of the chase; strange stories of savage love and hate. How when a young brave would wish a squaw from among some neighboring tribe, he would steal out and capture her by force or cunning, and carry her back with him to the lodges of his people; how they hunted the savage bear and panther among the trackless forests.

Sometimes White would drop in to smoke a pipe with us, for I, too, had learned to love the soothing weed, and we would both sit solemnly puffing at our pipes, the room white with smoke, as Manteo would recount some marvelous adventure, or chant some savage song, while in our ears still rang the deep roar of the restless sea.

It was on the first night that White came, when opening the door to his knock, I spied underneath his arm the sparkling handle of my gold-hilted sword. With a cry of joy, I took it as he held it out to me.

"How camest thou by it?" I asked.

"Sir Robert Vane sent it to me the day before thy coming on board," he answered, "and bade me give it to thee upon thy arrival. I crave pardon that I have not returned it before now, but in truth I have been so busy that I have not thought of it once. It is a splendid sword, and one worthy of thy valor.'

"'Tis a good bit of steel," I answered, "and has served me well, for which I prize it much, and have grieved that I had lost it. But sit thee down, and hear the Indian tell of his strange country."

White took the proffered seat, and listened with grave face to the tale of the chief.

The apothecary, John Marsden, I had met often upon the deck. I had seen him moving among the men, talking and gesticulating, and it was after these talks that they had cast the bitterest looks upon me. So in some way, dimly, I know not how, I began to connect him with the matter. He seemed to be always friendly with me, strove to make himself agreeable, but even when he strove the hardest, his uneasy eyes would belie his pleasant words, and he made no headway in my favor.

One morning, rising early from my bed, while all the rest of the company were wrapped in sleep, I came upon him and another rogue, a carpenter, Hawkins by name,



in earnest confab by the cabin. As I was about to turn the corner of the cabin, I heard my name called; peering out cautiously, I saw them standing with bent heads, only a few feet away.

Marsden was speaking, his thin, piping voice lowered to a whisper.

"We have been out three months, and thou still dost hesitate; dost thou call thyself a man, and yet fear to attack one lone mortal?"

"He is the devil himself," grumbled his companion, "and he will have with him, not only White, but his shadow, the savage. The men shrink from arousing them, for it will mean death to some of us."

"Fool," replied the apothecary, "creep upon him in the night. A thrust of the knife, and 'twill all be over. Thou shalt have a capful of bright gold when thou doest the work."

"It is well to talk about 'a thrust of the knife and 'twill all be over,'" grunted Hawkins, with a scowl, "but the infernal Indian, who sleeps in the cabin with him, one eye open, would be on thee by that time. A blow from that cursed hatchet that he hauls around with him all the time, and it will all be over with a vengeance. Thou art so anxious for it, why not do the job thyself, and keep the capful of gold that thou talkest of so bravely."

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"It is out of my line," he muttered; "had it been my work, I had done it long ago."

"Why not a drop of some powerful drug in his wine?" said the carpenter. "It would do the work full as well, and much quieter. He would die of some lingering fever, and it would all be well, no one would be the wiser; but this other, that thou speakest of, is a dangerous business."

At that moment footsteps sounded around the other side of the deck, and White came in sight. They had just time to separate; Marsden to lean upon the rail and gaze thoughtfully off upon the water; his companion to throw himself flat upon the deck, his cap over his face as though asleep, when the Governor reached them. He stopped to speak to the apothecary, for he had ever a cheery word for all, and

I turned around and slipped away quietly to the stern of the vessel.

Here was a pretty kettle of fish. Someone, I knew not who, was plotting to kill me. I had three to watch now—Dunraven, DeNortier, and my brother Richard; each had some motive for wishing me out of the way; none of them were too good to stoop to any means to accomplish their end. The first two would slay me because they feared that I stood between them and the woman they loved; Richard, because he had some fear that in some way, I know not how, I would wrest the estates and title out of his hands. I knew not upon whom to fasten the guilt, for it might be any one of the three.

It was important that I should learn who was at the bottom of the matter, and turning I made my way back to the cabin which I shared with the Indian. He had just awakened, and was yawning upon his pallet as I entered; closing the door, I came forward to where he lay. At the first sound of my footsteps, he had turned his head quickly, and he now squatted upon the floor opposite, his black eyes restlessly roving to and fro.

"What is it?" he asked. "There is a cloud that hides the sun from my brother; let him speak."

"Manteo," I said, "wouldst thou save me?"

"Let the Eagle speak," he answered. "Manteo will do anything for his brother."

"Listen, then," I said in a low voice. "I have three enemies who have sought my life long, and but a moment ago, I heard the pale one, Marsden, speak to the fat carpenter, plotting my death. I would know which of the three it is that sets on foot this scheme; do nothing rash, only dog both of these men, search their cabins when thou dost get a chance, and let me know what thou findest. My brother must be as cunning as a serpent, for he tracks those who are subtle and wary."

"Manteo understands," he answered, his face brightening. "It shall be as my brother says," and he glided silently from the room.

Three days had passed, and still the Indian had said naught. I knew he was at work, silently, quietly following the conspirators, for once as I turned the cabin upon the



deck, I had seen a sudden shadow upon the floor, but as I looked around I had discovered nothing. I knew it must have been Manteo, for no one else could have vanished in an instant like that. Out of mere curiosity, I searched everywhere for him, for I knew the savage Indians prided themselves upon their skill and cunning. I peered into every nook and cranny, looked behind every box and barrel, but as well look for last year's flowers or the frost of a winter ago—he had vanished. I knew that he would say nothing until he had found some trace of what he sought, and so I waited in patience.

I had walked about the deck most of the morning and was weary. It was near noon, so I made my way to the cabin where I dined by myself, unless White or the Indian ate with me. My dinner sat hot and smoking upon the table as usual, and by it the customary bottle; for the Governor kept me supplied with his own wine, and as fast as I emptied a bottle (which was but slowly, as I drank sparingly) I found a fresh one at my plate. A little piece of paper lay upon the table. I picked it up and looked at it.

"A bottle of my best wine; see how thou dost like it."

"WHITE."

I picked up the bottle. It was dusty and covered with cobwebs, and upon it was the label, "La France, 1408." I seated myself, and taking the bottle in my hand, looked at it. It was a mellow liquid, yellow and generous with age. Over one hundred and fifty years ago, some hand long since gone had pressed the grapes, and laid the bottle away for some unborn man to quaff in the ages to come. It was too good wine to gulp down with my food; I could wait until I had finished dinner, and sip it at my leisure.

Putting the bottle down, I went to work with a will at the platters before me. A pleasant sigh came from my lips. I had finished my dinner, and a pleasing feeling of languor and content swept over me—that thoughtful, expansive sensation, that we only experience after a good meal, when we are in a mood for thought and reverie, at peace with the world and ourselves. Talk about a clear conscience! It may be a great thing to make thee feel happy

and contented, but if thou canst not have that, by all means, my friend, have that next best thing, a full stomach, and an hour to muse and ponder over life and all it contains.

It was in this retrospective, peaceful mood that I pushed aside my plate, and tilting my chair back against the wall, fell to studying the label upon the bottle, and watching the light as it glistened upon the wine, as I turned the bottle this way and that. No such liquor as this had I seen since I drank the wine of the King of Spain with DeNortier, that night in the far-away isle of Eldorado.

Opening the bottle, I poured out a glass of the noble fluid, and held it up to the light; it sparkled as though it held imprisoned within itself the sunlight of merry France. Such wine was for kings and nobles, and not for a friendless and forgotten man, alone and deserted; it should grace the banquet board where mirth and laughter rang, and the toasts were drank to the clink of the glasses.

The goblet still stood upon the table in front of me, as I sat there. Idly I jostled the wine to and fro in the bottle, as I absently toyed with it. I started abruptly. What was that? A little grain of some white substance for an instant rose to the surface, and then sank out of sight as though eager to be lost from view. A sudden thought came into my mind, and like a flash I turned the bottle upside down. Yes, in the bottom, clinging to it, was some whitish powder which had not yet dissolved in the liquor. It was some poison I doubted not. The villainous Marsden had taken the hint of the carpenter, and had chosen the quieter way.

At my feet lay a great black cat, which White had brought out with him from England, and which had grown quite friendly with me. Leaning over I took from the platter, in which lay the remains of my meal, a bit of meat, and dipping it into the glass, I threw it to the animal. She snatched it up greedily and gobbled down most of it; then lying down again, she resumed her nap. I sat there silently watching her; five minutes she lay there, asleep. Perhaps after all I had been mistaken, had misjudged the man—but no, with a wail of agony the cat sprang to her feet, and with staring eyes and trembling body began to run around the room, uttering cry after cry of dumb brute pain. For



a minute she ran thus, and then sinking forward on her paws, she lay quiet. I touched her with my foot—she was dead.

And so I would have been by this time, had I not tardily delayed drinking the wine. Would have lain cold and stiff in my agony, with outstretched limbs and staring eyes, for the powerful drug lost no time in accomplishing its deadly work. Rising I took the bottle and glass in my hand, and carrying them to the window, cast them out into the ocean, and as I did so the door opened and the Indian appeared. At one glance he took in the room, my pale face, and the dead cat, as it lay in the middle of the floor.

"What is it, my brother?" he asked.

"The pale one has poisoned my wine," I answered. "It was only by chance that I discovered it in time; and to make sure, I soaked a piece of meat in the wine and gave it to the cat. Thou canst see the result," and I pointed to the animal.

The Indian's eyes flashed.

"The pale one shall suffer," he answered, "let not my brother fear. Manteo will, when the time is ripe, bury his hatchet in his skull, and his scalp shall dry in the lodge of Manteo."

"Do nothing rash," I said, "the time is not yet ripe."

He grunted, and opening his clenched fist, extended to me a little piece of paper, that he had held concealed in his palm.

"Let my brother look at the magic paper," he said. "I found it in the mantle of the pale one."

I took it—only a line. "Be wary and vigilant; he has the nine lives of a cat. Make sure that he does not escape thee this time." No name or address, but I knew the crest on the paper; it was Dunraven's. So this was his work. To be sure I might know his hand; he was a master at such as this.

"Watch them still, Manteo," I said. "At any moment they may try to cut my throat."

Not a muscle of his face moved as he replied: "Manteo will watch."

I walked up upon the deck. Marsden was standing with

his back to me, talking to Governor White. At the first sound of my voice he started as though he had been shot.

"I thank thee most sincerely for the noble wine which thou didst send me, Governor," I said. "It was worth a king's ransom."

The Governor smiled gently; plainly he was ignorant of the plot to poison me, and pleased at my praise of his wine.

"'Twas a bottle of some old wine that I bought in Paris years ago. I had forgotten that I had it, until I discovered it a day or two ago, covered by the cobwebs and dust. I thank thee, sir, for thy praise of it," and he bowed.

Marsden, his face ghastly, was still looking at me as though I were a ghost; plainly he had never thought to see me again on earth.

"Master Marsden is ill," I said to White. "Perhaps he needs some wine. And now I think of it, there is some of that wine of which we have just been speaking in the bottle. It would help him to quiet his nerves." And I turned as though to go down for it.

"No," he murmured, his cheeks like chalk. "It is a mere headache, which I have had all day, and which struck me with a sudden twinge. Do not trouble thyself about the wine, Sir Thomas."

"It is no trouble," I replied politely, and I made as if to hurry down the companionway.

"No!" he shrieked. "I will not have it. It always unsettles me," he continued apologetically, lowering his voice to its ordinary tone, "and for that reason I cannot touch it, when I have these headaches."

"Oh, well," I replied, "if thou wilt not drink it. But, pray, what causes these headaches, some sudden shock or disappointment?" I was delighted that I could taunt him thus; each sharp thrust that I gave him was as balm to my soul.

"No," he answered, a gleam of anger in his green eyes. "When I see some foul and loathsome creature it always affects me thus," and he smiled his ghastly grin. With this parting thrust he left us, and shambled forward to where the men stood.

A little knot of them were coming forward now to where



we were, the leader, the carpenter Hawkins, a pace in front of them. When they were almost in reach of us they halted.

"What is it?" asked White, his kindly face grown stern and harsh, for there was something different in the appearance of the men. They had lost their quiet and sober expression, and in its place there was a look of anger and determination.

The carpenter spoke, his words humble enough, but there was that in his tone that seemed to make his request a command. Behind him, on the deck below, the whole body of the men, adventurers and sailors, were gathered.

"We have a favor to ask of thee, Governor," he said, twisting his hat between his fingers.

At his first words I had drawn my sword, and putting my fingers to my lips, I gave a low whistle, the signal that Manteo and myself had agreed upon should there be trouble. It had come like a flash of lightning from a clear sky, without a word of warning; for I guessed that Marsden was at the bottom of the whole thing, and that I was to be the bone of contention.

"What is it?" answered White sternly, looking at Hawkins.

"The whole crew wishes to know whether these charges against Sir Thomas Winchester are true," he growled, glaring at me sideways from under his bushy brows. "If it be so, Governor, what they tell of him, he is not fit company for honest men," and he spat upon the deck viciously.

"Since when hast thou been appointed ruler over us?" asked White. "Begone! lest I hang thee from the yardarm," and he motioned him back with his hand.

"All this is well said, Governor," sneered the fellow, his face black with rage, "but we would know the truth—we are men."

"Leave me to deal with him Governor," I said. Stepping forward, I faced him. "Hast aught to say against me?" I asked. "If so speak it to my face, thou cur, and do not sneak behind my back. Come, draw steel, and we will settle the matter now."

But the fellow plainly had no desire to face me alone, and drew back a step.

"Fair play, men," I shouted to the crowd below. "We

are all honest men of England, and have fought and bled for her; this rogue has a grudge against me, and yet he fears to face my steel. With your hearts of oak to see fair play, I will meet him.

A murmur arose. "What of the rumor, sir?" cried a weather-beaten old tar.

"'Tis false," I answered. "As I expect mercy from my God at the last day, 'tis false, instigated only by my enemies. Come, ye are men, sturdy and true. You will see fair play—for an old soldier of England."

A dozen voices arose. "Give the gentleman a show—stand back—give him a chance. Let him fight Hawkins." And a score of men sprang out from among the throng. "Clear the deck!" they shouted. "All come back but Hawkins."

As the cry rose, those who had stood by the carpenter turned, and crept one by one back down to where their fellows stood, until only I and Hawkins faced each other. The fellow was no coward, whatever his faults; he knew that he was nothing like my match with the sword; knew that I would kill him without any mercy like a dog, and yet he stood his ground, his cutlass, which he had drawn, in hand. He would have retreated at that last moment, could he have done so without showing the white feather; but there was no way to do it, and retain the respect and admiration of his fellows, and losing these, his power would be gone. He had advanced too far to back down now, his only safety lay in fighting to the end. There was naught else left.

"I will end thy trouble for thee," he growled, as he made ready.

"Better men than thou have tried and failed," I answered. "The foul creatures of the deep shall feast upon thy body this night," and I moved forward to cross blades.

But as I did so, there was a quick rush of soft feet, a shout from White, and with a groan Hawkins fell, a gleaming hatchet buried in his skull; beside me stood Manteo.

A cry went up from the men, and then died away. White sprang upon the rail.

"I warn all to return to their duty," he shouted. "But fail for an instant to obey me, and I shall turn the culverins upon you. Those who escape them will hang in chains. Disperse instantly, or else a worse thing shall befall you."



An instant the mob wavered; they needed only a man of spirit to lead them upon us, but their leader lay dead, and there was none to take his place.

"Dost hear me?" roared White, "or shall I fire?"

They hesitated for an instant, and then broke and scattered, the sailors to their work, the rest to their tasks, whatever they might be. The mutiny had blown over.

White descended from his perch.

"It was a close shave," he said as he neared me. "A little more and it would have been good-by for us. That stroke of thy red friend was the best thing that could have happened. Nay, scold him not, it was at the right time, and probably saved our lives. Manteo has done well," he said to the Indian.

"It is good," proudly answered the chief. "He would not see his brother imperil his life against such a dog as this."

"Bill," shouted White to one of the sailors who stood near, "do thou and Sam fasten a solid shot to this fellow's feet," pointing to the carpenter, "and cast him overboard." And he walked away.

As I made my way down to my cabin, I ran full into Marsden, who crouched down behind the ladder.

"It is awful," he groaned; "much innocent blood will be shed, and I hide my eyes from the scene."

"Get out!" I said, giving him a kick with a right good will, which sprawled him on his face in the middle of the floor. "Thou needst have no fear; the storm has blown over, and thy precious head is safe." And with that I left in disgust.

We were now nearing the shore of Virginia. For the last day the boughs and barks of trees could be seen on the water, and this morning about five o'clock, the man had called out from the mast the magic word "land." In a few moments the decks were crowded with men, as with eager gaze they strained their eyes to catch the first glimpse of old mother earth, which for five months we had not seen. Away to the left of us, and several miles behind, could be

seen the other vessels, following in our wake, as they had during the whole of the voyage.

By noon we had neared the shore, of what White told me was Roanoke Island, on which was a settlement of the colonists. No sound greeted our ears as we approached the shore, fringed with a forest of dark, unbroken trees. We fired our culverins and musketoons repeatedly. No answer —only the boom of the surf came back to us, and the woods re-echoed to the roar of the guns.

The Governor was standing by my elbow, his face distraught and anxious.

"Why do they not answer?" he groaned. "What has become of them?"

"Perhaps they have run out of powder and ball," I answered, "or probably they have strayed over to the other side of the island, and have not had time to come within shooting distance."

"I fear that they have been slain," he said gloomily, "for only about four miles around is the settlement."

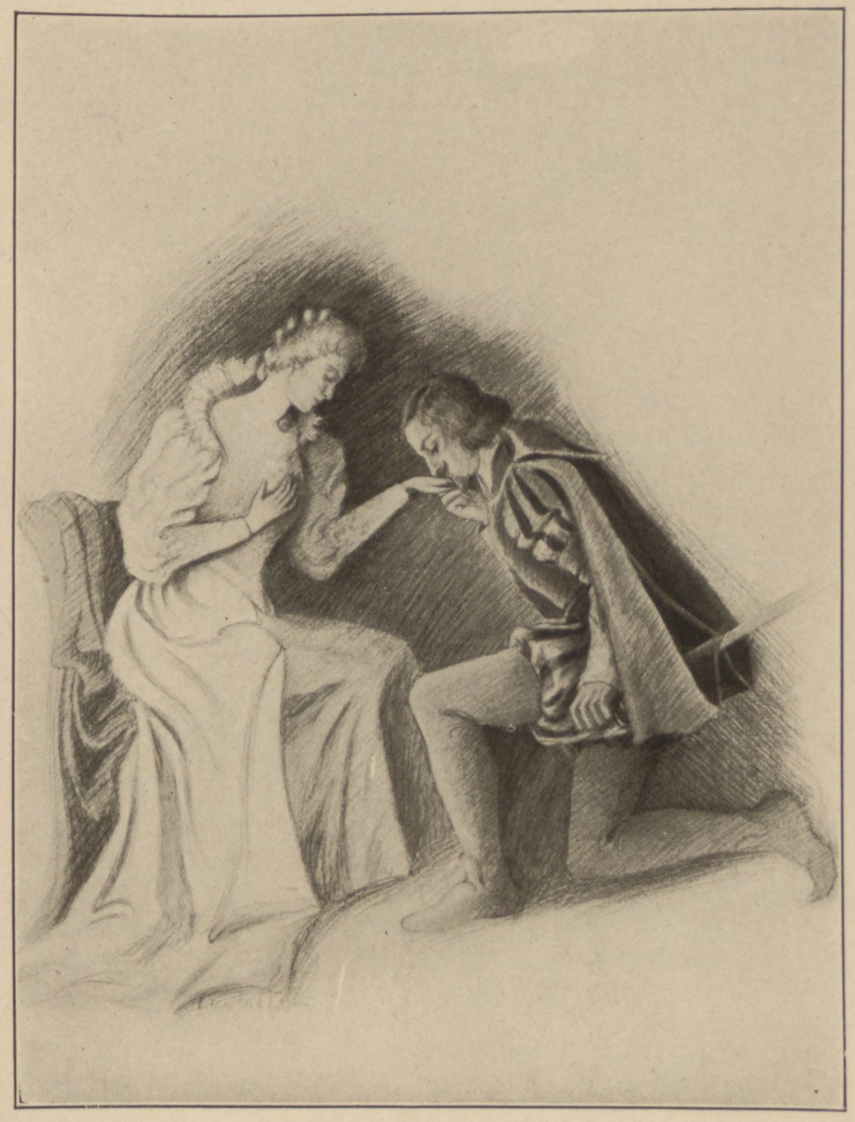
We rounded the northern end of the island, which we had first seen, and passing into a broad bay of water, began to beat down the coast. The island was thickly wooded, and grapes and fruits in abundance could be seen from the ship. In an hour's time we had dropped anchor in a little sheltered cove, and firing our guns again, put out several boats for the shore.

"The settlement is only about a mile away, through yon trees," said White sorrowfully. "Some evil has befallen them, or they would have answered long ere this."

I did not answer, for I knew he spoke the truth, and in silence we rowed to the shore, accompanied by a strong party well armed with swords and musketoons.

We began our journey through the trees and tangled vines to the huts. It was hard work to keep the men in line; they had not felt the firm sod under their feet in so long, that they were almost beside themselves with glee. Twice we had to halt, while White and myself with drawn swords drove them away from the grape vines, where they had stopped, and back into line.

In front of the little column strode Manteo, hatchet in belt, his bow in his hand, with eyes fixed upon what seemed



"I Pressed that Little White Hand to My Lips"

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to be a dim trail, overgrown with grass and bushes; behind him walked White, sword in hand, his back bent with anxiety. I followed, and behind me in single file, trod the men, in dead silence, for the Indian knew not what instant we would come upon hostile savages, and the command had been given by White to march quickly and quietly.

The trail broadened here, and the chief stopped. Peering over White's shoulder cautiously, I saw in front of me what seemed to be a rough log stockade, some six or eight feet high, the walls pierced for the guns of the settlers. Above the fence I could see the top of several thatched huts, but no sound came from the settlement; silence deep and unbroken reigned. Only the call of some strange bird came to our ears. The Indian motioned to us to remain where we were, and throwing himself flat upon the ground, he began to crawl cautiously towards the settlement, taking advantage of every tuft of grass, and log of wood. Finally he reached the wall and disappeared from view.

It was several moments before he appeared again, gliding in silently like a shadow. "Come," he said, and turning he walked toward the fort, with us at his heels.

White had broken into a run, and had dashed past us through the idly swinging gate, and I heard him shout, as he reached the inside. He was rushing madly from hut to hut, searching each one eagerly, and then passing on to the next, his gray locks floating in the breeze. "Virginia!" he shouted, "Virginia! Come to Grandpa," and he raised his voice again and again, and called the child. No answer —only the taunting echo, "Virginia."

The settlement was deserted, and had evidently not been trodden by the foot of the colonists for months. The cabins were bare and uninhabited, with rotting floors, and sagging doors; the hearthstones had been cold for long days. The colonists were gone, and had left no trace behind them.

The old man, Governor White, had thrown himself upon the ground in anguish, and lay with bared head on the grass. He did not move when I approached him.

"Governor," I said, bending and touching him on the shoulder, "do not despair. We will search the country; perhaps they have gone to some more congenial spot, and

even now await us. By inquiring among the Indians, we may find some trace."

"No," he answered dully, "our agreement was that if they should leave this spot they should carve upon some tree the name of the place where they had gone, and if in distress, they should cut above the name a cross—I find neither name nor cross. The little lass would be just large enough to walk about and babble her childish thoughts, so young and innocent, with curling locks and playful eyes. And to become the prey of some cruel savage or ferocious beast, or to die beneath the tomahawk, or at the stake," and he tore his gray hair with his hands wildly.

"Come," I said, gently taking him by the hand, and lifting him from the ground where he lay. "Thou must rest, and then we will begin our search."

At that moment there arose a loud shout, and the party, which had scattered in their search, all ran forward to where the Indian stood, surrounded by a throng of the men. White broke loose from me and ran at full speed to where they stood, I hot at his heels. Had Manteo found a moldering body of some of the unfortunate colonists, or had he discovered some token or message of their whereabouts?

Panting and breathless, I halted where the chief stood pointing to a tree, the body of which had been stripped of its bark, and which gleamed white and naked among its fellows. There, high up upon its trunk, in well-cut letters, was carved the one word "Croatan."

## CHAPTER XV

### THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST COLONY

ALL day long, at the head of my little band of fifteen men, I had pushed through the deep virgin forests. Rough, steady men they were, well armed, with their musketoons upon their shoulders and their flint and steel in their doublets, ready at a moment's notice to fire upon the Indians. For the natives around the coast had proved sullen and hostile, and not only had refused to give us any information of the lost colony, but had fired a shower of arrows at their questioners.

Some of our men had been left on the island as a garrison, and White, with a strong party under the guidance of a friendly Indian, had started in one direction, and I, with my little band under the guidance of Manteo, had plunged into the forest in another. The two other vessels would cast anchor in a few hours, and as soon as they did so, several more parties would be organized, and the whole country near the coast would be given, as far as possible, a thorough search.

So now, with the Indian by my side, I strode steadily on; behind us, on a pole, two of my men carried a buck that Manteo had brought down with his bow only a little while before, and upon which we were to sup. The last rays of the setting sun were falling through the trees, and in a few minutes they would disappear, leaving us in darkness among the silent forest, with its gloomy trees and painted men. There was something oppressive in the thought; the men behind me had ceased their chatter and jest, and like shadows softly strode after us.

We finally reached a little grassy hillock, and here the Indian paused. With a wave of his hand he said:

"Will the Eagle rest here to-night?"

"Yes, my brother," I answered. "It is a fair spot, and

here we will stop until the morrow," and turning to the waiting men, I bade them throw aside their baggage and rest.

Posting two sentries, I cast myself beside the Indian upon the grass. It had been long since I had taken such a jaunt as this, and my limbs ached from the unaccustomed exertion. The scent of the roasting venison floated up to my nostrils from where the men had lighted a little fire, which, by the direction of the Indian, they had kindled in a low depression, so that it could not be seen by any prowling wanderer. The firelight played upon the rough, bronzed faces of the men, and flashed from their swords and breastplates, flickering upon the fierce features of Manteo as he lay in his paint and feathers by my side, and upon my face as I watched the men.

Suddenly the Indian raised his hand and pointed to the west.

"Look, my brother," he said.

I followed his outstretched finger; there, far away from the depths of the forest, twinkled a tiny light like a star, one moment it might be seen, and then it would be lost for an instant—then lo! as we looked it would rise again.

"What is it, Manteo?" I asked in surprise.

"'Tis the signal fire of some scout," he answered. "It may be that the natives have discovered that we are advancing into their country, and even now they send the news to their friends."

Only the cry of some wild beast of prey echoed from the forest, and anon the mournful call of some strange bird. We were alone, cut off from all civilization and the world. I looked around me; of how many bloody struggles could not these dark glades tell, could they but speak; how many black and gloomy secrets of war and massacre. They had looked down for countless ages upon the roaming red man, and the wild animals of the forest, but never until now had they been trodden by the foot of civilized man.

The cheery shout of the men floated up to where we lay. They called us to our evening meal, and descending the little hillock, we joined them in their fierce attack upon the smoking venison. After we had eaten our fill, Manteo and myself, lighting our pipes, strode out in the moonlight; below us trickled a little spring, its waters clear as crystal,



and I followed the Indian down to drink of its pure waters. He was bending over the moist earth in front of the spring, looking down at the ground intently.

"What is it, Manteo?" I asked, noticing his strange conduct.

"It is the foot of some white squaw," he answered arising. "Let my brother look."

I bent down—there, in the soft earth, was the impression of a little shoe, dainty and small, as though its wearer had touched earth for a moment here, as she bent to quaff the waters of the spring. It was plainly the shoe of a patrician, a lady from its size. No Indian ever wore such a shoe as that; it could have been made by no one but a white woman, unless it was the track of a small child.

The Indian straightened himself up with a grunt.

"It is the beautiful one," he said gravely; "let my brother look."

I eyed him in wonder and astonishment. Was he daft that he should make such a statement as this, and expect me to believe it? I had received his declaration that this was the print of the shoe of a white woman without question, but that he should go further, and say that it was the shoe of one maid, and she the "beautiful one," as the Indian with the poetry of his race called Margaret Carroll—impossible! —I had left her safe in England, and we had seen no vessel pass us.

So with fast-beating heart and bewildered brain, I turned to Manteo.

"How knowest thou that it is the beautiful one?" I asked. "'Tis but a track, and might be that of any one of a thousand ladies."

"How canst thou know that the summer draweth nigh?" replied the chief, his arms folded upon his brawny chest. "By the flowers. So know I that the beautiful one has passed."

"It may be so," I answered incredulously. "We will follow the trail on the morrow, be it who it may."

Manteo, his head bent near the earth, had traced what might have been to him a trail, but, as I followed behind him, search as I would, I could perceive nothing. 'Twas true that here a twig was bent, a tuft of grass might have

been stepped upon, but that could have been the work of some deer or other wild animal as they trod by. The Indian would turn here and there, now zigzagging from left to right, now retracing his steps and starting afresh, his head ever bent near the ground, scanning with his dark eye the earth.

Finally, after we had followed the faint track for some one hundred yards he stopped, and with a guttural "Ugh!" pointed to the ground again.

"Two white men passed this way four suns ago with the beautiful one," he said. "And after them only on last eve, the pale one with a red man hurried to overtake them." He straightened himself up in the moonlight and looked at me.

"It is well, Manteo," I answered. "Shall we follow after them to-night?"

"No, my brother," he replied. "The hearts of the men are faint within them; to-morrow we will follow them." And with that he retraced his steps to the camp, I by his side.

I dreamed that night that the Lady Margaret struggled with Dunraven, and stretching out her hands, cried out for me to save her. As I sprang forward to her aid, lo! with a start I awoke.

Something was struggling through the undergrowth near us; I could hear the faint sound of the bushes as someone passed through them—a stick crunched. An instant thus I lay, and listened to the faint rustling sound, and then turning over, I touched the slumbering Manteo, who lay next me, upon the shoulder. He started, and cautiously peered around at me.

"What is it, my brother?" he whispered.

"Listen," I answered in the same low voice, "something is approaching the camp."

The sentry upon this side of the camp now raised his musketoon. "Halt!" he shouted loudly. "Halt, or I fire." And I could see him as, flint and steel in hand, he stood ready to discharge his weapon.

There was a grunt from the bushes, and out of them strode a single Indian brave. Manteo sprang up from the ground and rushed forward toward him. "Do not hurt the warrior," he shouted to the astonished sentry, who stood



amazed at this red man, who had come out so willingly from his concealment.

The strange warrior was holding something white in his upraised hand. "'Tis for the Eagle," he grunted, and ignoring the others, he stalked forward to where I lay and held out the paper to me. Wonderingly I took the note from his hands and opened it. It was from White and ran thus:

"My dear Sir Thomas:

"A friendly native informs me that a week ago a great white ship cast anchor near the mainland, and from it there were put on shore two pale men and a white squaw. From the description which he gives me of them, I have no doubt that these people were Lord Dunraven, the fat priest, whom thou hast described to me, and Lady Margaret Carroll. They took the direction in which thou art now exploring, and the ship sailed away again. Perhaps thou mayest discover them, and so rescue the lady. Trusting that thou mayest do so, I remain ever,

"Thy friend,

"White."

Lifting my eyes, I looked for the Indian runner who had brought the message.

"Where is the messenger?" I cried.

"He is gone," said Manteo, who stood near me. "Does the Eagle wish him brought back?" and he turned as though to go in pursuit.

"No," I answered, "'tis of no use. Manteo, thou wert right, 'twas the track of the beautiful one that thou didst see to-night. But how knewest thou 'twas she? Art thou gifted with magic?" and I laughed uncertainly; for in truth I did not understand how he knew that this print of a shoe was made by Margaret Carroll.

"My brother is curious," grunted the chief. "Listen, and he shall know. When I dwelt with the great chief in the crowded village of the pale faces, there I saw the beautiful one, who outshone the other pale squaws, as the sun outshines the dim stars. One morning I beheld the beautiful one walking in her garden, and after she had gone, I clam-

bered over the wall, and moved by some mysterious impulse, I know not what, I bent over the print of her little moccasin in the soft earth. In the heel of the left shoe there were six tacks, arranged in the shape of a star. To-night I saw not only the shape of the same small foot-print, but lo! in the heel of the left shoe I find the star—and then Manteo knew that the beautiful one had passed by."

I stood amazed at such marvelous wood-craft, for although I knew that the Indians were trained in the lore of field and wood from their youth up, I had not thought that they were so expert as this.

The chief had turned his face from me.

"Look!" he said, pointing to the eastern sky, where the first faint rays of the sun were beginning to be visible. "'Tis day, and the men are ready to resume their journey." And so saying he glided swiftly forward to where they were gathered, busy fastening belt and buckle, preparing for the march.

Two long weeks we followed hot upon their trail; we had passed now far into the interior. Twice had we caught sight of a lordly river, broad and wide, as with foaming yellow water it rushed on to join the sea. Over hill and dale, across grassy savannahs we pursued our unwavering march behind the tireless Manteo. Often we started a herd of deer from their hiding places, and with a rush they would dash out of sight among the trees, and sometimes savage beasts of prey were frightened from their lairs by our approach.

Once a great black bear had not been quick enough, and the Indian had wounded him with an arrow; growling surlily, he had turned with a cry of anger, and made for us with foaming muzzle and upraised paw. But as he came down upon our little band, I had snatched a musketoon with lighted fuse from one of the men, and let fly at him. The ball had struck the beast in the throat, and as he reeled from the shock, a dozen men were upon him with upraised blades, and had sheathed their swords in his body.

One night as we rested from our day's trail, we had seen a bright light gleaming a few miles ahead of us; but when after an all night's march we reached the spot, there were only the charred ashes of the camp fire—they had gone.



"'Twas the beautiful one," Manteo had grunted, as he gazed at the trodden ground. With a sigh I had resumed the march; so near to her and yet so far. 'Twas like the will-o'-wisp; one moment thou couldst see the magic fire in front of thine eyes, but lo! when thou hadst reached it, it had flitted on ahead, to taunt thee to further pursuit.

And now on the fifteenth day of our departure from Roanoke Island we still followed after them. Manteo, who glided in front, was striding along, his eyes as usual upon the ground. I following him, was wondering for the one hundreth time whether it was possible that this could be Margaret, and if so how she came there, and who were her companions; Dunraven of course, and the pale one, as the Indian called Marsden. Who was the third white man? It might be DeNortier, and so musing I bumped suddenly into the Indian, who had halted, and almost threw him sprawling upon the ground.

"Hush!" he whispered, his finger upraised.

I stopped, as did the man behind me, and listened. Far away I could hear the deep regular strokes of an ax; plainly someone was chopping, but who in this wilderness?

"Wait here," muttered Manteo. "I will see who it is that cuts so loudly," and with that he glided silently away, across the little open glade in front of us, and into the trees upon the other side.

A few minutes passed, and then he came back again as silently as he had left.

"Come," he said, and he turned and retraced his steps whence he had come.

We followed him for perhaps ten minutes, and then emerging from the trees, we came full upon a strange Indian. Bow in hand, he sat quietly by the side of a charred tree, which he had been fashioning into a canoe with a stone tomahawk, after burning out the heart of the tree. He arose gravely as I approached, and stood looking at me, his fierce eyes scanning my face searchingly.

"This is the great white chief, the Eagle," said Manteo to the other brave. "Tell him what thou hast seen."

The Indian answered, speaking in what appeared to be a dialect of the same tongue that Manteo spoke, and though

it differed in some respects, I could yet manage to understand what he said.

"The sun has stood still twice, since Occom beheld a strange sight, for as he sat in this same spot, he heard the sound of feet approaching, and hiding himself, there passed by three pale men, and a squaw more lovely than the harvest moon. They had with them Tetto, one of the Tuscaroras, and as Occom looked they disappeared on down the trail, and I saw them no more."

"What manner of men were they, my brother?" I asked.

"The chief was tall, with dark hair, and his face was as the stone; the look upon it was like the hawk when he wheels to strike his prey."

It was Dunraven without a doubt, the Indian had described him well. But who were his companions?

"And what of the others?" I continued. "Did the eye of Occom behold the others?"

"Occom saw them," he answered. "The one who walked behind the chief was as the pale moon, when afraid it shrinks behind the clouds, and when the chief spoke to him harshly, he drew back in fear; he is a squaw and should till the soil with them."

"And what of the third?—what of him, Occom?"

"He was round and fat as the bear," he answered, as though in scorn at my excitement. "His face was big and red as the blood of the deer, but he wore the dress of the squaw, and his head was white with the snows of many winters."

"'Tis the priest!" I cried. "Ah, a precious crew!

"Show the Eagle what thou didst pick up from the trail when they had passed," said Manteo to the Indian Occom.

"It was this," answered the other, and from his deerskin robe he plucked out a little shining trinket, and held it out to me.

I took it with a cry of wonder. It was a little gold locket that I had often seen around Margaret's neck; pressing the spring the face flew open, and there, I beheld a little miniature of her, painted several years ago when she was a merry, laughing girl. I gazed at it long, wrapped in my own thoughts. Ah, my lady! the same light brown hair, the same deep azure eyes and pink cheeks; time had brought



little to thee, only the ripening of the lovely fruit, only the bloom of a yet more perfect beauty.

As I toyed with the little bauble, a spring snapped, and the back of the locket flew open. I must have touched a secret spring in some way. There in the recess was a paper. Hardly knowing what I did I took it in my hand, and read the few lines that it contained. So Dunraven had struck his last blow—by the grace of God I would wring his neck for this, though I should follow him across the whole vast country that stretched before me to accomplish it. The blackest perfidy of his dark life lay before me as I read that note, and my very blood boiled in my veins with rage.

"MARGARET:—I lie sick and wounded in this place to which I have escaped from the prison. To-morrow I must sail for Virginia, and I may never see thy bright face again. I would make one last request in the name of the love I bear thee; for the love of God, Margaret, have pity upon me as I lie here sick unto death, and longing for one more glimpse of thee. Come, though it be only for a moment—thou art a woman, and wilt pity me in this last hour. If thou wilt come, but accompany this holy priest who bears this note to thee.

"Farewell,

"THOMAS WINCHESTER."

I laughed bitterly as I replaced the paper in its hiding place. It had done its work well, and I now knew why Margaret was here. That imp of Satan, Father Francis, had carried this message, and she, in the pity of her woman's heart, had accompanied him to some house where Dunraven awaited her. Then they hurried her aboard his vessel and set sail, thinking to be safe in this wild country. But fate, weary with the smiles which she had bestowed upon him, had at last turned her frown, and I, like a sleuth hound, was on their trail.

"Wilt sell the bauble?" I asked Occom.

"I would that my brother would give me one of the bright steel tomahawks," he answered. "Then shall Occom be rewarded for his story, and the Eagle shall keep the trinket."

"It is well," I replied, and I commanded one of the men

to give the Indian his hatchet, promising him another when we reached the ship.

The Indian's face lighted up with pleasure as he took it in his hands.

"Occom thanks the Eagle," he said, "and shall not forget him."

Manteo now spoke: "The Eagle shall have the canoe too," pointing to the unfinished boat. "Many leagues he has to go, and his heart will sing within him, if Occom will but give him the canoe."

"'Tis the Eagle's," Occom replied.

"We shall follow them by water," Manteo said to me. "In this way we can take two steps to their one."

The men had gathered around me, and now one of them spoke respectfully:

"Dost thou still follow the trail, captain?"

"Yes," I answered, looking at the group about me. "Why askest thou?"

He cleared his throat hesitatingly.

"Then men are fearful, sir. Fifteen days have we followed thee, but it is plain that the colonists are not to be found, and while we still go deeper into these woods, the Governor might sail away and leave us."

I turned to the others. "Are ye all of this mind?" I asked.

It was plain that they feared to go on, though they cared not to say so.

"If there were any hopes of finding them," said one, "but the deeper we go, the fainter are our chances to ever get out alive, and we do but endanger ourselves without helping them. As this is a private enterprise of thine, captain, we have made so bold as to mention this matter," and a chorus of approval went up from his comrades.

"So be it," I replied. "As thou sayest, this is a private enterprise of mine, and you can all go back; but I would ask that you first help me with the finishing of the canoe."

"Aye! aye!" they answered, and with their axes and hatchets they fell to upon the half finished boat. In an hour it was finished, and putting it on their shoulders, they carried it the few feet that separated us from the river.

I made ready to separate from the men. They had put a



musketoon with some ammunition and provisions in the canoe, and all was in readiness. I think at the last they felt some remorse of conscience, as I prepared to set out alone far into the unexplored regions that lay in front of us. I shook them all one by one by the hand, as I stepped into the boat, and bade them tell Governor White that they left me sound and well. Then, picking up my paddle, I prepared to push off. Occom had promised to guide the men back to Roanoke Island, and now stood silent and apart, waiting the moment to start.

A light foot sounded upon the boat. Manteo had stepped aboard, and picking up one of the paddles was about to dip it into the water.

"Manteo," I said, "go back with the others. I go far into the country, and may not come back again."

"Manteo will go with his brother," he interrupted me. "What would the Eagle do alone? He could not follow the flight of the beautiful one," and thrusting the paddle against the bank, he gave a shove that sent us far out into the stream.

The men raised a great cheer as we left them; a few more strokes and we were out of sight, alone in the little canoe upon the breast of the great river.

We still paddled upon the stream, the Roanoke Manteo called it. Three days had we passed on its breast; only once had we seen a human being besides ourselves, and that a lone Indian, who seeing us approach had made for the shore in haste, and leaving his canoe had plunged into the trees, so that as we passed we only saw the empty canoe as it rocked idly to and fro upon the water. Manteo had grounded our boat upon the beach a few yards from the Indian, and we stepped ashore.

"We near the beautiful one," he said. "It is best that the canoe be concealed here, and we should follow them upon the land."

Hiding the light canoe under some bushes, so cunningly that when I looked for it a moment later I could discover no trace of it, he made off through the trees, I following, a musketoon upon my shoulder. We trod on in silence. Manteo looking ever for the trail. Evening was beginning to fall, as though some black mantle dropped by the hands

of the gods upon the quiet earth. There came to my ears the cawing of a crow, and it seemed to me that the bird was very near us.

Manteo in an instant had fallen, without a sound, flat upon his face. "Down," he whispered. "Quick!"

I followed his example as quickly as I could, and just in time. For, from the trees in front of me, there stole silently a painted figure; tall, fierce, savage, he strode from the dusk, and after him another, and another, until I had counted fifty warriors, walking in single file, their glaring eyes seemingly fixed upon me, as with bated breath I watched them. They were naked, save for the breech cloth about their loins, their bodies hideously daubed with the juice of wild berries and clay; from their coarse black hair there dangled the feathers of an eagle or hawk. I had seen nothing like this before in all my wanderings. Noiselessly, like a shadow, they faded one by one into the gloom opposite.

Long it seemed to me we lay there quietly; finally Manteo arose to his feet. "A party of Cherokees on the war path," he whispered, and we resumed our journey. Searching the ground about us for many minutes the Indian moved, now peering under some stone or leaf, now turning some tuft of grass aside to look beneath it. At last with a low grunt he led off again, striding along at his rapid gait.

"How knewest thou that thou wouldst find their trail here?" I asked.

The Indian grunted. "Had the Eagle looked closer, he would have seen the mark upon the bank where a canoe had landed," he said.

"But how knewest thou that it contained the party whom we seek?"

"Their canoe had been broken and the prow had been mended; I saw that it had landed here, for the mark of it was upon the bank."

I trod in silence behind him, and wondered at this almost superhuman knowledge of the forest that could observe such things as these, which to me were as a closed book. My musketoon in my right hand, I had hurried on after him, but now I halted in an instant, for again I heard the cawing of the crow in the woods, seemingly in front of us. The Indian too had stopped suddenly, and we stood motionless.



As we stood there from every bush and tree there seemed to rise a hideous, painted figure. With a yell, so horrible and ferocious that my blood almost congealed in my veins at the sound, they were upon us with brandished tomahawks and clubs.

Like a flash I struck flint and steel, and ignited the fuse of my gun; at least one of these demons would be silenced forever. Leveling my gun at the foremost one as he leaped at me, I pulled down, but even as I did so, Manteo with one quick blow of his arm struck the gun upwards, so that it harmlessly exploded in the air.

Before I could draw my sword, a score had caught me by the arms and shoulders, and hurled me headlong to the ground. My companion made no defense, and a dozen grasped and in the twinkle of an eye disarmed him, and secured his arms with thongs of deerskin. Several had bound my hands behind me, and they now jerked me to my feet—I stood disarmed, a prisoner among the Cherokees.

Without a word they placed us in the midst of the band, and at a long swinging trot began a journey to the northwest. My heart was bitter within me as I hurried along. I had been betrayed by one whom I thought was my friend and as true as steel; he had doubtless decoyed me here so that he could deliver me into the hands of these Indians, probably allies of Dunraven, and they were now most likely carrying me away to deliver me into his hands. There was one melancholy consolation in it—I would see Margaret once more, though it be under such circumstances as these.

All day long they kept up this swift pace, stopping only a few moments for dinner, and the evening was beginning to deepen into twilight, but still they kept on their steady way. Manteo trotted by my side, but I said no word to him, and he had said naught to me. I had begun to despair of ever resting again, when the loud shouts of our captors and the answering yells in reply informed me that we were about to enter their encampment.

Emerging from the forest, many smoking torches could be seen approaching, and the beating of drums and the shouts of the advancing crowd produced a noise that was almost deafening. The embers of several camp fires lit up the thirty

or forty rough bark huts which were grouped before us into a semicircle. At our heels there tagged a crowd of men, women, and children, who shouted and danced with glee, as surrounded by our guards we entered the village. Fierce savage faces peered at us from the doorways; little half-naked boys and girls shouted to each other in wonder at my white skin; the wrinkled squaws hissed and grunted. I only saw hatred, curiosity, surprise; nowhere pity or sympathy for a friendless stranger.

Yes, in one face I saw pity, sympathy, or was it admiration? It seemed to me, that as I saw the face for an instant I could discern something akin to that in the dark eyes. It was a young Indian maid of perhaps nineteen or twenty summers, who stood in the doorway of one of the largest huts. Slender, shapely, graceful as a young fawn, with black eyes, large and liquid, and straight black hair, she might have stood as a model for some picture, representing savage beauty. She was clad in a mantle of soft deerskin, with leggins of the same material fringed with bear claws, and upon her small feet were moccasins of the same soft skin.

I took all this in at a glance, as I stood motionless among my guards, for they had halted here. A few words were spoken to the girl. She stood aside, and the brave dragged Manteo and myself to the entrance and thrust us inside, leaving several warriors at the open door, while the babble of tongues wrangled and argued upon the outside, as they craned and twisted to get a glimpse of me.

For several minutes we lay there; then a wrinkled old warrior pushed by the braves who stood at the door and bending down he cut the thongs that bound Manteo, and motioned for him to follow; they strode out of the place, leaving me alone. An old hag came in to bring me a pot of some kind of meat, and with her came the pretty maid whom I had seen outside, who brought me a skin to lie upon.

I thanked her in the native tongue, at which she looked at me with wide open eyes.

"How knowest thou our tongue?" she asked, while the old crone stood peering at me as though I were a ghost.

"It matters not," I answered. "And who art thou, my pretty maid, who dost remember a poor prisoner?"



The rich color surged up into her dark face as she answered shyly, "I am Winona, daughter of the chief Windango."

At that moment there entered the same wrinkled old chief.

"What dost thou here, Winona?" he said sternly. "This is no place for thee."

"I came but with Occoma, father," she answered. "She brought the pale man some venison."

"Begone!" he said, and turning his back upon her, he bent over and cut the thongs that bound me. "Come," he said.

I followed him, escorted by the two guards who had each taken an arm and were holding to me with an iron grasp. Passing down the street of the encampment, we halted in front of a long, low building, which stood in the center of the place. Drawing aside the curtain of deer skin, Windango, for such was my guide, motioned for me to enter. I did so, and dropping the curtain he followed.

I found myself in a long, low room, its walls made of rude, unfinished logs, with a thatched roof. A large fire burned in the center of the room, and around it there squatted upon the hard mud floor the whole band of warriors, their fierce faces scowling at me through the smoke; for there was no opening in the roof, and the smoke from the fire was so dense that it was almost impossible to see. Almost blinded, my eyes stinging and watering from the thick haze which hung over the room, I staggered to a place in the front rank to which Windango motioned me.

A deep silence reigned. From hand to hand a great long-stemmed red pipe, decorated with feathers, was being passed, each warrior as it reached him taking a puff, and then solemnly passing it on to his neighbor. It was handed to me by Windango, and taking a puff, I passed it on. A full hour it was in going the rounds, and when the last warrior had been reached, the old chief by my side arose.

"The ears of the Cherokees are open to hear the words of my brother Manteo. Let him speak."

On the other side of the fire Manteo stood erect. Extending one hand, he spoke. The fitful firelight lit up the bronze faces of his listeners, and played strange pranks

with their fierce, motionless features, as now in light, now in shadow, it came and went upon the walls, and threw into strong relief the face of the speaker. He began in a low voice which penetrated to every corner of the wigwam.

"My brothers," he said, "many moons have passed since Manteo has seen his neighbors, the Cherokees. His heart warms within his breast as he looks upon them, for was not the father of Manteo a friend of the Cherokees?"

He looked around, while a chorus of grunts went up from the circle.

"He has journeyed far to see his red brothers, but he comes not alone, he brings with him a great chief of the pale men, who live far beyond the wide waters. He floated back with Manteo upon a great wigwam with white wings to see these warriors of whom he has heard so much. He has brought for his red brothers six shining tomahawks, like the one that was taken from Manteo, and two long knives, together with many blue beads, which are now on board the wigwam ready for the Cherokees."

"Ugh," said Windango at this amazing lie, and his fellow braves all followed suit with a resounding "Ugh." I could feel that they were covertly glancing at me to see whether he told the truth.

"But the Eagle has come also to ask the help of his red brothers," continued the speaker. "A wolf has crept into the lodge of the pale chief, and even as he slept, has carried away the favorite squaw of the Eagle, and fled with her into the country of the Cherokees. The Eagle, to show that there is no cloud between him and the face of his red brothers, has come alone into their land, to tell them of the presents that he has brought for them, and to ask their aid to regain his squaw and to punish the wolf. Have my brothers seen aught of the pale one with the squaw?" and he looked around inquiringly.

Windango answered: "It is but two suns since down the stream there floated a canoe with three of the pale men, even like the Eagle, and with them a red dog, a Tuscarora, and a pale squaw, who gleamed as fair as the winter snow and whose hair shone like copper. We had no canoes and could not follow them, so they passed on down the river.



"Let the Eagle follow them," said Manteo, "and he will send a speaking paper back to the wigwam with my brother, that they may have their presents. So shall my brothers be the friends of the Eagle, and their corn shall flourish and be green. If the Eagle frowns upon them, then shall famine and pestilence sit in the cabins of the Cherokees; the Tuscaroras will slay their braves, and their hearts will quake within their breasts, for the Eagle is a great chief, and wields a magic tube that thunders death from it. Listen, and the Eagle will speak to the Cherokees in their own tongue," and he motioned to me.

Arising to my feet, I spoke with as much majesty as I could command at such short notice:

"Manteo speaks true; if my red brothers will free me so that I may pursue my squaw, then six shining tomahawks, together with two long knives, and much beads are theirs. If you seek to detain me, death and destruction shall stalk among the wigwams of the Cherokees," and I seated myself.

Windango arose. "The hearts of the Cherokees sing within them that the great Eagle has soared down to them. Let it be as he says; let the Eagle but fold his pinions for a brief season to rest among his red brothers. They will send some of their braves back with Manteo to the great wigwam, that they may receive the gifts the Eagle has brought them. Then upon Manteo's return, their braves will accompany the great chief, so that he may take his squaw."

"Let Manteo stay with his red brothers, while the Eagle journeys on to regain his squaw," said Manteo. "Then shall the Eagle be glad, for the wolf may have carried the squaw far, while he feasts with the Cherokees."

I chimed in with the same request, but plainly the cunning old fellow had no idea of releasing me till he got the hatchets. He was too afraid I would give him the slip.

"Would the Eagle fly from among his brothers," he answered reproachfully, "after he has journeyed so far to see them? The Cherokees would moan, and their hearts would be as lead within their breasts, did my brother do this. No, let the Eagle feast with us a little season, then he shall fly again."

And with this I was fain to be content. But my lips parted that night in a faint smile as I thought of what my lady would say, could she but know that the pet and belle of London was to the Indians only a squaw—of less value than their bows, only useful to till the ground and carry the burden, the plaything of an idle hour.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A WILD DIANA

I SAT with my head upon my hands watching Winona, as with her nimble fingers she fashioned a pair of moccasins from some soft deerskin. Two months had I been here, the prisoner of the Cherokees.

Manteo had started back with a party of savages the morning after our capture, bearing a short note from me to White, briefly telling him that we were prisoners among the savages, and that our ransom was fixed at a half-dozen hatchets, two swords, and some beads; also telling him that Lady Margaret Carroll was a prisoner in the hands of Lord Dunraven, further up in the wilderness; that I was helpless to stir hand or foot to aid her until the ransom was forthcoming, and imploring him to make what speed he could in sending the articles. I had heard nothing of the party since, and knew not what to think. It might be that in a country teeming with enemies they had fallen in some fight with a hostile band.

Often in the dead of night I would toss and groan upon my pillow as I thought of Margaret, a prisoner in the hands of Dunraven somewhere in the depths of the unbroken forest, cut off from the world and all help, at the mercy of one who feared neither man nor devil. My fevered brain would conjure up every taunting phantom of fear and anguish that the ingenuity of man could devise.

I would think of her struggling in his embraces, his kisses upon her lips, calling upon me for help and succor, with none to hear her cries, and at such times I would arise from my sleepless couch and with a silent guard, who never left me, I would pace the streets of the village until day. Often haggard and weary, I would never lie down to sleep, but would sit all night staring into the camp fire, building air castles and wondering what Margaret did. She was Bobby's

but she could not prevent me from thinking of her, and weaving happy dreams, that at a touch would crumble and fall into dust.

The Cherokees ever watched my slightest motion; a brave would follow me all day long, throughout all my journeys, and at night would sleep in the doorway of my hut, so that I could not step outside without awakening him. Several times I had accompanied the Indians upon their hunts, but never did I have an opportunity to escape. Ever there kept at my side one of the warriors, and twist and turn as I would I could not shake him off. He clung to me with the tenacity of a leech, and so finally in disgust I gave up the effort, and returned quietly to the village.

I had watched every chance to free myself, but I could never find a propitious opportunity. Someone was ever at my heels, and so I waited as best I might for Manteo to return. I had craved pardon for my suspicion of him before he left, and with his stately air he had answered:

"It is nothing; the Eagle for a moment thought that Manteo would betray him, but he knows better now, and Manteo's heart is glad. He but struck up his brother's thunder tube because he knew that if a Cherokee had fallen, then would the Eagle have been burned at the stake." And with a smile he left me.

I had another friend in the sweet Indian maid, Winona. Often would I find in my hut, when I returned from a long stroll, some choice fruit, or a fat turkey, browned to a crisp. Once a deerskin doublet had hung on the wall, at another time there had been a wampum belt, and I knew whose deft fingers had been at work. When I had fretted myself into a fever, it was Winona who brought me cool-water and nourishing food, and with her light hands had soothed my fevered brow and waited upon me until I had been myself again.

Often she would sing some wild love song of the savages to me, sitting opposite and looking at me with a strange, sweet light in her dark eyes, which had almost frightened me, for I feared that she had grown to love me. I grieved that her warm young heart should be disappointed and wounded, for there was but one woman for me, wild or civilized, and that was the blue-eyed maid, who somewhere



in yonder dim region which loomed before me, chafed and fretted, a prisoner of Lord Dunraven.

And so it was with a heavy heart this bright morning that I sat opposite the Indian girl, and saw that same warm, tender light in her great black eyes—those eyes that were the envy of her girlish companions, and the despair of all the young bucks of the village, who scowled at me as I passed them on the street.

One of them in particular loathed me with a fierce, unbending hate, the young brave Chawanook, who had found favor with Winona until I had arrived upon the scene, when she straightaway turned her back upon him, and would have naught more to do with the young warrior. He had immediately saddled me with the blame, and but waited for a favorable opportunity to revenge himself.

The old chieftain, Windango, adored his bright young daughter, and she twisted him about her fingers, as the saying goes, until he would believe that black was white if she but said so. She had been brought up free from all the toil that had bowed the hearts and bent the backs of her companions, and while they were fast becoming withered and faded, she was strong and graceful, a veritable wild Diana. She could follow the chase as well as any brave, and strike down with her arrows the wild deer. Often had I seen her return from a day's hunt fresh and smiling, while behind her there lagged some warrior worn and footsore.

But even the old chief had begun to admonish his daughter to give ear to the soft sighs of the young braves, and become the squaw of some warrior. She was long past the age when her companions had wedded. Why did she still remain alone? Here was Chawanook, who would some day be a great chief. Why not go into his wigwam and cook his venison? It was of this that Winona spoke as she finished one moccasin, and laying it aside, began to embroider the other with the bear claws.

"Do the maidens beyond the seas go into the lodges of the braves so soon?" she asked, with a bright smile at me.

"Some," I answered, smiling gently at her question. "Many of them do not go at all."

She broke into a low clear laugh.

"Would that I dared to tell my father that, but he would

tear my head from my shoulders, did I dare to hint such a thing. He wishes me to become the squaw of Chawanook; to slave and toil for him—and he ugly and awkward," and she frowned, her eyes still upon me, as though she wished to draw me out.

"Why dost thou not listen to Chawanook?" I answered. "He is a brave young warrior, and will some day become a chief. That he would be kind to thee, I doubt not."

She laid down the moccasin and looked at me intently, the smile gone from her face.

"And thou wouldst counsel that," she said in a low voice. "I thought that thou wert the friend of Winona."

"Even so," I replied; "and it is because I think much of Winona that I speak thus."

"Dost some fair maid await across the great sea for the Eagle?" she asked eagerly, changing the conversation with the artfulness of a woman.

I shook my head. "No," I replied sadly, "no one waits for the Eagle—he is alone."

She still sat opposite looking at me, the half-finished moccasin beside her.

"The squaw of the Eagle is in the forest above the head of the river," she said. "Is that why the Eagle walks abroad in the moonlight, when all are slumbering, and sighs to himself until day? Does he love the fair young maid, who is in the hands of his foes?"

"The squaw belongs to one of the Eagle's friends," I replied gently, for the girl did not know that she touched a raw and bleeding wound. "He seeks her for one whom he loves as a brother."

The girl looked at me; plainly she was debating something in her mind. Finally she spoke hesitatingly, and bending forward she whispered in a low voice:

"A sun after the Eagle had folded his pinions among us, there passed up the great river a canoe, and in it a single pale man, with hair and beard the color of the night. He stopped not, but passed on in the direction of the great mountains, towards which the pale squaw had gone. Is he the friend thou speakest of?"

"No," I answered, "he is not the one;" for I knew not of whom she spoke, unless it might be DeNortier. "Did he



have a curved nose, like that of thy father?" I asked; "thin lips, and a high forehead?"

"Yes," she answered quickly, clapping her hands, "it is the one."

It was DeNortier most probably; like a sleuth hound after his quarry he would run them to earth before he slackened pace. But the lady would be in as bad conditions in his hands as in Dunraven's.

"Winona," I said, bending over nearer to her, "wilt tell me something?"

"Yes," she answered, looking up at me with her soft black eyes perilously close to mine, a deep red color in her cheeks. "What is it that the Eagle wishes?"

I drew back hurriedly and sat down, for I liked not those soft looks.

"Where is the white squaw?" I asked.

She hesitated and drew back. "It would mean my death," she whispered, "should they find it out, and yet I will tell thee. They are four days' journey above us, near the banks of the great river."

Four days' journey from me—and yet I sat here with folded arms, while she, a captive in the hands of Dunraven, wrung her white hands and endured I knew not what. No, I would make one attempt to break loose from the Cherokees to rescue her, though I lost my life in the effort.

The Indian maid had finished the moccasins, and with them in her hands had risen to go.

"I must go," she said demurely, as though she had not sat with me for two hours alone. "Occoma will be searching for me if I stay longer. Let the Eagle take the moccasins," she continued shyly, as she extended them to me, "for of a truth he needs them," with a ringing laugh. And evading my outstretched hands, she ran from the hut.

I looked down at my worn-out boots. She had spoken the truth, for I needed them if ever mortal did. Stooping, I took off my ragged footgear and replaced them with the soft new moccasins, and then, like a little child with a new toy, I paraded down the streets.

A party of braves were gathering around the great council hall, their bows and clubs in hand, and as I neared them I saw the light form of Winona running to and fro among

them. Windango was there too, and the fierce, scowling Chawanook. As I looked at them a sudden thought struck me. There were only about fifteen warriors in the party; it might be that in the hurry of the chase I could escape from them. So, stopping beside Windango, I said:

"Where goes Windango? Does he strike the Tuscaroras?"

"No," grunted the old warrior, as he busied himself with his weapon. "Windango but goes to hunt the deer, and to supply the village with venison."

"The Eagle will fly with his red brothers, and strike down the quarry with them," I continued, with a glance at the other braves.

I thought that he did not look particularly pleased at the suggestion, though he only nodded his head, and falling in by his side, we took the trail for the forest. A few minutes and we had passed out of the village, and headed northward, a direction in which I had never been before.

The old chief, who trod in front, spoke but seldom, and then only about the journey. Soon tiring of his grim silence, I fell back a pace by Winona, who, bow in hand, trod swiftly along behind her father. Behind me was Chawanook, who eyed me as though he would gladly have cut my throat if he but dared. Noticing the frown with which he regarded me, I turned to him, and with an air of great anxiety inquired of him if he were ill. His only answer was a savage grunt, much to the amusement of the dusky flirt at my side, who, little minx, knew well enough what ailed the young brave, and seemed to enjoy his air of discomfiture.

The men had scattered somewhat, for we were nearing a famous deerlick, which great herds of the wild game were wont to frequent. A small band under Windango had crept around to the right of the grove of trees, to scare up the quarry, while the remainder of the party, with whom were Winona and I, had deployed in a long line so as to head off the deer. The Indian girl was standing under a great leafy tree, her weapon in hand, while I, unarmed and empty-handed, stood some ten paces away, a little behind Chawanook, who seemed determined to keep his eye on me.



With a rush a dozen deer had started up at the first crackling of the leaves, which heralded the advance of the party of Windango, and with a bound dashed towards us. The quick twang of the bows and four or five fell, the rest darting by us and into the woods. With a shout Winona sprang forward, and drawing a little steel knife that I had given her, cut the throat of a lordly buck with wide-spreading antlers, which she had brought down.

"Let the Eagle come forward and help me to bear the buck under the tree, and I will cook some of the flesh so that we may eat," she cried out to me, with a triumphant air.

Smiling I came to where, with face aglow with exultation, she bent over the deer.

"Well done!" I said; "thou art a veritable Diana." And taking hold of the animal, I dragged it over under the great tree.

The maiden had followed me, a frown of perplexity upon her bright face, and as I threw the bleeding carcass down, she spoke:

"Who is this Diana of whom thou speakest? Is it some lady of thy own country?" And with a pretty look of eagerness she glanced up at me.

"She is a goddess," I answered. "One who descends from above to lead the chase, and to ensnare the hearts of men, even as thou," and I laughed at her confusion. For with a deep blush, she had dropped her long lashes over her black eyes, and stood fingering the fringe of her deerskin tunic.

"I ensnare not the hearts of men," she answered in a low voice. "Some there are who crave but to be caught, and those I care not for; others mayhap would struggle to be free, if by any chance they should fall a victim, and those I would not take prisoners against their will," and she raised her eyes bravely to mine, with the warm light which she vainly endeavored to conceal burning deep in them.

It was my turn to be confused now, and I mechanically sought in my mind for something to say that would change the conversation from this awkward topic, for I knew at that moment that the dark-eyed maid loved me. I could give her no encouragement, and yet I grieved that I should wound her young heart, and even as I stumbled for words

to say, Fate, that old master, with a jerk caught the reins from my hands and mounted the box.

With a rustle of the leaves there bounded down through the air from the tree overhead, a long, dark body, which alighted at the very feet of the girl. As she started back horrified, she tripped, and losing her balance, rolled down to the feet of the beast, who, with a hoarse growl, put one paw upon her body, and with gently moving tail stood glaring down at the helpless girl. He was a long bony animal with a round cat head and shining green eyes, perhaps measuring some six feet from muzzle to tail, his color a dark brown. His little short ears erect, he stood there as though to challenge the world.

A huge club lay at my feet, where one of the warriors had dropped it as he pursued the deer. An instant I stood as though spellbound by the spectacle of this ferocious beast, which had dropped as though from the clouds among us, and then with a yell, I caught up the club and sprang at him. Before he could turn upon me, I had raised the heavy bludgeon and brought it down on his head, with a resounding whack; as I did so, I heard the screams of the girl, the shouts of the warriors as they hurried towards us, and with a shrill snarl of rage, the brute recovered from the shock, and then sprang full at my face.

I threw up my left hand to shield my head, and it was on this arm that the great brute, his eyes gleaming with rage and pain, alighted. I felt his sharp claws as they sank deep into my shoulder and arm, his teeth seeking to reach my throat, his hot, fetid breath in my face. I tottered with the weight a moment, and then went down, the animal upon me. Luckily he had his fangs fastened into the chain which held my breastplate in position, and growling and snarling he strove to free himself, his claws rasping and scraping upon my steel plate.

As we struggled thus, a half-dozen arrows from the bows of the braves whistled into him. The warriors, with clubs and tomahawks sprang to my rescue; a short, sharp struggle, and the huge brute toppled over me and fell. The Indians helped me to my feet, the blood spurting from the flesh wounds in my arm and shoulder, and with looks of wonder and admiration they stood about me. I had plainly risen



in their estimation, for there is nothing the savage appreciates like bravery.

Winona pushed through them as they stood there, a soft deerskin in her hand. I saw she had torn from her own shoulders the light robe that she wore, and now with quick commands she dispatched one brave for water, another to get some herbs from the woods, as with deft fingers she cut away the frayed cloth from the wounds. Before I could prevent her, she bent her head, and pressed her lips to the bleeding flesh.

"Did not the Eagle risk his own life to save Winona?" she cried, as I remonstrated vainly with her. "Had it not been for him, Winona would now sleep with her fathers."

The silent Indians stood around me; no sound or gesture did they make as they watched the girl, though their dark eyes followed her every motion. Looking up quickly as Winona finished, I caught the deep, implacable look of hate which Chawanook cast at me, and I knew that I had here a bitter and undying enemy, who would go to any length to injure me; and at the thought my heart grew heavy, for here was one more complication in the net that surrounded me. The love of Winona, with which I knew not what to do, and the hate of Chawanook, who would watch me like a hawk, would prove obstacles in the way of my escape.

"Art hurt, Winona?" I asked, as she bent over me, impatiently waiting for the messengers to return.

"No," she answered; "thanks to a warrior." And she cast a taunting look at Chawanook, who leaned gloomily on his club behind her.

At that moment the young braves returned; one with water in my steel cap, the other with a bunch of some peculiar looking herb in his hands. With deft fingers the girl washed the wounds, binding the leaves to them. Windango, his wrinkled old face gleaming with excitement, had arrived, and was listening to the account of my rescue of Winona. As the braves finished, the old chief strode forward to where I stood, and taking my hand in his, he said:

"The Eagle has saved the life of Winona. Windango will not forget; perhaps he may repay the Eagle some day." And with that, he turned and led the way in silence back to the village.

The Indians held high carnival to-night, for it was the feast of the Sun God, which Winona had endeavored to explain, as she stood before me clad in all her savage splendor, a wild flower in her dusky hair. In vain she tried to enlighten my ignorance as to the celebration. All that I knew when she had finished, was that it was the feast of the Sun God, and was a great time for them; that the maids and young braves decked themselves in all their finery, and danced and shouted together until day.

In despair at getting no more information, I put on my steel cap (about all that was left of my original garments) and followed her down the long street of the village, now alight with torches, and thronged with young braves and maidens, while from the lodges there peered out the faces of the squaws. Before the doors gathered the old warriors, pipes in hand, talking over the hunt and planning some foray against their enemies. The hum of many voices arose as we passed through the crowd down to where the feasters gathered.

I might almost at first glance have passed for an Indian myself in the twilight, for my doublet and hose had long since worn out. I now wore the deerskin and leggins of the savages, and the moccasins that Winona had made me were on my feet.

No day had passed since I had been a captive among them, that I had not planned to escape, but someone was ever watchfully at my heels. My weapons had been taken from me, and I seemed as far from escape as I had ever been. Of Manteo and the party who had gone to Roanoke there had been heard no word, and I had given them up for lost. Windango and a band of his warriors had only yesterday taken the trail for a scout against their enemies, the Tuscaroras. The braves only awaited his return to muster their fighting men to the war path.

Winona had halted by the open space, around which the crowd had gathered. It was perhaps a hundred feet square, and now within it there leaped and shouted a medicine man in his skins and paint, a great round club in his hand which he shook fiercely to and fro, as he sang a wild ditty, keeping time to the music with his feet. With a loud yell, he threw himself upon his face.



"What is this for, Winona?" I whispered to the girl as we stood watching him.

"It is to frighten away evil spirits," she replied gravely, in the same low tone.

And now a party of maidens sprang into the cleared space. Their long hair wreathed with wild flowers, decked in their finest garments, with branches of green leaves in their hands, they stood motionless an instant at the further end of the square.

"Wait for me here," whispered the girl by my side. "I go to join them," and she darted rapidly away. A few minutes later, I saw her take her place among the throng.

And now they raised a loud chant, and with waving branches began a marvelous dance, now advancing, now retreating, winding in and out among each other to the sound of their voices. Slowly forward they moved toward the other end of the square, their merry, laughing faces making a pretty picture against the black background of the night. Their clear voices arose upon the air like the sound of some wild strains of barbaric music. Faster and faster they turned, until they only seemed one dark mass of moving figures, twisting in and out among one another.

The wreaths had fallen from their heads in the rapidity of their motion, and they trampled upon them unheeded, as they whirled by. From the words that I could catch, it seemed a wild invocation to the Sun God to send them peace and plenty, and that their braves might triumph over all the enemies of the Cherokees. I looked in vain among the throng for Winona, but the figures moved by so quickly that I could not discern her face among the many dark heads that glided past.

Faster, faster, faster they moved; several had fallen in exhaustion, and the old crones, who stood on the outskirts of the crowd, had rushed in and dragged them out of the rush. Their companions still danced on; it seemed to me as though they must all be weak from exhaustion by this time, but still they kept up their mad pace until, with one loud cry, they halted and stood still. A chorus of cries and loud "ughs" of approval from the bystanders arose. They had danced well.

And now into the ring rushed the young braves, stripped to the breech cloth, their bronze bodies shining in the light. They caught each other around the waist, and tugged and strained, each seeking to cast his antagonist to the ground. For many minutes they wrestled, their chests heaving, as with every muscle strained they exerted themselves to the utmost.

The warriors and squaws looked on, delight pictured upon their faces. Now and then a deep-chested "ugh" would go up, as some brawny brave would cast another upon the ground, and the defeated one would withdraw, leaving the victorious wrestlers to struggle among themselves.

The braves thinned slowly but steadily; finally only two were left in the arena, the warrior Chawanook, and another lusty Indian, called Okisco. An instant they stood facing each other, then slowly, cautiously, like cats, they moved about, each seeking for an opportunity to catch the other unawares. Finally, with a dull crash they came together. Okisco had caught Chawanook under the arm pits, and with bent body was endeavoring to bear him down, while his antagonist, his toes dug deep in the sand, was steadily resisting every effort the other made to throw him.

Great drops of sweat ran down their faces, as they staggered about the square, locked in each other's arms. The ground was trodden into deep furrows, where they dug their moccasins into the soft earth. Both were now becoming weak from the long bout, and even while I looked the end came.

Okisco, giving a shrill yell, threw all his bull strength into the effort, and with a fury nothing could withstand, bore the other to his knees. A loud cry went up from the crowd. At the sound, as though beside himself with rage, Chawanook sprang to his feet, and catching both hands around the waist of the triumphant Okisco, and bending his body with a power that seemed superhuman, he cast him backward upon the ground. With a proud gesture, Chawanook stood erect, the blood pouring from his nostrils as the result of his great effort.

And now there tottered into the square an old feeble man, the eldest of the village. With his sunken face and dim eyes he looked as though he was ready for the grave.



With a gesture he held up his hands, and silence fell upon the noisy throng.

"My brothers," he said, "from the time of our fathers, when the mind of man runneth not to the contrary, it has been our custom that the oldest man of the village should at the feast of the sun present to the maiden who had danced the nimblest a belt of wampum; to the most valiant young brave a necklace." And he held up in his withered hand a blue wampum belt, and a necklace of blue stone of some strange pattern, but I was not near enough to discern them well.

"The judges have decided that unto Winona, the daughter of Windango, should the belt belong, and unto the young brave Chawanook, the necklace. Step forth," he continued, "and receive them." And from the crowd I saw Winona and the warrior Chawanook come forward and receive the belt and necklace.

As the maiden turned, and scanning the dark faces about her, moved rapidly down the ranks, I heard the murmur of the savage tongues about me.

"To whom will she give the belt?" asked an old hag by my side.

"I know not," said her companion. "Perhaps to the young Chawanook. They would make a brave pair," and she moved aside to let Winona, who was coming toward me, pass by.

Too late I realized what was about to happen, and for her sake as well as my own I would have turned and fled, but the golden moment had passed; there was naught to do but to stand my ground.

The girl stood in front of me, the wampum belt in her hand. A deep flush was upon her face, and she bent her head for a moment in embarrassment, for the whole crowd was gazing at her in silence. For an instant she stood thus, twisting the girdle nervously in her hand, and then she raised her face. It was transfigured and glorified by the light of a great love—a love that would face all things and undergo all agony or sorrow for the sake of the one she loved; that could endure the cold gaze of the world, and fear it not, happy in the knowledge of the light within. Who counted all things as naught compared with this.

I had heard often of the love of some frail woman, who would face death calmly and unafraid, would endure the thumbscrew and the stake with a smile upon her face and a song within her soul, for the sake of one she loved, and I had doubted the story; but as I looked upon the face of this Indian maiden, I knew that such things as these could be, that here was one who would die for me, if needs be, because she loved me.

"It is a custom," she murmured softly, so softly that I had to bend my head to catch the faint sound, "that the maiden who wins the girdle should bestow it upon some valiant warrior. I know of no warrior who is more worthy to wear it than the Eagle, who at the risk of his own life dared to rescue an Indian maid." And with that she bent forward shyly, and with fingers that trembled fastened the blue wampum belt around my waist.

I dared not look around me, as she bent her dark head over the clasp, her hair just brushing my face. For an unconscionably long time, it seemed to me, she fumbled over it, and then with a little sigh of satisfaction, she straightened up. "There," she said, with a nervous laugh.

"Winona," I said gravely, for in truth I was in the most awkward position in which I had ever been placed, "the Eagle thanks thee for thy courtesy, and will wear the belt always to remind him of thee. It will be a bright spot in his life, which he will cherish, when he has returned again to his own far distant country." And extending my hand, I caught her little brown one in mine, and carrying it to my lips as though she were some princess, I kissed it.

She flushed again happily, her dark eyes soft with light as she looked at me.

The sullen voice of Chawanook rang out behind me: "And so the daughter of a great chief stoops to bestow her love upon a nameless dog of a captive!"

The girl had raised her head proudly at his words, for there flowed in her veins the blood of a line of savage chiefs. She answered him scornfully:

"If Chawanook would meet his fathers let him face the Eagle alone in yon ring. As for me," and her voice rang out clear and full, "my love is my own, to bestow where I will; it shall never be given to such as Chawanook."



The young brave answered angrily:

"I sought Winona to bestow upon her the necklace of blue beads, for which many of the maidens sigh, but I would bestow it upon the most beautiful, even upon Winona. What do I find here? That Winona shamefully has confessed before the whole village her love for the pale man, who is a captive among us, by bestowing upon him the wampum belt." And almost beside himself, Chawanook tore the necklace in his hands into a dozen fragments, and cast them from him.

The girl, her head erect, stood fearlessly looking at him.

"What if I love the Eagle?" she cried defiantly. "He is a great chief among his own people; he is no nameless brave like Chawanook." And with heaving breast and flashing eyes, she stood like some wild animal at bay.

The warrior whirled on me quickly.

"Thou shalt not live to boast of this!" he cried. "Die, pale dog!" And before I could turn my head, he had plucked from his belt a tomahawk, and cast it full at my head.

The excited crowd had surged about me in their eagerness to see what was going on, and even as he threw the weapon, an old woman had darted in front of me to shake her fist in my face. It proved my salvation, for as she sprang in front of me, the tomahawk crashed full into her head, and she fell over against me, the weapon still quivering in her skull.

In an instant I had plucked it from her, and with all my strength cast it at Chawanook. The tomahawk sped onward and struck him with a dull thud full in the face, braining him at a blow, and spattering blood upon those who stood beside him. Throwing up his hands, he fell at full length upon the ground. An instant thus I stood, with my hand raised as I had thrown the tomahawk, and then from somewhere back in the crowd there arose a voice, shrill and piercing:

"How long will the Cherokees bow their heads like squaws, while this strange Eagle soars into their lodges, winning their loveliest maiden, and strikes down with his talons their braves? The Cherokees are women and should till the ground. The Tuscaroras shall make war for them."

A low growl of fury went up from the mob as it gazed upon the body of the young warrior, as it lay before them. A brave leaped from among the throng. "Come!" he cried. "The Cherokees will clip the Eagle's wings!" and with a yell he sprang towards me.

The crowd stood still for a moment. They were as a magazine of powder, and wanted but a spark to ignite. The fire had been applied, and with a loud shout they streamed down in one wild mass of men and women upon me. I struck down the first who neared me with my fists, but I had as well attempt to catch the rain with my naked hand, as to break the fury of the attack in such style as this.

A dozen had caught me by each arm; several braves had clambered upon my back, and tugged and pulled to throw me from my feet. It was as though I was in the hands of the giants themselves, for with a rush they threw me to the ground, and bound me securely, hand and foot.

"What shall we do with the pale one?" they shouted.

A score of old women had rushed to where I lay, and shaking their fists in my face, they taunted and jeered at me. Some of them had thongs of deerskin with which they beat my helpless body, as I lay there bound and tied, and I firmly believe they would have torn me to pieces in their fury, had not the braves who guarded me interfered and driven them away.

And now they cleared an open space of about ten square yards about me, and two great braves, picking me up in their arms, carried me to the middle of it, and dumped me upon the ground, after which they placed a log of wood under my head. A great brawny warrior strode forward to where I lay, a jagged club in his hands. Leaning upon his weapon, he looked down at me.

"Does the heart of the Eagle faint within him?" he taunted.

I made no answer, for I thanked God that they were to end my suffering quickly with one blow, and not by the fire and stake or the gauntlet.

The warrior still looked at me, with a fierce smile upon his face.

"Were it not that the Cherokees expect at any moment the return of the chief Windango, who might save thee, we



would put thee to the torture and the stake. Our time is short, and thou mayest thank the Great Spirit that thy end will be quick and merciful."

And with that he raised the great club high above his head, and as he did so a lithe figure darted out from among the throng, and caught his arm with a quick jerk as it descended. The weapon swerved to one side, and fell harmlessly upon the ground near my head. It was Winona.

"Thou shalt not kill him!" she wailed. "Put a weapon in his hands and let the Eagle face thee; then thou shalt know that he is a warrior."

With a growl of fury the Indian struggled to throw her aside, as, with the strength of despair, she clung to his arm with the grip of a bulldog.

"He shall die!" he answered fiercely. "Loose me, girl, or I will beat out thy brains with my fist." And with a threatening scowl upon his angry face, he raised his knotted fists.

"Loose him, Winona," I shouted to her. "Thou hast done thy best for me, for which I thank thee. Thou canst do no more."

"No," she sobbed, "he shall not slay thee." And she fought and struggled with the brave.

A dozen warriors now sprang to the rescue of their leader, and catching the girl by main strength, they dragged her from the panting and furious Indian. Holding her, weeping and struggling, they shouted for him to strike. A second time he raised his club to strike, but the girl, with superhuman effort, had wrenched herself loose from her captors, and bounding forward, cast herself upon my body.

"If thou slayest him," she sobbed, "thou wilt slay Winona also. Now strike, if thou darest."

Under ordinary conditions he would not have dared to slay the daughter of the chief, but he was infuriated beyond control and beside himself with rage.

"Then die!" he shouted, and with a fierce snarl he raised his club again.

I closed my eyes and waited for the weapon to descend. I could not think; my mind seemed only to whirl and throb in a chaos of broken thought which I could not connect. I wondered dimly whether a rough knot which I had seen

upon one side of the gnarled stick would strike Winona or myself; whether the Indian would strike once or twice; whether Margaret would moan could she but know, and what she did at that moment; whether her hair still shone with the old golden splendor as of yore; whether her eyes were the same deep blue and her laugh as clear and ringing as in the old days.

It seemed to me that I lay there an eternity, waiting for the blow, and still it did not descend. Would it never come? "Strike!" I shouted. "Wouldst thou wait forever?"

No sound answered me, and I opened my eyes and looked up. There, a few paces from me, stood the would-be headsman, leaning upon his huge bludgeon, a sulky, frightened look upon his dark face.

A voice, loud and angry, rang in my ears:

"And so this is how the Cherokees treat a stranger who feasts with them, when Windango turns his back?"

Turning my head I saw the old chief, tomahawk in hand, standing fierce and motionless behind me, as he looked down disdainfully at the throng of savages, who had slunk away as a whipped dog will from his master.

"Speak!" he continued. "Have the Cherokees naught to say for themselves?"

A chorus of voices arose. "The Eagle had struck down Chawanook. Winona had given to the pale one the blue wampum belt. Could the Cherokees stand by and see such deeds as this? Then, when they would have slain the Eagle, Winona caught Mountawk's hand, and finally threw herself upon the Eagle, to protect his life at the risk of her own." And they pointed to the girl, who, pale beneath her dusky skin, had arisen and stood with bent head near the old chief.

Windango with a wave of his hand silenced them.

"Leave the girl to me," he said hoarsely. "I am a man, and can deal with my own lodge. Begone!"

"And what of the Eagle?" cried one, bolder than the rest. "Shall he not die?"

"Is not Windango a chief?" replied the old brave. "Cannot he deal with the pale one? Out of my sight, or I shall slay some of you in my rage."

A moment thus the dark throng stood, undecided. They



were as some fierce wild beast, who, as he is about to feast upon his bleeding quarry, is driven from it by another stronger than himself. But the habit of obedience was strong within them. Even as they wavered, the chief put his fingers to his lips, and gave a long, quivering cry. An answer floated back from the trees, and the dark forms of the old warriors could be seen, as, weapons in hand, they hurried to the assistance of their leader.

Some twenty or thirty war-worn veterans had already pushed their way through the crowd and stood grouped around him, ready at a word to let fly their tomahawks, and as many more were hurrying to him. The whole village could muster no more than one hundred braves, and of these fully one-half would stand by Windango. They were the older and more experienced men, and the other braves would be as chaff before them.

The dark throng broke, and scattered into a hundred fragments.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE DEATH OF DeNORTIER

A LIGHT hand shook me by the shoulder. I moved uneasily, and rubbing my eyes looked about the hut; all was inky darkness.

"Hist!" said a voice, which I recognized as Windango's, "let the Eagle follow silently behind me." And taking my hand in his, he led me quietly across the hut and into the night air.

As I looked down at the sleeping warrior in the doorway, I saw something red trickling slowly down his broad breast. Bending over him, I looked. A great gash was over the heart, and from it was streaming a torrent of blood. The old chief had taken this means of silencing him effectually, and so straightening myself, I stepped to his side, where he stood in the shadow of the lodge.

With a quick movement, he threw a deerskin over my head, so that nothing could be seen of my face. The night was dark and moonless, and from the deserted streets of the village no sound arose. He turned, and with me at his heels began a quick journey towards the woods. We met no one, as with bent heads we silently stole towards the shadow of the trees.

The cabin in which I had been confined that night lay at the northern end of the village, and it was only a few moments until we reached the outskirts of the place. I started back in alarm, for before us there trod to and fro upon his beat a sentry. We could not pass him without being seen; but the chief by my side reassured me in a word.

"It is a friend," he whispered. "Once I saved his life from the Tuscaroras, and he has not forgotten; the Eagle need not fear." And with head still bent, he stole silently by the motionless figure, who, with his back turned toward us, stood gazing intently into the night. He must have heard





us as we passed, but if so he made no sign as we trod softly by, and in a few moments we had reached the friendly shadow of the trees.

Never for an instant did Windango relax his swinging trot, as he hurried through the forest. Twice I tripped upon some root or branch, and came to the ground; but I was up in an instant, and after his dark shadow, which I could partly discern before me. Through bushes and vines we tore, the briars scratching my hands and face; into trees I bumped, and stumbled into gulleys, as I hurried on after the chief.

Five good miles we must have trodden thus, and then crashing through a cluster of undergrowth and trees, we halted upon the banks of the river, the Roanoke the natives called it. Here, from underneath some bushes and vines, the Indian brought out a canoe, and placed it upon the water. Turning to me he spoke:

"Windango has kept his word, and has repaid the Eagle for the life of Winona, which he saved from the wild beast in the forest. It is not safe that the Eagle should remain longer with the Cherokees, for to-night they plot his life, and while it may be that Windango could save him for this once, yet in the end they would slay him. Let the Eagle depart," and with a wave of his hand, he motioned me toward the canoe.

"The Eagle will not forget Windango," I answered, as with a clasp of his hard hand, I stepped into the boat, and picking up the paddle dipped it into the water. "The memory of him will be as the sun upon the tired traveler after the storm has passed. But how shall the Eagle know when he has reached the lodges of the pale ones?"

"It is three suns' journey," answered the Indian. "The Eagle will see upon the banks of the river upon his right a broad rock which juts out into the water, and over it a withered oak. Let him alight there, and take the trail which he will see; in an hour he will be at the lodges of the pale men."

"The Eagle thanks his brother," I said, and with a wave of my paddle, I pushed the little canoe into the stream, and made rapidly towards the east, down its wide current.

I had left the Indian behind, and with strong strokes, I

made haste toward Dunraven. Overhead brooded the night, dark, silent; before me lay the great river, and somewhere beyond those dark trees was Margaret. My foot struck something in the bottom of the canoe, which rang against the board. Stooping, I picked it up; it was my gold-hilted sword—the companion of my wanderings—and beside it lay some food and a jar of water, placed there by the same kind hand. Buckling the blade about my waist, around which was still fastened the blue wampum belt, I resumed my task, my mind engrossed in thought.

Why had not the Cherokees attacked the settlement of Dunraven, if they knew so well where it lay? It was only a few miles away, and I knew them too well to think they stood in awe of four men, however brave. No, there was something deeper than this somewhere. This was the secret of those steel hatchets and knives which I had seen among the Indians; he had bought their friendship with these trinkets, and bribed them to hold me a captive among them.

Ah! there was a long reckoning to settle with my lord, when we should meet again. One which had been long in the making, and such as one mortal man could seldom count up against another. If I could only reach him with my sword, I would give worlds for the opportunity.

A light sound of a paddle floated to my ears from behind me down the stream. Someone was evidently following, but who I did not know. With a quick stroke of the paddle, I turned the head of the canoe towards the bank, and shot in among the overhanging trees and bushes. Here I waited in silence; five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, and I had almost persuaded myself that I heard only the sound of some beast from the forest, when again came that light sound. Nearer, clearer, it again struck my ears, and in a moment I saw the dark body of a canoe upon the water.

I strained my eyes to discover who were its occupants, but in the gloom I could see nothing. A pale glimmer of the moonlight for a moment came out from behind a cloud, and fell full upon the face of Winona, as with her raised head she looked around her for a glimpse of my canoe.

"Winona!" I called softly, and in an instant I had paddled out from my hiding place, and to where the boat rocked.



"Thou must go back, child," I said. "What doest thou here?"

She only answered with a storm of sobs.

"Thou canst not follow me, a wanderer upon the face of the earth," I continued. "What will thy father think of this, after he has saved my life? No, turn again to thy people," and I pushed her canoe around with my hands.

"Winona cannot return!" she cried. "Her people will have naught to do with her after to-night. If the Eagle refuses to let her follow him, she will cast herself into the river."

I was sorely vexed; here I was about to go into the camp of the enemy; at the very time that I needed to be footloose, the Indian girl must needs follow me—a plague on her! And there was Margaret, Heaven only knew what she would think; but the lass had saved my life, and I could not leave her alone and friendless in the wilderness. If it be true that her friends had cast her out, there was naught to do but carry her with me, and so with a sigh I turned my canoe, and in silence continued my journey up the river, with her little craft behind me. And so we journeyed for two long days.

We were moving up the river, only a day's journey from Dunraven now, and with paddle in hand I pushed the little boat for all there was in her. But a few more hours and I would face my lord, and with sword in hand would end his troubles.

A low call floated out to me from the shore, and turning my head quickly, I saw standing upon the bank some fifty feet away, his face distorted by a ghastly smile, the apothecary, John Marsden. If I had seen a vision, I could not have been more surprised. I looked at him in amazement, as he raised his hands and beckoned me to approach him.

What ruse was this? Did he but attempt to lure me to the shore, so that I would fall into the hands of some of Dunraven's men, who concealed by the trees lay in wait for me?

"Quick!" he shouted, as my canoe lay motionless upon the water. "Quick, Sir Thomas! for I know not what moment Lord Dunraven may appear, and if I fall into his hands, it will all be up with me." And he shuddered in

such terror that, half convinced that his fear was genuine, I paddled towards him.

"Let me but come aboard," he said, as my canoe touched land; and he rushed forward in the boat and seated himself in the stern. "Give me a paddle!" he cried, and seizing one, he never rested until we had pulled far out into the current; then he gave a sigh of relief. "If Lord Dunraven overtakes me, it will end the career of John Marsden," he said, with another uneasy look at me.

"What doest thou here?" I asked sternly, "and why flee from Lord Dunraven?—mind thee, the truth."

"'Twas on the day before yesterday at noon that I sat in the hut," he answered. "I was brooding over the failure of my lord to pay me the gold that he had promised, and the scornful way in which he treated me, when I approached him and begged for the reward which he held out to me. I heard a footfall on the floor behind me, and looking up I saw DeNortier."

"'Dost thou wish one thousand pounds sterling, Marsden?' he said in a low voice. 'If so, thou hast but to speak.' What could I do? Here was a vast treasure, sufficient to overthrow the honor of an angel and a way to revenge myself upon Dunraven; so I answered that I would do his bidding for one thousand pounds.

"'Then listen to me,' he said, glancing around cautiously. 'The Lady Margaret Carroll is imprisoned here, and languishes as the captive of Lord Dunraven. I would rescue and restore her to her lover, Sir Thomas Winchester, but it is not to be, for last night as I lay upon my bed I dreamed a dream. As I looked, lo! there stood beside me the dead Herrick, even as I had seen him often in life. I thought a look of sorrow was upon his face, and as I looked at him his lips opened and he spoke:

"'"Thy time has come, my captain," he said. "Long have I waited in this far land for thee, but now thy end draws nigh, and I am sent to warn thee. Three days, and thou shalt join the shadowy throng of thy men; but do this before thou goest. Send a messenger to Sir Thomas Winchester to guide him to Lady Margaret Carroll, whom he loves, and perchance it will avail thee much in the end." As he said this he vanished.



"'I lay there in the silent room; I am not a person to fear either man or devil, but I feel within me this shade spoke truth, and it shall be as he has said. It matters little now, since I know that I cannot win the Lady Margaret Carroll, for death is better than a weary existence without her. Dost thou, therefore, Marsden, go to Sir Thomas Winchester and guide him here, while I stay and guard the lady until his arrival. Hasten back when thou dost give the message.'

"And he gave me the one thousand pounds, which I buried, and straightway I set out to find thee. Praise be to God I have done it!" And he looked at me with an air of joy.

"Dost expect me to believe this?" I asked incredulously.

"Believe it or not—it is the truth," he said doggedly. "Would I be likely to put myself in thy hands, if what I say were not true?"

We were all this time making our way swiftly down the river, Winona in her little boat behind us.

"Marsden," I said, "tell me the scheme of my abduction, all thou dost know of it—and then perhaps I may believe thee."

"DeNortier had watched for several days to carry thee away from London," he answered, his face lighting up at the thought. "When thou didst walk abroad that night Herrick was at thy heels. But thou gavest him the slip and they had given up all hope, until one of the crew who drank in a little inn saw thee come by and sent word to DeNortier. Immediately he posted men at every lane which led from the tavern. As luck would have it, thou didst come up to the very one which he himself guarded, and he but had time to engage in a discussion with the drunken fool Steele, when thou didst approach, and the rest thou knowest."

"Why did not DeNortier slay me when I was in his power?" I asked. "'Twas not like him to let the opportunity slip."

"He loved the same fair lady that Dunraven and thyself sought to win," Marsden replied. "Whilst he had thee in his hands, he could play thee off against my lord, and so hold him in check," and he burst into a roar of laughter.

"Why dost thou shout so?" I asked sternly. "I see naught to laugh at."

"I but thought of the tale I heard DeNortier tell one day in his cups, of how thou didst go into the cave to explore it. The old hag, Neulta, cried out from a secret panel in the wall, and blew the candle out of thy hand with some of her secret power, and thou didst dash out of the cave as though the devil were at thy heels." He laughed again apologetically, and rubbed his eyes with his sleeve.

"Thou knowest how Dunraven entrapped the Lady Margaret," he continued, "and how they set sail in the 'Betsy,' and making further south reached this coast a week before thou didst."

"Yes," I answered impatiently. "But how does the Lady Margaret bear her imprisonment?"

"Like an angel," he said, his crafty eyes lifted to mine to watch every expression. "Not a murmur has ever crossed her lips, and DeNortier protects her from harm, for he stands ever between her and Dunraven like a shield."

"But I have something here that nearly concerns thee," he continued, drawing from his doublet a square package. "'Tis thy father's will, which I stole from thy brother Richard one night, thinking perhaps to sell it to thee at a propitious moment. It is thine for ten thousand pounds," and he waited impatiently for my reply. "Wouldst give that much for the estates and title?"

"Thou art mad!" I replied. "Even if I thought thou didst speak truth and that it were my father's will, which I do not believe, still he had no power to will the title and land from Richard if he so desired, which is improbable, for the estates have been entailed for the benefit of the eldest son for ages."

"Old Sir Hugh Richmond, thy grandfather, broke the entail by suffering a common recovery," he replied. "Nay, do not look so incredulous, the proof is in this package. Wilt give ten thousand pounds for the document?"

"If what thou sayest be true, I am willing," I answered. "But how came my father to disinherit Richard?"

"'Tis the same old tale," Marsden rejoined. "Richard, thinking he had the game in his own hands, turned loose all his ill-humor upon thy father after thou hadst left England,



making the old lord's life a perfect hell on earth with his abuse and ill-treatment. Four days before he died he sent for a scrivener, and deeded all of his property of whatsoever character to Sir Robert Vane to hold in trust for thee. As the estate has been held in fee simple since the common recovery was suffered, he could so fix it that Richard could not get at the property. I tell thee that old Sergeant Moore, who drew up the deed, has so tied up the estate that 'tis impossible to overturn the conveyance," and he chuckled at the thought.

"But to resume my tale—the title cannot be disposed of as long as Richard lives, but thy brother cannot of course maintain the dignity of his position without the estates to keep it up. He will be glad to relinquish it in thy behalf for a mere pittance, and thou canst have his action ratified by act of Parliament, so thou wilt be safe in any event," and so saying, he put the package into my hands.

It was composed of three papers. The first I laid aside after carelessly glancing at it. 'Twas the common recovery by which Sir Hugh Winchester barred the estate tail, and attached to it the instrument by which he took it back again to hold in fee simple.

The next was a bulky document in which my father solemnly transferred all his estates to Sir Robert Vane in trust. "Nevertheless to hold the same for the benefit and advantage of my second son, now beyond the seas—Thomas Winchester." And below he had scrawled his name.

I folded the document together again—so that homely old saying had come to pass, that "curses like chickens come home to roost." I had never loved my father, he had meant naught to me but a name, but at that moment I pitied him. He had hated me without a cause and his sin had brought its own punishment. And so thinking I opened the third and last paper—it ran thus:

"RICHMOND CASTLE,
"April 10, 1588.

"THOMAS:—As I lie here to-night, I realize that in a few hours I must pass out to meet that God, whom I have never served or obeyed. I have done little of good in this world; have lived only for self, my own desire and enjoy-

ment my only thought. I know of not one soul whom I have ever helped or assisted during the whole of my miserable life, but on the contrary there are many whom I have wronged and injured, who will rejoice as they hear the news of my death.

"I have wronged thee most of all, for I allowed that villain, Richard, to play upon my dislike of thee, until I did thee that last injury and drove thee from England. I have paid for my sin in agony and torture; my life since thou left has been a living death. There has been no night for months that I have not writhed in anguish, and to add to my sufferings, Richard has done all in his power to be-devil me, thinking that he had the estates safe.

"I have made what little reparation I could, and have disinherited him, and transferred all the property to thy friend Sir Robert Vane, to hold in trust for thee; for something tells me thou art alive, and will yet come to claim thy own. Death, my son, will be a boon to me—it will at last end my agony in this world. I trust that my God will take into consideration my suffering here, in measuring my punishment in the life to come.

"And now I will close forever. I cannot ask thee to forgive me, I have sinned too deeply. I only ask thee to remember that if I have wronged thee I have been repaid; for every drop of suffering that has been wrung from thy brow, I have sweated two—for every groan thou hast uttered, I have groaned thrice. So thou dost see, that even in this world, we are repaid for our sins, for as a man makes his bed so shall he lie.

"Farewell,

"RICHMOND."

I held the paper in my hand, and from my long dry eyes there fell a tear, as though in tribute to one who had sinned and suffered. I knew he had repented bitterly the injury he had done me, and from the bottom of my heart I forgave him. I looked up at Marsden, who sat opposite, eying me as a cat gazes at a mouse.

"But thou dost forget that I am a fugitive from justice, and if I set foot in England to claim the estate, the Queen will hang me."



He threw up his hands in despair.

"I had forgotten that; thy estates are forfeited to the Crown as those of a traitor, and thy father's disposition of them goes for naught. 'Tis maddening with only that between thee and fortune—fool that I was not to think of it! Shall I have the papers back again?" he said. "They are of no value to thee."

"No," I answered. "Did I give them back to thee, thou wouldst sell them to Richard, and 'tis best that they remain in my hands."

A scowl of fury came over Marsden's pale face at my words, and he glanced about him. But he saw that I was prepared to meet him, so he arose to his feet. Raising my head, I saw that the canoe lay by a little neck of land, and that even now he was preparing to step ashore.

"What doest thou?" I asked in surprise.

"I promised DeNortier to return as soon as I delivered the message," he said; "for the Count needs help to protect Lady Margaret from Dunraven." And resisting all remonstrances, he plunged into the woods, bidding me go by water. "Dunraven might try to escape by the river, and 'tis best to surround him on all sides," he said, and seeing the wisdom of his words, I let him go and resumed my journey.

All night long I paddled steadily, the canoe of Winona behind me, and by morning we were nearing the goal for which I had struggled so long.

Four of the afternoon had arrived, and Winona called to me that just ahead there lay the broad white rock which marked the end of our journey. Yes, there to the left, jutting out into the water, was a broad flat rock, and above it hung a withered oak.

"'Tis the rock," said Winona, and turning our canoes in that direction, we soon approached it.

The girl caught the prow of my boat, and concealing both canoes in the high reeds that fringed the bank, with bow in hand she led the way along the little beaten path into the woods. So this was the beginning of the end I thought, as with my sword loosed in its scabbard, I followed the lithe figure of Winona. With eyes bent upon the path, and step as proud and free as a young fawn, she tripped in front of me.

For some minutes she walked thus, and then with an exclamation she pointed to the trail; for here there was a great place trodden smooth, as though some monarch of the forest had locked horns with an enemy in the death struggle. The earth was torn and furrowed, and a great pool of blood, which looked as though it had been shed only a few minutes before, was in front of us.

"What is it, Winona?" I asked. "Have some bucks locked horns here?"

"No," she answered gravely, as she gazed at the ground; "it is the pale faces—see!" And she pointed to the earth, where bending I could dimly see the print of a shoe.

"Let us go on, Winona!" I cried, alarmed at the sight, and I followed the trail of blood, where it led out again to the path.

"See!" she cried, and she pointed to the stream of blood. "One of the pale ones was struck down, but he sprang up and followed his enemies," and brushing by me, she ran on down the path.

For a few minutes we kept on after the bloody track, then turning from the path, we followed the blood into the woods down a little hillock and up under a great oak, where I could dimly see the figure of a man, as with upturned face he lay quiet and still.

"The wounded man almost caught one of those who struck him!" she cried excitedly, pointing to a deep track, as where one had leaped in terror and then sprang forward in desperation.

I did not answer, but breaking into a run, I rushed by her and up the slope to where that ghastly figure lay beneath the tree. As I stood beside him, he stirred and opened his bloodshot eyes, wearily looking up at me—it was DeNortier, and wounded unto death, it required no leech to see that. Beside him lay the dead body of the apothecary, Marsden, a look of terror awful to behold upon his pale face.

One stiff hand clutched some leaves, the other lay outstretched above his head, as though in despair. He had died like a trapped rat; the ghastly look upon his face was more significant than words, for it showed the agony and despair of the last moment, when the freebooter had struck him down. There still quivered in his lifeless frame the keen



blade of a sword, which had been thrust through his body and deep into the ground, pinning him down to writhe and die like a butterfly transfixed by a needle.

The Count DeNortier looked at me a moment with his glassy eyes, and then drew back from me.

"Art come to torment me, pale shade?" he said. "Away! A few moments and I will be even as thou art."

"I am no shade," I answered, "but a man of flesh and blood like thyself."

"Who is it, cloaked and hooded, that stands gray and silent by thy side?" he continued in the same low voice, as though he had not heard me. "It looks even as one whom I have known in the long ago. Speak, dim spectre! Who art thou?"

I looked behind me, there was no one there save the wondering Indian girl.

With a shout that resounded through the forest, he dragged himself to a sitting position, horror stamped upon every feature of his face.

"It is Sir Samuel Morton!" he shouted in an unearthly voice. "Back! I slew thee, but it was in fair fight. Why comest thou here to torment me? Go! I said," and he fell back trembling upon the ground.

"'Tis no one, Count," I said soothingly. "Be calm—It is only the creation of thy fevered brain that thou seest."

But with straight, unseeing eyes, already fixed in death, he stared past me.

"'Tis ever thus," he groaned, "ever I see rise around me the shadowy faces of those whom I have slain. They flock about with leering looks and outstretched fingers, taunting me as I lie thus. If there be a hell, as the lying priests would have us believe, it would be torture enough to listen through countless ages to their gibes, and to see about me their staring faces," and he lay back exhausted, with panting tongue.

"Water," he moaned—"would that I had but one drink of water."

I cast my steel cap towards the motionless girl.

"Bring him some water, Winona," I said.

She bounded away to a little brook that glimmered through the trees near by.

"Dunraven," he screamed, rising again, "thou shalt not have her! I would rather that this Sir Thomas should win than thou; he is at least a man, whilst thou art a creeping serpent. I would rather see the maid cold in death, than to be the bride of such as thou."

"How camest thou thus?" I said, seating myself by him.

"What carest thou?" he answered, seeming to see me again. "What difference can it make to thee, thou who art a shadow, whether I live or die? But listen, if it be of any interest, and thou shalt hear how I came to be in this condition.

"This Dunraven had kept the maid captive for two long months in the cabin yonder, constantly threatening her and menacing her with I know not what, unless she would give her consent to let that imp of hell—the priest Francis—marry her to him. I had landed the day after they did upon the coast; for I knew Dunraven's plans, and that he would come directly here. I learned them from the spy, Marsden, the rogue who lies beside me, who would have played me false. I followed hot on their trail and found them here. Dunraven was furious that I should have tracked him, for he thought to have the maid in his power, and I was ever as a thorn in the flesh to him.

"Often wearied by the long resistance of Lady Margaret, he swore by Heaven and earth to wed her. I took the part of the maiden—partly because I loved her—partly because down in my black heart I pitied her. For if ever woman bore herself nobly, under circumstances that would daunt a heart of iron, that woman is Lady Margaret Carroll.

"Curse it!" he cried. "My throat burns and scorches, and yet I lie here and babble to amuse a pale shade, and thou wilt not give me a drop of water to cool my aching throat."

"Thou shalt have water," I answered; "have patience." and even as I spoke, I heard the step of the girl as she returned.

Taking the cup from her, I bent over the dying man, and lifting him up, held the cool water to his lips, while he gulped it down eagerly and resumed his story, a far-away look in his glassy eyes.

"For the last week Dunraven has been as one possessed,



for one of the savages brought him tidings which set him wild, and it was only with the point of my sword I held him in check.

"I strolled down to the great rock this morning, where I had dispatched Marsden to find thee and bring thee here to rescue the lady. My agreement with the traitor was to meet him on his return at the rock. As I gazed upon the water, I heard a sound behind me, and turning I saw Dunraven, with his henchman, the fat priest, and Marsden, together with the Indian whom my lord had ever with him. Fool that I was to suspect nothing from Dunraven's smiling face, as talking and chatting, he rode with me back to the cabins, the others following.

"Anxious I was to know what success Marsden had met with, but I could say naught until I could get him apart from the others. So I came along with them, perhaps a mile, when the priest, leaning behind me, without a word plunged a long knife into my back. I turned on him, but like a flash the whole band were upon me.

"I struggled furiously, and tried to draw my sword, but the Indian had severed the belt with his knife. I fought for my life, unarmed and alone—but what could one man do? They bore me down to the ground, and thrusting their knives in me a last time, pursued their way, leaving me for dead.

"'Have no fear for the Lady Margaret!' Dunraven cried, as with a smile he left me. 'I will care well for her.' I lay there and cursed the fate that had willed that I, a man who had slain a score of gallant gentlemen in fair fight, and held at bay for five long years the strength of Europe, should die in an unknown hole of this great uninhabited country.

"Even as I lay thus, I heard a light step, and the ruffian Marsden came stealing down, knife in hand, fearing that by some mischance I might betray the secret of his perfidy to Dunraven. I waited quietly, with my eyes closed, until he bent over me, then gathering all my strength, even as a lamp flares up into a bright flame before it goes out forever, I sprang at him, and caught him by the throat.

"With a yell of fear, he wrenched himself free and tore down the path, with me at his heels. I drew nearer and

nearer to him until, with one last leap, I sprang upon his back and hurled him to the ground. Then with his own sword I slew him. Could I have only cut the throat of that fiend Dunraven, I would die content.

"And now, thou dweller of another sphere, one last thing to soothe thy troubled heart would I do, before I go to join thee. The Lady Margaret loves thee. Would I could have told thee before thou hadst passed out of this mortal globe, but I only discovered it a few brief hours ago. They say that dying men see plainly into the future. I know not if that be true—I only know that something tells me that Margaret Carroll will be the bride of a nobler man than Dunraven."

He was nearing the end now, and with long-drawn breath and wildly groping hands, he fought for breath. Suddenly he looked up at me with vacant gaze.

"Say that thou forgivest me for the share I had in thy detention!" he wildly cried. "As God is my witness, I have rued it oft and deeply. I have other and grievous sins to answer for, and would not go down to death with that blot unforgiven."

"I forgive thee," I gently answered, as I bent over him, "and though 'twas a terrible thing, I bear thee no malice, and would not stand between thee and thy God."

"I have done thee a great favor," he muttered. "Thou wilt discover it sometime."

He babbled on a few moments at random. Of deeds of blood and terror, awful and ghastly; of men murdered in cold blood; of women and children put to death with torture, such as the mind of man could hardly conceive, by the thumb-screw and the stake; of burning ships and murdered crews. Then a look of cunning and avarice came over his ghastly face, and he tried to raise himself, but was too weak. He could only beckon me to draw near.

"Nearer," he whispered, "I will tell thee a secret, that will make thee rich beyond thy wildest dreams. It will be some recompense for the pain I have caused thee, and thou canst let a small portion be used in Masses for my soul. No one knows where it is concealed, save myself and the dead Herrick."

"Where is it hidden?" I asked listlessly, for in truth I



cared little for the golden hoard, since one whom I loved could not share it with me.

"Nearer," he whispered, so low that only bending far over his white face, could I hear his voice. "Those pale ones who bend beside thee shall not hear it; 'tis for thy ear alone. Look upon the Island Eldorado, it is concealed——"

He stiffened himself; even as he did so, I knew that his race was run, for I could feel beside me the presence of that one who had beckoned him, and who with waiting boat was preparing to waft him over the dark stream, and into the dim unknown region from which no traveler returns.

The dying man had lifted himself until he sat erect, his dull, glazed eyes fixed far beyond me. He spoke, and with awe I recognized that his voice had regained all the strength and imperiousness with which it rang when he had reigned supreme, the lord and ruler of the savage crew.

"Some wine, José!" he cried. "The wine of the King of Spain. We will drink one more toast before we go; our time is short—long and weary the journey. Now, men, fill up to the brim, for I give you a toast to-night, such as you have never drunk e'er this, nor will again.

"'Tis a lady, pure, beautiful, divine, such a one as never graced this rough earth before. Had Eve been such as she, 'tis no wonder that Adam lost all, and counted it naught beside the glory of her deep eyes. Had Helen been one-half so fair, I wonder not that Paris for her sake braved all Greece and laughed at their rage. I give thee a lady, my comrades, more lovely than the pale blushing dawn, purer than the driven snow, with eyes whose deep blue outshines the azure sky, one whom England admires and adores—The Lady Margaret Carroll!"

He fell back upon the bank, the same calm smile upon his face. He made no sign or motion; bending forward, I saw that he had died without a struggle.

With the help of Winona I dug a trench and buried the Count. So we left him to keep his last long watch; the snows of winter lie thick upon his grave, the sun and rain of summer beat upon it, but he heeds them not. He was a man with all his faults, and deep above his grave I carved upon a hemlock the simple words "Requiescat in pace."

It was night when the Indian maid and myself resumed

our journey. Winona had buried Marsden near DeNortier, and by the light of the moon we made our way down the rocky path and towards the cabins. No sound broke the gloom of the forest, as we strode rapidly on. I had lost precious time with DeNortier; during which perhaps the fox Dunraven had taken the alarm, and fled still further into the vast country beyond the dim mountains of which Manteo had told me.

And now, as we silently turned a bend in the path, the glare of a fire met my eyes, only a few feet ahead, and to the left of where I stood. Cautiously drawing my sword, with Winona, bow in hand, at my heels, I stole forward, until I stood underneath the trees in the shadow. Then quietly I looked out upon those who sat about the fire.

In front and facing me, sat Lord Dunraven upon a huge log, his sheathed sword between his knees. To his right, and several feet away, was another figure, a woman in a white dress. The light from the fire shone upon her white neck and rounded arms, and a gold chain about her throat glistened and sparkled as the glow from the blazing embers fell upon it. One little foot peeped out from the hem of her skirt, and her burnished hair shone in the dim light, as though each strand were gold, mined from the far-off land of the Indies.

A fagot from the dying fire blazed up, and the light fell full upon her face, which was in the shadow. Even before the firelight told me, I knew the maid was Margaret. Paler than it was her wont to be, but radiant with the same marvelous beauty. The last few months had defaced not one trace of loveliness, and even as I gazed upon her from my hiding-place, the same faint perfume floated across to me that I had ever noticed when in her presence.

"And so DeNortier, a plague upon him, has gone out upon a longer journey than it has been his wont to take," Dunraven said, a sneer upon his face. "He will find it, I fear, a rough voyage, and will meet on his arrival a warm greeting," and he looked up at the lady.

"I would have gone to where he lay, and read to him from the Holy Scriptures," she said in a clear voice. "Perhaps it would have soothed his last moments, but thou wouldst not let me do this."



"No," he answered, his sneer deepening into an evil smile. "Curse him! He has thwarted me long enough. Had it not been for him, thou wouldst have been Lady Dunraven long ere this. But the fruit only grows more tempting with the waiting," and he laughed long and loud.

The Lady Margaret had risen, and with tears in her eyes now faced him. "Why dost thou persecute me thus?" she said, as though in despair. "Thou knowest I will never willingly be thy bride; there are many fair ladies in England. Why wilt thou persist in thy mad pursuit of me, when thou knowest I do not love thee?"

My lord kept his seat, the smile still upon his face.

"If thou for any reason dost look into thy mirror, thou needst wonder no further."

"I seek not for compliments," she answered impatiently. "I would know the cause of thy unreasonable conduct."

"Thou seekest for a reason, behold thou hast it. Margaret, I have spent a great treasure; have slain two gallant gentlemen; have left the luxuries and pleasures of my own country to become a wanderer in a strange land; have traversed countless leagues of trackless ocean and boundless forest, my very life at the mercy of these roving savages. Have imperiled all, Margaret—wealth, position, title, reputation, and for what?"

"Yes, for what?" she answered, her head held proudly erect. "It has been worse than wasted."

"'Tis for this," he cried, and he advanced a step nearer to her—"because I love thee."

My lady's face had grown scornful, her eyes flashed, for she came of a noble line, and when once aroused, the Carroll blood could be hot and fierce.

"Thou hadst best save thy breath," she answered contemptuously. "Thou art like a child, that frets and whimpers for the moon."

"Art thou made of stone?" he cried, "that naught can touch thy cold heart? What more wouldst thou have? I have dared all, endured all, for thy sake, and yet thou still dost frown—hast thou no smile?"

"Not for such as thee," she answered calmly, turning her back upon him and looking out into the gloom.

"Perhaps thou thinkest that they be for Sir Thomas Win-

chester," he said with a scowl. "Fool not thyself, proud lady, thy lover is dead—died with such torture as thy mind knows not, devised with all the ingenuity that the savage Indian can contrive. Thy smile shall never more be for him."

Margaret had grown paler, but her courage did not fail her for an instant.

"If he be dead," she replied piteously, "he was something that in thy whole life thou hast never been, nor conceived of—a brave and gallant gentleman."

"It may be so," he answered, "but I had rather be a live man with the Lady Margaret Carroll, than a dead gentleman, though he be a saint."

"Beast!" she cried, in anger and despair. "I loathe thee! Even the very savages have some mercy on their helpless victims, but thou knowest not what mercy is."

"Not where thou art concerned," he answered steadily. "Cost what it may, thou shalt be mine." And folding his arms upon his chest, he looked at her as though he would imprint every feature of her face indelibly upon his brain.

"Name my ransom," she said. "Any price—though it take every penny of my estate, I will pay it gladly and willingly," and she turned again and faced him imploringly.

"What wouldst thou do here, alone in this wilderness? Thou wouldst lose thyself amid its dark shades; be devoured by some wild beast, or fall into the hands of the Indians, beside which captivity in my hands would be a paradise."

"It matters not," she cried eagerly, her face alight with hope. "Better to die at the stake, than to endure such as this. Name but thy price, and it shall be paid."

"This is my answer," he replied slowly and deliberately, his dark eyes upon hers: "Though each leaf upon every tree in all this vast continent were a golden sovereign, and all that vast treasure mine, should I but set thee free, I would turn my back upon it in scorn and disdain. Not for aught that this great world holds would I forego my power to make thee mine."

Margaret had sunk back again upon the log from which she had risen, her hands over her face. I still lay where I was behind Dunraven. I would wait until the moment



arrived when he would attempt to carry his scheme into effect; then at the very instant when he held the cup to his lips, I would dash it to the ground. Defeat would only seem the more bitter because he had been so near to victory.

"So don thy fairest dress and thy brightest smile this evening, for I can wait no longer for the time when thou shalt be mine. With only the light of thine eyes to bask in, with thee to cheer me, this rough land would be an Eden, and we like two children to wander hand in hand beneath the trees. Such a life I have long dreamed of—such at last is at hand for me. The priest will make us one this very night. So prepare thee, for in a few brief moments he will be here."

She raised her head, a look of determination in her blue eyes, which had grown hard and cold as steel.

"I cannot tell what things the future holds in store for me, but this much is certain: Before I would submit to such an indignity I would slay myself with my dagger and so end my misery. I warn thee that I am desperate. Push me not to the wall, or I will do something that perchance thou wilt regret. Be not so sure. At the last moment the cup may be dashed from thy hands." And she arose, courage and desperation upon her face.

"There is no help for it," he answered. "Thou canst do naught, Margaret, but weep and wring thy white hands; there is no one to aid thee. Thou art alone in my power—neither God nor man can help thee now."

"Be not so sure of that, my lord," I answered as I stepped out into the firelight, my sword raised. "Thou knowest not what these dark woods contain."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MY LORD TAKES HIS DEPARTURE

HE wheeled upon me as I spoke. My lady had given one loud cry, whether of joy or fear I knew not, and with clasped hands stood gazing at me.

"So thou dost come at last," he said coolly. "It is well; one of my enemies has stepped out of my path forever today. Thou art the second and the last, and thou too shall go to join him. Francis!" he cried, raising his voice into a shout.

An answering call came back from the darkness, and I could see the light as it streamed from the half-open door of a cabin, a few yards away.

"Quick!" he cried. "'Tis that dog, Sir Thomas! Out, and at him!"

A yell, and the rush of approaching feet, as they raced for me; I had sprung forward at the first shout and crossed swords with Dunraven. He wore his steel breastplate, or I would have cut him down in a few seconds, for he lacked much of being my match with the sword; but there was naught for me to do but to make for his head, as my time was too short to pick and choose my point of attack. Another cut at his head, which he parried, and replied by a vicious lunge at my throat, which I met—and then from out of the gloom his men sprang at me.

The priest, a great cutlass in his hands, came down like a wild boar; behind him panted the fat skipper of the "Betsy," his red face aglow, and at his heels an Indian in his paint and feathers. And now four to one, on all sides of me, they cut and thrust; one man, no matter how splendid a fight he made, could not keep all of them at bay.

A low cry from my lady caught my attention. She was swaying to and fro, both hands clutched at her breast—even as I glanced at her, she toppled and fell full length





upon the ground. That one brief instant, when I turned my eyes from my assailants, proved my undoing. With a rush all four men were upon me. The priest caught the hilt of my sword and was endeavoring to wrench it from my hands; the others sprang upon my back and were trying to throw me to the ground.

"Drop all swords!" Dunraven cried. "I would not have him hurt—he is reserved for a sweeter fate."

I staggered under their combined weight; my hands were pinned to my sides, for the priest, having wrenched my sword from me with the help of the savage, now gripped my body and arms with a grasp of steel. The two, Miles, as Dunraven called the fat skipper, and my lord himself, were upon my back, with the Indian tugging at my knees. With a crash I went down, carrying them with me.

What had become of Winona, I thought as I fell. Had she forsaken me? She was the equal of a man in a fight such as this; but when it came to the pinch, she had doubtless fled.

The priest had loosed me as I fell, and catching up a long knife, he bent over me as I struggled with the others upon the ground. The old dark leer was upon his face.

"And so we square accounts!" he cried triumphantly. "I have gloated over the thought of this moment ever since we last parted. Die, thou carrion! May thy foul soul rot in Hades with my old chief, the Count DeNortier, for a million ages!" And he struck downwards at me.

With a whistle an arrow whizzed towards him, and as I looked I saw its sharp point strike him in the throat, and passing through, project a foot beyond. A shrill, keen, quavering yell vibrated through the forest, as the priest staggered blindly, the knife still clutched in his hand. Then another piercing cry rang out, as a second arrow struck him full in the back, and with a hideous shriek he sprawled out upon the ground.

An answering yell came from the other side of the glade, and the woods rang and re-echoed with the blood-curdling cry. Miles was struggling madly beneath me to rise.

"It is the Indians!" he cried. "Up!—let me go!"

Dunraven sprang to his feet. "It is the Cherokees!" He rushed to where the limp body of Margaret lay, and

catching her up in his arms, sword in hand, he dashed out of the grove. "Save yourselves!" he shouted to his men. "As for myself, I must rescue the lady."

The others were still struggling frantically with me, their only thought to escape. With another series of deafening yells, two figures sprang out of the trees and made for us. One of them was Winona, I knew her by her short petticoat, and the other—yes, the firelight shone on his face an instant as he darted by—it was Manteo.

The Indian with whom I fought had broken loose from me, and now dashed forward. I saw him rush upon Manteo. The two grappled together, and fell rolling and struggling on the ground.

Miles, to whom terror had lent the strength of despair, was fighting manfully to free himself. His hand came in contact with the stone tomahawk which the Indian had dropped in his fight with me; his fingers closed over the handle, and raising it with all his strength, he brought it down upon my left arm, where I held him by the hair, while with my right I pinned his body down. My arm fell limp and helpless to the ground. With a plunge he broke loose from me, and springing up he bounded full into the arms of Winona, who caught him around the waist, and with a howl of terror he fought to break away.

I leaped to my feet. Dunraven had disappeared with Margaret. I heard him crashing through the woods a hundred yards away, as he ran at the top of his speed. I dashed away in the direction of the sound, my arm dangling by my side. But I heeded it not, as like a hound at the heels of his quarry, I tore through trees and bushes, bareheaded and disheveled, after Lord Dunraven. It seemed as though I crawled at the speed of an ant, and yet I know now, that I ran as I had never done before.

Now I rushed through level plains, upon which the moonlight cast the shadows of the tall trees in strange fantastic shapes; then I would tear my way through a dense thicket, or splash into the water of some babbling brook and up a little knoll.

At last I caught sight of Dunraven. My eye glimpsed the flutter of Margaret's dress, as with her upon his shoulder, he was running at the top of his speed, below



me some fifty yards away. Encumbered by the lady and bleeding from several wounds, he was losing ground at every step, and with a loud curse he shifted the limp body of Margaret to his other shoulder, and halted a moment to shake a clenched fist at me.

In grim silence I ran on—bending every nerve and sinew to overtake him. We were now on a long, level plateau, perhaps three hundred yards in length. I uttered one long, loud cry. Startled by the nearness of the sound, he slackened his pace for an instant, and made as though to turn and meet me. But his heart failed him, and with an exclamation of despair, he cast the lady upon the ground, and abandoning her, rushed on.

Not for aught would I have halted then, for I was too near a final reckoning with this villain who had hounded me so long. To-night we would settle our quarrel for aye, and so swerving aside from Margaret, who lay white and still where she had fallen, I ran on after him. I would overtake him, cost what it might, or die in the attempt. A few more bounds now, and he would be in my grasp.

"Curse thee!" he cried as I drew closer. "I believe 'tis as the priest says, that thou art leagued with the evil one himself."

I made no answer. I was too near him to waste useless breath, for I needed all my wind and strength too in that mad race.

"Thou hast won at every point!" he shouted bitterly; "hast beaten me at every move, and for this I curse thee, now and hereafter. If it be possible I would sell my soul to the devil himself, if I might come back once more to earth to haunt and torment thee. I despise thee with a bitter, unrelenting hatred, such as I have never borne before for man or beast, for thou hast robbed me of her for whom I have plotted and schemed for weary months," and he gave a snarl of rage.

I was upon him now, and with a cry of triumph, I gathered myself for one great spring, which would land me upon his back. But even as I drew myself together to leap, he threw up both hands and gave a scream of mortal despair, as though he were in the grasp of death itself. As it rang out upon the night air he plunged forward, down,

and out of sight, his hands clutching and grasping at the earth to save himself; for there, yawning dark and deep before me, was a great precipice, its deep sides falling abruptly away, with no tree or vegetation to check the fall below upon the solid rock.

I dug my feet desperately into the ground to save myself, for if I went down there was no help for it, I would be dashed to pieces. My feet slipped forward over the brink of the precipice, and clutching despairingly at the stone ledge, I caught it with my right hand, and so hung over that yawning abyss by one hand; for my left arm was broken and useless.

No words can describe my horror and despair, as I dangled between heaven and earth. I was too exhausted by my long, hard run to pull myself up in safety. I could only hang thus until my grasp would weaken and give way, and I would fall upon the rocks beneath. Suddenly I heard a dull crash from below, and then silence. Peering cautiously down I saw the figure of Lord Dunraven, crushed and mangled upon the rocks, a hundred feet below me—this was his end. He had sown in blood and crime, and so he also had reaped.

My grasp was weakening fast; my arm seemed as though it would be torn from its socket with the strain. I had given myself up for lost, and was about to loose my hold, and so relieve my aching arm.

A voice came from above me. It was as the sound of sweetest music to my ears.

"Where art thou?" cried Winona, as she leaned over the cliff.

"Be careful," I answered, "there is a great chasm in front of thee, over which I hang by one arm. Quick! or I must let loose and be dashed to pieces on the rocks below."

A slight noise, and then she reached out, and with both hands grasped me by the collar, just as my hand slipped from the ledge, and drawing me slowly up placed me upon the ground. Exhausted and unnerved I lay there, shaking and trembling like a leaf. The strain had been so great, that now I was safe, the reaction was almost more than I could stand in my worn-out condition.



"Where is the lady, Winona?" I asked feebly, as she bent over me.

"She lies below," she answered calmly. "I rushed on up here to find thee."

"And thou didst leave her where she fell?" I cried in amazement.

"Yes," she answered stolidly. "And well for the Eagle that I did, else he had not been here to tell the tale."

With an exclamation I got upon my trembling feet, and back I went through the tall grass, the Indian girl at my heels. Thank God she was still there; I could see the white dress as it gleamed in the moonlight. Reaching her side I bent over her; her eyes opened and she gazed up into mine.

"I knew that thou wouldst come," she murmured. "They told me thou wert dead, but I knew it was false, and I have waited long and patiently, praying that thou wouldst take me from this place."

"Yes," I answered gently, "I have come. Would that it had been sooner, but I have done my best. I grieve that thou shouldst have been subjected to the threats and terror of this man so long, but it is past now forever."

"Yes, gone," she repeated softly. "But take me away from here."

Bending over her, I took her up with my right arm, as though she had been a tired child, and with her head upon my shoulder, I retraced my steps to where I had met Dunraven. Never will I forget that walk with Margaret in my arms; I was weary—yea, exhausted—my left arm broken, but I had forgotten these things—forgotten that my enemies lay cold and still in that silent forest, and would trouble me no more. I only knew that I held in my arms one that was more to me than all else in this great world, that she lay nestled close to my heart, her light breath gently fanning my cheek. For a few brief moments I tasted the ambrosial nectar of the gods, and was content.

With Margaret I could walk on forever through these dark forests, feeling neither hunger, thirst, nor cold. Manteo had joined us, three fresh and bleeding scalps at his belt—one was the Indian's, another the priest's, and the third that of the sailor, Miles. Without a word he led the way down the path to the boats, I following, with Winona,

her eyes fixed upon my slightest motion, behind. We had traveled perhaps one-half of the distance when Margaret stirred.

"I have recovered sufficiently to walk," she said. And looking down at her face in the moonlight, I could see the deep blush upon her cheek and neck.

"But canst thou walk?" I answered, loath to loose her. "'Tis but a few steps more to the boat."

"Nay," she replied, "I can walk now." And gently, but firmly, she loosed herself from my arm, and turned to follow Manteo, who strode down the path ahead of me.

"What is wrong with thy arm?" Margaret cried in alarm, for a sudden faintness had seized me, and I staggered blindly as I caught with my sound hand at my left arm from which a stream of blood was spurting.

"'Tis naught," I answered. "Only a sudden weakness which has passed." And I would have gone on had she not stopped me.

"Thinkest thou that I am blind?" she said indignantly. "Stop this moment, sir, and have it dressed." And with a pretty, impetuous gesture she halted.

Manteo glided to my side, and with his knife cut away the deerskin from my arm, and glanced about him.

"If Manteo had someone to hold the Eagle's arm while he cut a splint," he murmured, half to himself.

My lady stepped forward, and despite my protest, caught my arm in both of her hands, and held it in the position which the chief indicated, while Winona darted away for some water from a little brook to wash the wound. Quickly the chief splintered my arm, and putting it in a deerskin sling, said that we were ready to proceed.

"Dost thou not wish Winona to go back for some of thy dresses, Lady Margaret?" I asked, as we were about to start. She hesitated a moment.

"If she would," she said uncertainly, and she looked at the Indian girl who stood a little apart from us. Turning to Winona I bade her go to the hut, and bring back the contents of the chest which my lady described to me. She turned and bounded back down the path out of sight, while we moved on slowly towards the flat rock.

"It is well that thou didst come when thou didst,"



Margaret said, with a dainty little shudder, "else I know not what I would have done; for the Count DeNortier, who had protected me heretofore from Lord Dunraven, was dead, and I was alone and helpless. Is Lord Dunraven dead?" she asked suddenly, looking up at me.

"Yes," I answered slowly. "Both he and the priest are dead. My lord fell over a deep precipice as I pursued him, and I had a narrow escape from the same fate."

"I am glad," she said in a low voice. "I should have grieved if aught had befallen thee."

"I thank thee," I said quietly, though my pulse bounded and danced at these simple words, which in her kindness she had spoken—and so we came to the boat. I helped her into the largest canoe (Manteo had already broken a great hole in the other with his hatchet, so that it could not be used to pursue us) and stepping in after her, I took my seat.

A few minutes we waited thus in silence, and then Winona, panting and hot, came down the trail, a bundle in her arms which she, without a word, handed to me. She stepped into the canoe and picked up one of the paddles; Manteo took the other, and they pushed out boldly into the stream.

"Manteo," I said, turning to him, as he knelt in the bottom of the canoe, and with powerful strokes urged her through the water, "it was just in time that thou didst arrive."

"Manteo has been delayed long upon the journey," he answered. "Twice he nearly fell into the hands of hostile red men, and he only reached the lodges of the Cherokees a few hours after thou hadst departed. The chief, Windango, told me where thou hadst gone, so Manteo followed hot after the Eagle, and seeing the girl Winona, as I crept near the fire, I recognized her as the daughter of the chief of the Cherokees. In a few words she explained to me the trouble, and we gave the war whoop and rushed at them. Of a truth they acted as if the whole Cherokee nation were at their heels," and something like a smile crossed his dark face.

"It sounded to me as though there must have been at least a hundred savages in the woods," I answered. "My brother Manteo shouted as though he might have been threescore himself," and I laughed at him.

My eyes fell upon Margaret as she shivered in the stern, and catching up the great bearskin from the bottom of the boat, despite her protests, I wrapped it about her.

"The beautiful one is more lovely than the dawn," said Manteo, a look of admiration for a moment upon his face. "I wonder not that the Eagle has traversed all these leagues to carry her back with him to his lodge."

I looked at Margaret.

"Wouldst thou know what the chief has said of thee, Lady Margaret?" I asked, a twinkle in my eye, for the chief had spoken in his own tongue. Although he understood the English language, yet he would never express himself in it, but would always talk to me in his own soft speech.

"What is it?" she asked, a faint smile upon her face as she noticed my glee. "Nothing bad, I hope."

"He says that thou art more lovely than the dawn," I answered, wisely judging that it would be better to suppress the latter part of his remark.

The color deepened in her cheeks.

"Since when hast thou taught the very savages to turn a compliment?" she said. "Truly, sir, thou hast not labored in vain."

"They know no better than to tell the truth," I answered, a smile upon my face. "'Tis from the heart, and not from the lips as in London."

She made no answer, but turning her head looked out upon the dark river, as its waters glistened and sparkled in the moonlight. And I watched her lovely profile as she sat thus.

"It is beautiful, is it not?" she said softly.

"Very beautiful," I answered, as I still gazed at her. I was thinking of her face, and if I but dared to lean over and press my lips to that soft cheek, which so lately had lain against my shoulder.

She stamped her little foot.

"Where are thy wits?" she said. "Thou lookest off as though in a dream, and I venture to say that thou knowest not one word that I have said."

"Margaret," I answered, "I would know one thing. The priest once showed me a paper in thy hand and stamped with thy crest, in which thou didst say that thou lovest



Dunraven, and would be his wife. It almost shook my faith in God and man, that thou, whom I believed so pure and noble, shouldst love one so black as he. I had thought to ask thee that night in the prison, but it slipped my mind. Tell me, didst thou write such a note as this?"

"And thou thinkest that I would do such a thing as that?" she answered, with a look of reproach. "For shame, Sir Thomas! Have I ever in my whole life given thee cause to think thus of me?"

"Forgive me," I replied. "But the note was in thy handwriting, upon thy paper, and scented with thy perfume."

"Thou mightst have known better," she answered gravely, and she looked out again upon the river.

"Oh, man," she cried in scorn, "canst thou never believe that a woman cares naught but for wealth and fame; that she plans for naught but rank and position, and that her mind is ever filled with thoughts of conquest?"

"I know of one lady who, I think is all that mortal should be," I answered; "whose pure soul can hold no unworthy thought."

"And who pray may this person be? Fain would I know such a one," and she looked up again at me, smiling faintly.

"Thou knowest her well," I answered quickly; "she is perhaps thy best friend."

"I know not of whom thou speakest," she cried innocently, or was it but a subterfuge—"unless it be the Lady Jane Porter."

"'Tis thyself, Margaret," I answered. "Thou art the one of whom I speak," and I bent forward to look into her face.

But she had drawn herself up, as her eye caught sight of the silent Indian maid behind me, who with keen gaze followed her every movement.

"Enough," she replied coldly. "I did not angle for a compliment," and she turned her head aside as though to end the conversation.

"Thou art tired," I said. "Let me wrap thy robe about thee, and thou shalt rest in the bow of the canoe."

"I am not tired," she replied, "and I would prefer to sit and watch the changing river as we glide along."

But I insisted upon her taking some rest, and she finally consented; for though she would not acknowledge it, she was plainly tired.

Long I sat in the center of the canoe. The Indian girl had relinquished her paddle, and was now slumbering behind me. Only the tireless Manteo urged the boat through the water, his steady strokes unflagging as hour after hour passed. I sat opposite him until after midnight. Then despite his protest I took the paddle from his hands, and bidding him snatch some sleep, I took his post and with my sound arm made shift to paddle the canoe. So I sat until the dawn crept slowly above the trees.

My lady was up early, and with a light song upon her lips, chided me for sitting up till day. She was like a little merry-hearted child this morning, as she ran to and fro upon the boat. I had seen her often and in many moods—as the stately lady of fashion in silks and satins; as the plain simple maid, dimpled with smiles, going for her walk in the city of London; had seen her as she archly tossed her head at some nicely-turned compliment; had seen her in tears, as on the night when she visited me in London—but I had never seen her half so lovely as now.

Even the silent Manteo brightened up under the spell of my lady's good humor—only Winona seemed moody and ill at ease. And so passed long, happy days for me, as we floated down the river. I cared not to return to the world again, for me it meant to lose Margaret, and perhaps my head.

It was hard, Heaven knows, to sit and watch her face; to listen to the sound of her sweet, low voice, and to keep down the great wave of love for her that welled up in my heart; to speak no word of all those tender ones, that it seemed impossible to suppress. But I fought against my love like a man, for she was Bobby's, the finest gentleman I had ever known and my best friend. Moreover she was in my hands, and I would fulfill my trust; I would take no advantage of her position to pour my love into her unwilling ears. She should go back to England and Bobby, and forget me.

Once when I mentioned Bobby's name, I had seen a blush upon her cheek, and I thought her blue eye grew softer; the



demon of jealousy arose in my breast, and I mentioned his name no more. Turning to her, I said:

"Lady Margaret, wouldst thou grant me one favor?"

"Yes," she replied, and she turned her head away from me. "What is it, Sir Thomas?"

"Wilt thou, when thou raisest thy voice in prayer to God, offer up one supplication for a wicked, sinful man, that he may triumph over the tempter, who daily and hourly besets him?"

"Yes," she answered gently, and a tear dropped from her blue eyes. "I will pray for thee, Sir Thomas, that thou mayest fight a brave fight, and win a noble victory over thyself."

And now we had left the canoe, and under the guidance of Manteo plunged again into the forest afoot. To my remonstrances that the lady could not endure the journey, he had turned a deaf ear.

"Better that, than to fall into the hands of the Tuscaroras," he said stolidly. "Here in the woods Manteo can guard better against them than on the water," and so afoot we had gone.

Margaret had made light of my gloomy forebodings.

"Out upon thee, sir!" cried she archly. "One would think that I was some pretty toy, from which the rain would wash the paint, that I cannot keep the trail with thee in the forest."

"Fair lady, perhaps thou wilt remember my warning when thou art footsore from the march," I answered. "But if thou art determined, come!" And I led the way after the Indian, with her at my side.

The long journey was sweet to me, for I walked by her side much of the time. I helped her over some fallen log, or held aside an overhanging limb so that she might pass beneath it. Often I would bring down some wild fowl with the Indian's bow, with which I had become expert, and browning it upon the coals, would bring a choice piece to my lady, where she sat enthroned under some monarch of the forest, and dropping upon one knee, with mock humility would present it to her, while she with stately air, albeit with a merry twinkle in her eye, would accept it right royally.

Both Manteo and I were her willing slaves, for the Indian had fallen under her spell too, and worshiped the very ground upon which she stood. Winona would have naught to do with Margaret, but scornfully and disdainfully held herself aloof, and to all her advances turned a cold shoulder.

We were nearing our journey's end now, and as I sat brooding moodily over the camp fire, my head bent low over my hands, I thought bitterly of the future. I could not return to England and see Margaret become the bride of another. No, I would go back with Manteo into the wilderness after I had seen my lady safely upon her ship, and there I would spend the remainder of my life with the faithful Indian.

But what if White, despairing of my return and finding no trace of the lost colony, had raised anchor and sailed back to England. What, then, would become of Margaret? Manteo had told me on his return, only a few days ago, that the Governor had found no trace of the colonists, and but awaited my arrival to set sail. If he should tire of my long absence, what should I do with my lady? A selfish joy at the thought welled up within me, but I resolutely put it away. A light step interrupted my thoughts, and looking up, I saw before me Winona. The girl had her bow in hand and on her shoulder was strapped a robe, as though ready for a journey.

"What is it, Winona?" I asked, as she stood motionless before me.

"Winona goes back again to the lodges of the Cherokees," she answered. "Long she has traveled from her people, and her heart yearns for the faces of her tribe. The Eagle has flown far, and now he journeys with the beautiful one to the land of his home. Winona cannot travel so far. Her feet would tire, and she would return to where Windango awaits her."

"Winona," I answered, "thou canst not return to the Cherokees; they would slay thee. I am a wanderer upon the face of the earth and can do naught for thee myself, but I will ask the Lady Margaret to take thee with her. She is a great lady and thy lot would be an easy one, with so fair a mistress."

"Nay," she answered, "Winona will remain with her people. Windango is a great chief and I shall be safe with him—besides," and she hung her head.



"What?" I asked kindly. "Speak freely, thou needst fear naught."

She raised her head proudly, her dark eyes looking into mine.

"Why should I fear to tell it?" she cried. "Winona loves the Eagle; she knows that his heart belongs to the beautiful one, and that he will fly far away with her to his wigwam. Shall Winona go to eat out her heart with sorrow at the bliss she cannot share? No, she returns to her own. Thou art near thy journey's end. Two days more and thou wilt stand on the Island of Roanoke—Winona would leave thee now."

"But, Winona," I cried, "I go not back to England with Lady Margaret!"

She looked intently at me.

"Dost love the beautiful one?" she asked fiercely. "Answer me the truth at this last moment."

"Yes," I answered simply, "I love her."

"And thou wouldst ask me to serve her?" she cried. "One whom thou lovest? Wouldst thou have served the chief whom thou didst chase over the precipice, if the beautiful one had loved him?"

"No," I answered. "Thou knowest I would not." I could say no more, so I stood silent and waited.

"Winona will not forget the Eagle," she said in a low voice. "When she grows to be an old woman, she will tell how she once knew and loved the great white chief. Winona knows the Eagle and the beautiful one will be happy."

"Winona," I said sadly, "the Lady Margaret loves another."

"Winona is not blind," she replied, "the beautiful one loves the Eagle. Sharp are the eyes of love to discover love. And now," she said, as I stood staggered by her last words, "Winona would tell the Eagle farewell, for she knows she will see him no more." And catching my hand in hers, she pressed it to her lips. Then turning, she sped lightly away.

"Winona," I cried, "come back! Go not thus!" but only the moaning of the pines answered me—she was gone.

A light step from the other side of the fire, and my lady stood before me, her face wet with tears. One look at her, and I knew she had heard all.

"She has gone!" she cried. "Not back into the woods? Quick! After her, thou mayest yet save her."

"'Tis useless," I answered quietly, "she is far into the depths of the forest by now—besides, why should I bring her back? She is better thus. Thou hast heard what she said, and thou knowest why she left."

"I but rested upon the other side of the fire," she answered hurriedly, "when her voice fell upon my ear. I could not withdraw without being seen by her, so I was forced to play the spy against my will."

"It matters not," I replied; "there was naught said that I would not have thee know. But sit down, Lady Margaret. I have a few words to say to thee, before we part forever." I motioned her to a seat upon a stone in front of me.

"I am about to reopen a painful subject for the last time, but as we part in a day or two, I would wish to speak of it again. I cannot go back to England; it would be sheer madness to return and face the Queen. And after all, England holds naught for me but sorrow and pain. I have passed from the lives of those I once knew, as the dead leaves of last year's trees, and I shall return no more.

"Margaret," I said, "I cannot go back into those great wastes behind me, without telling thee of what my love for thee has been to me. It has been a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night; it has been the sweetest drop in the bitter cup of life. Life would be worth the struggle, had it held naught else for me save this. See," I continued, "I found months ago by the trail, this little miniature of thee. I have kept it ever since where I could feast my eyes upon it. I am a better man because I have known and loved thee."

"Thou art the noblest gentleman I have ever known," she sobbed. "I am unworthy of such love as this."

"No," I answered, "thou art worthy of a finer, truer man, and such a love thou hast. When thou art happy in thy far-away home, wilt thou not think of one who loves thee and wanders in exile in Virginia? The grass is green in old England now, Margaret, and the birds are singing on



every hedge; greet the old place for me, and remember me to my old friends, Bobby and Steele, for I shall never see them more."

"I will think of thee often," she answered, the tears still in her azure eyes. "Must thou remain here, alone in this strange land?"

"Yes," I answered, "my place is here. I could not bear to see thee the bride of another."

"Am I to be wedded without my consent, sir?" she said archly, and she broke into a low, sweet laugh.

"But thou dost love Bobby? Thou didst as good as tell me that in the prison yonder in England."

"Thou didst take it for granted," she said shyly. "I was overpowered with sorrow at thy sad plight, and thou didst jump at the conclusion that I loved Sir Robert," and she looked at me, a smile shining through her tears.

"Whom dost thou love, if not Bobby?" I cried in wonder. "Dost love anyone, Margaret?" and I bent low over the golden head.

"Yes," she answered softly, "I love a gentleman, brave, strong, noble, with a heart as true as steel; one who has loved me long."

"Who is it, Margaret?"

She looked up at me, with a smile soft and sweet, at which my heart gave a great bound of joy—it could not be. No, I must be dreaming.

"Must I tell thee, stupid? Are thy wits gone wool-gathering?"

With a great cry of joy I took her in my arms, smiles, blushes, and tears, and held her close to my heart.

"Dear," I cried, "I never dreamed of this. Why didst thou not tell me before now?"

"Because thou didst not ask me. Oh, Thomas, why didst thou not ask me that night in the prison?"

"Margaret," I said, "thou shouldst love one handsome and young like thyself. Thou wilt be ashamed of me, sweet one, when thou seest me by the side of some gay, debonair, young gallant."

But she gently placed one soft white hand over my lips.

"Hush, not one word more, or I will vanish into yonder woods. Thou art more handsome in my eyes than any

velvet gallant, for thou hast become a man of deeds, not words. Thou wilt go back with me to England," she whispered, her face close to mine; "together we can face the Queen, and I will have thee pardoned."

"Yes," I answered, "come what will, we go back together."

"When didst thou first love me, Margaret?" I asked, my eyes upon the bright head against my shoulder.

"I do not know," she said. "I only know that as I stood beside thee in the prison cell in London, I knew that thy life was strangely precious to me. But good-night," she said, "I must keep my roses or thou wilt soon tire of me." And slipping from me, she tripped lightly away.

A light hand touched my arm. I turned and saw Manteo.

"The beautiful one will go with the Eagle to his lodge and be his squaw?" he said gravely.

"Yes," I answered, "she will go."

"Manteo is glad," he said simply, "for it is meet that the lady who is lovely beyond all mortal beauty, should go into the lodge with the Eagle, who is a great chief."

"I thank thee, Manteo." And I followed him down by the camp fire, and stretched myself out upon my bearskin.

My mind was in a whirl—I had not dreamed that Margaret loved me. I—gray, penniless; she—young and beautiful beyond compare. And with thoughts such as these, and of the future, I fell asleep.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE JOURNEY'S END

"GET up, lazy bones!" cried a merry voice in my ear, and arousing myself, I looked up into the arch face of my lady as, dimpled and smiling, she stood before me.

The sun was high in the heavens, and Margaret, an apron of deerskin about her slender waist, was getting breakfast. I had never seen her do this before. Either Manteo or myself always prepared the meals, but now with flushed face she tripped back to where a great haunch of venison browned over the fire on a spit, and with a look of anxiety, beautiful to see, turned it over to brown upon the other side.

"See how industrious I am this morning," she cried laughingly. "I am getting thy breakfast while thou dost sleep. 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard'!"

"'Tis the first time that thou hast ever done such a thing," I said lightly, as I bent over her, and catching both white hands, stick and all in mine, despite her laughing resistance, kissed her rosy lips.

"'Twas because thou wouldst not let me, sir," she answered saucily. "Now seat thyself and behold me cook."

I threw myself upon the ground opposite, and watched her as she ran to and fro, now putting a stick upon the fire, now turning the venison again. Finally she stated with an air of wisdom, that breakfast was done. And so we sat down together. Manteo had gone out for a little scout before breakfast, she told me.

"Venison from such a hand were thrice as sweet," I said, as she helped me to a generous slice.

"'Tis not sweet at all," she answered with a laugh. "So now, gallant sir, thy compliment is shattered."

"Say, then, is thrice more palatable," I replied, "and thou hast a compliment, perhaps less flowery, but more delicate and flattering," and I bowed to her mockingly.

"Oh, Thomas," she cried, as she watched me eat, "that is the third great slice of venison that thou hast helped thyself to; never have I seen thee eat so much."

"Never had I such a cook," I answered. "I could eat forever with so dainty a maid to sit beside me. In truth this venison is to me as the nectar of the gods." And so feasting my eyes upon her, I sat looking into her face.

"The Eagle gazes at the beautiful one as a famished wolf at a fat, slick buck," said Manteo, who had strode noiselessly up and who now stood behind me. "He looks as a man who had not tasted food for days would look, if he sat down to a great feast."

I flushed guiltily at his words, and then I translated them to my lady, who had looked up at the sound of Manteo's voice. She blushed a deep pink to the tips of her little ears, and her blue eyes fell beneath the admiring gaze I bent upon them. Laughing at her pretty confusion, I arose and made ready our light baggage to take the trail.

In a few moments we had resumed our journey. Pleasant and sweet were those last two days to me, as I walked by Margaret and whispered soft words of love to her. The very woods seemed transformed to me; from every tree there trilled some sweet-voiced songster; beautiful flowers lined our path and mingled with the many-tinted autumn leaves; while the sun shone brightly down on us, as though in pleasure at our happiness.

Hand in hand we trod after the Indian, as with tireless step he led us on. Sometimes we would come upon a little babbling brook and then, picking up Margaret in my arms, I would wade through, and put her gently down upon the other side. And so, laughing and happy as two children, we came in sight of Roanoke Island. I gave a great shout as we emerged from the forest, for there, a few rods away, lay the ship of White, riding calmly at anchor, her consorts nowhere to be seen; probably they had sailed again for England.

At the sound of my voice, a dozen men who were on the



"I Know of No Warrior Who is More Worthy to Wear It than the Eagle"

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deck turned towards me, and as I waved my hands, they lowered a boat and came toward us. In the bow of the approaching boat sat Governor White, and he shouted at me all the way to the shore.

"Safe back again, at last!" he cried in joy, as the boat grated upon the beach, and springing ashore, he wrung my hand as though he would never loose it. "We feared thou hadst been slain by the savages, but I had determined to wait until thou didst appear or we had news of thee."

"This is the Lady Margaret Carroll of London," I said, turning to my lady as she stood beside me, stately and grand as any queen. "This is Governor White, of whom thou hast frequently heard me speak."

"This is indeed an unexpected pleasure," cried the Governor, as with a deep bow he bent over her white hand. "'Tis but poor accommodation we can offer to one so lovely and well-bred, but to such as we have thou art welcome."

"I thank thee, sir," she answered, "and am sure that the company of Governor White will recompense for much else."

With another bow he took her hand and led her to the boat.

The men had gathered around me, shaking my hand as though I were a long-lost brother. I was overcome by the warmth of their greeting, I, whom they had previously shunned as though I had the plague. With shouts and exclamations of pleasure they hovered about me, and followed even the Indian, who met them with the same cold reserve as of yore.

We stepped into the boat, and rowed toward the ship. As we drew near, I saw that the whole company had gathered upon deck, and as we touched the side, they raised a ringing shout.

"Three cheers for Sir Thomas Winchester!" cried one, and with a will they roared them out.

And so amid cheering shouts of welcome, I, who had moved among them in the past with sneers and scorn, came back amidst the plaudits of the throng. Of such are made the fickle crowd; one moment ready to cut a man's throat—the next moment ready to crown him.

My lady's face was flushed with delight, as with starry eyes she looked up at me.

"See," she whispered proudly, "this is how thy fellows would honor thee."

"What does it mean, Governor?" I asked.

"The 'Dart' touched here a few days ago, on its way to harry the Spanish towns upon the coast, and she brought for thee an open letter of pardon; 'tis under the hand of Elizabeth and sealed with the great seal. It seems that DeNortier himself had sent a letter to the Queen, a few months ago, before he sailed away, swearing upon his oath that the charge of the priest and the other men was false, and sworn to by the command of Lord Dunraven. This coincided with the tale of Oliver Gates, and so thy friends secured a pardon for thee; there is another bulky letter here, brought by the same vessel, which I have not opened."

A great lump came into my throat and choked my speech, a mist dimmed my sight, and I could only shake the hand that White held out to me, and murmur a few words in answer to his hearty congratulations.

This had been the favor that DeNortier tried to tell me of as he lay dying in those dark woods. I thought of how often I had abused him, and of the great hate I bore him; then too how he had stood like a bulwark between Margaret and Dunraven. There was something noble after all in a man who would do this for an enemy, and I wished I could shake his hand and thank him—but it was too late.

I have never been able to solve the problem of why he wrote this letter to the Queen. Whether in a fit of remorse of conscience for all the evil he had done me, or to injure Dunraven who was his strongest rival, I know not; and the only lips which could solve this unexplained riddle lay cold, silenced forever, in that vast unknown land behind me.

And so we boarded the vessel. My lady had gone to the great cabin which the Governor had given up to her, and I stood near the mast looking at the shore. White approached me, a long bulky package in his hand.

'Tis the Queen's pardon," he said. "And this is the other letter of which I spoke," and he placed them in my hand.

Seating myself, I broke the seal and opened the letter. It



was from Bobby—a long, rambling epistle, telling me of the disappearance of Lady Margaret and begging me to watch for her, as he feared that Lord Dunraven, who he was sure had abducted her, would fly to this country. But it was the last part—I stared long, and read once, twice; it ran thus:

"I have at last given up all hope of winning Lady Margaret, for I know that she loves thee, and so I am to be wedded in a few weeks to my lady's friend and sometime schoolmate, Lady Jane Porter. So if thou dost discover Margaret, I give thee my advice to capture her without more words. The Queen has pardoned thee. But there is another piece of good fortune which I would acquaint thee with.

"Thy brother Richard died but one week ago, here in London. He died without a will or issue, unexpectedly in the night. The leech was summoned, but when he arrived thy brother was speechless. They say he made frantic efforts to speak, but in vain—death had sealed his lips. It is probably fortunate that he was dumb, as he no doubt wished to disinherit thee, whom he hated. And so the title and estates are thine. With these and the Queen's pardon in thy pocket, thy old place in London awaits thee. So come back—we stand with wide open arms to receive thee. No more at present, from

"Bobby."

I looked up, the breeze had begun to freshen; already the sailors were running to and fro, making preparations to hoist anchor and set sail for home. My lady had come up again and stood beside me.

"What is it?" she asked with a smile, as she saw the letter in my hand.

"'Tis from Sir Robert Vane," I answered. "He tells me that he is about to wed Lady Jane Porter; so thou seest, fair one, thou hast lost a lover," I said teasingly.

"I care not," she replied. "I have also gained one, and I am glad he is to wed, for I feared he would take the news of my betrothal to heart."

"He also says my brother Richard is dead, and the title

and estates are now mine." And I placed the letter in her hand.

"'Tis too good to be true," she replied calmly, as she clapped her hands. "See, sir, I am thy good fairy; the minute I came to thee, fortune opened wide her lap and poured her treasure at thy feet."

"Had she brought me naught but thee, I had been content," I answered.

I looked cautiously around. There was no one in sight, so catching her in my arms I stole a kiss. I was still looking down at her pink cheeks, when a step sounded, and Governor White came around the corner. One glance at my lady was enough for the wily captain, and with a twinkle in his eye, he looked at me.

"I think I may congratulate thee again, upon something of more importance than even thy pardon," he said.

"And what may that be, Governor?" I asked innocently, for I had no mind to give Margaret away.

"Upon thy approaching wedding," he answered, a broad smile upon his face. "Of a truth, Sir Thomas, thou art the most fortunate of men, and thou shouldst thank thy lucky star that thou hast won so lovely a bride."

"I am indeed most fortunate," I answered, "for I would not to-day exchange places with a king. And this letter from a dear friend, tells me my father's estates and title are now mine."

"This has of a truth been a day for thee long to be remembered," said the Governor, "and I rejoice with thee, for I grew to know and esteem thee for thy worth and valor, whilst thou wert with me upon the ship."

"Not more than I did thee," I replied. "But hast thou heard aught of thy little grandchild and the lost colony since I left thee?"

His old face saddened, and a look of grief came into his eyes.

"No," he replied, "I have heard no word of them; they were probably captured by the savages and carried far into the interior, never to be seen again. Poor little Virginia!—so innocent, so bright and happy, 'tis a hard fate for her. Rather would I have seen her in her grave; then would I have known she was beyond all harm and sorrow, and I



could have come sometimes to drop a tear or lay a flower upon the mound. But this is worse than death," and he wrung his hands in grief, his haggard, care-worn face working with emotion.

Margaret bent towards him, a tear in her blue eyes.

"God will watch over her, Governor," she said softly. "Safe in His protecting care, she is secure from harm."

"I thank thee, Lady Margaret," he said huskily. "'Tis a beautiful thought, and one that I shall treasure," and he strode rapidly away.

Coming towards us now I saw Manteo; silently he made his way, until he stood in front of us.

"The Eagle and the beautiful one will in a few moments be upon the breast of the great water," he said. "Manteo would say farewell to them before they go. He is glad that the beautiful one will be with the Eagle in his tepee, to cheer him when Manteo is gone."

"Surely thou too wilt not leave us, Manteo?" I cried. "Winona has gone back into the forest. Wilt thou desert us too? I had planned many pleasant things for the future, when thou too shouldst walk with us the smooth sod of my own green country."

"Manteo thanks the Eagle," he replied. "Manteo loves him, and would wish him well, but the fish cannot live out of the water, nor the bird when it beats its wings against the cage; neither can Manteo in that crowded land to which thou goest. His heart would yearn for the great, free forest; for the call of the wild bird to its mate; for the flowing river and the scent of the wild flowers—no, the Eagle and the beautiful one will return again to their own land, and Manteo will remain here."

"But, Manteo," cried Margaret, "'twill cloud our happiness to leave thee behind—thou who hast done so much for us," and she cast a coaxing look toward him.

"The beautiful one is kind to Manteo," he answered, "still he cannot go to that far land. Manteo first saw the light in this wild land, and here he has lived; his heart loves its shadowy depths and waving trees; here came into being his father, and their bones molder away among its sighing pines." And folding his robe about him he stood silent,

as some old Roman wrapped in his toga, his motionless eyes fixed upon me.

The great ship came around in the breeze; the shouts of the men reached us, as they hoisted sail and prepared for the homeward journey. The little canoe of the Indian had been placed upon the water, and now danced and eddied on the waves, as some impatient steed awaiting its rider.

White came forward to where we stood; I with my heart full to overflowing, and my lady with wet eyes. I was about to part from a noble soul, who had stood by me, undaunted and unafraid, when all others had shrunk from me, and I was torn with sorrow.

"If the Indian would leave, it is high time, Sir Thomas," he said; "for in an instant we will make out for the open sea, and his little canoe could not safely float upon the ocean."

Margaret had taken a little gold pin from her dress, and held it out to the Indian. "Keep it, Manteo," she said. "Do not forget me. And shouldst thou ever come to England, I shall be proud to entertain thee."

I unbuckled my gold-hilted sword from my side, and stepping forward, I fastened it around his waist.

"Take this sword," I said in a husky voice, "and when thou drawest it, Manteo, remember to whom it once belonged. Draw it not in an unworthy cause, nor sheath it in a just one; of all who have worn this blade, there has been none nobler and truer than thyself."

The chief's bronze face worked with emotion.

"Manteo must go," he cried, "or he will forget that he is a warrior, and weep even as a woman. Farewell! May the Great Spirit, who dost watch alike over all, both pale and red skin, guide your footsteps and keep you safe from harm," and with a steady step, he glided over to his canoe and dropped into it.

His knife gleamed for an instant upon the line that bound the canoe to the vessel. Released, the little boat fell back, and the great ship rose upon the water and began her outward trip.

We stood at the rail, Margaret and I, and watched the boat with the motionless figure in it, until a turn in the island



hid him from our view. And so we parted from that true soul forever, bearing with the stoicism of his race his grief at the separation.

A nobler type has there never been of a savage and barbarous race, whom its enemies have defamed and maligned. Hospitable, generous, warm-hearted and true, quick to anger, and when aroused never forgetting nor forgiving a foe, but at the same time never betraying a friend, nor forgetting a favor. Many foes of the race would do well to imitate its virtues, while with that knowledge that comes with superior advantages and opportunities they reject its failings. And of that untutored people, none there were who could boast of more of those qualities that go to make up a soldier and a gentleman, than he whom we left behind us that day—Manteo, a chieftain of Roanoke.

. . . . . .

We were coming into London. After being long upon the brine, we had at last reached England. And now this bright December morning we sailed up the sparkling Thames, passing swiftly the craft that, bent on business or pleasure, thronged its waters. Rapidly we sailed by them one by one, and kept on our steady way to the harbor. Each familiar spot I saw seemed to greet me as an old friend, and with Margaret at my side, we laughed and jested, as we drew nearer and nearer to London and home.

Home—that gray old castle, where my forefathers had lived and died, was to be our home, for we had determined to stay in London only a few days. I had prevailed on Margaret not to put me off any longer, and to-morrow morning, with only a few near friends to witness it, we were to be married quietly in a little chapel, and then would journey on to Richmond Castle, where, with her dear presence to cheer me, I was to take up the duties and responsibilities of my position.

I would have much to do, for we had made many plans for the improvement of my estate, and for the well-being and advancement of the tenants. There together we would pass our days in peace and happiness. I had suffered much, sorrowed much in the past, and longed for the rest and quiet of the calm green country, where, surrounded by my friends, and far from the noise and turmoil of London, I

could forget all, happy in the sweet sunshine of my lady's smiles.

We had turned the last bend of the river, and a great roar went up from the men, as like little children they shouted and cried. Many strong men, who had faced death unafraid, fell upon their knees, tears streaming from their bronzed faces, and thanked God that they had been spared to set foot on old England again. The culverins of our vessel screamed out a greeting, and from the shore the guns roared back a reply.

My lady had given a little cry of joy as we looked, for there in front of us lay the great city, the docks dotted with the crowd which had gathered to greet the vessel. Margaret laid her hand gently upon my arm. "Look!" she cried, and following her outstretched finger, I saw, at the very edge of the water, a little group shouting and screaming to us.

Could it be possible? Yes, there was Oliver Gates, dancing for joy, as he waved his hat and yelled like a savage; he had grown handsomer than ever, and looked stout and robust. Behind him stood Steele, his broad face wreathed in smiles, and leaning on his arm, his wife, stouter and more matronly than of yore, but still beautiful, a look of joy and welcome in her eyes. And Bobby, dear old fellow, yelling at me as though he would split his throat.

A little behind them there stood a larger group, old Sir Henry DeGray, Francis Drake, Bacon, Walter Raleigh, Sir William Stone, the little Doctor Robbins, and a score of other whilom friends, who cried out a hearty welcome as we neared them, and with wide open arms stood awaiting us.

I turned to Margaret with a joyful face, and met her azure eyes smiling into mine. Stretching out one of my tanned hands, I laid it upon her little white one, which rested lightly upon my arm. It fluttered for an instant like a little bird, and then lay quietly and trustfully in mine.

Behind me lay the river, its dark water rippling like the dead and forgotten past, with its pain and sorrow; before me stretched the bright sunshine and the greeting of my friends, like a prophecy of the joy to come. It seemed to reach out its welcoming hands, to draw us from the dim



yesterday of travail and woe into the sunny to-day of happiness and light.

All the dark gloom was behind us, and naught but sunshine lay before. So, with her hand in mine, we passed together out of the shadow and into the light.

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