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# OUR PIRATE HOARD.

By Thomas A. Janvier

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## Contents

[I](#)

[II.](#)

[III.](#)

[IV.](#)

[V.](#)

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## I

My great-great-great-uncle was one of the many sturdy, honest, high-spirited men to whom the early years of the last century gave birth. He was a brave man and a ready fighter, yet was he ever controlled in his actions by so nice a regard for the feelings of others, and through the strong fibre of his hardy nature ran a

strain of such almost womanly gentleness and tenderness, that throughout the rather exceptionally wide circle of his acquaintance he was very generally beloved.

By profession he was a pirate, and although it is not becoming in me, perhaps, to speak boastingly of a blood-relation, I would be doing his memory injustice did I not add that he was one of the ablest and most successful pirates of his time. His usual cruising-ground was between the capes of the Chesapeake and the lower end of Long Island; yet now and then, as opportunity offered, he would take a run to the New England coast, and in winter he frequently would drop down to the s'uthard and do a good stroke of business off the Spanish Main. His home station, however, was the Delaware coast, and his family lived in Lewes, being quite the upper crust of Lewes society as it then was constituted. When his schooner, the *Martha Ann*, was off duty, she usually was harbored in Rehoboth Bay. That was a pretty good harbor for pirate schooners in those days.

My great-great-great-uncle threw himself into his profession in the hearty fashion that was to be expected from a man of his sincere, earnest character. He toiled early and late at sea, and on shore he regulated the affairs of his family so that his expenses should be well within his large though somewhat fluctuating income; and the result of his prudence in affairs was that he saved the greater portion of what he earned. The people of Lewes respected him greatly, and the boys of the town were bidden to emulate his steady business ways and habit of thrift. He was, too, a man of public spirit. At his own cost and charge he renewed the town pump; and he presented the church—he was a very regular churchgoer when on shore—with a large bell of singularly sweet tone that had come into his possession after a casual encounter with a Cuban-bound galleon off the Bahama Banks.

And yet when at last my great-great-great-uncle, in the fulness of his years and virtues, was gathered to his fathers, and the sweet-toned Spanish bell tolled his requiem, everybody was very much surprised to find that of the fine fortune accumulated during his successful business career nothing worth speaking of could be found. The house that he owned in Lewes, the handsome furniture that it contained, and a sea-chest in which were some odds and ends of silverware (of a Spanish make) and some few pieces-of-eight and doubloons, constituted the whole of his visible wealth.

For my great-great-great-aunt, with a family of five sons and seven daughters (including three sets of twins) all under eleven years of age, the outlook was a sorry one. She was puzzled, too, to think what had gone with the great fortune which certainly had existed, and so was everybody else. The explanation that finally was adopted was that my great-great-great-uncle, in accordance with well established pirate usage, had buried his treasure somewhere, and had taken the secret of its burial-place with him to another and a better world. Probability was given to this conjecture by the fact that he had died in something of a hurry. He had been brought ashore by his men after an unexpected (and by him uninvited) encounter with a King's ship off the capes of the Delaware. One of his legs was shot off, and his head was pretty well laid open by a desperate cutlass slash. He already was in a raging fever, and although the best medical advice in Lewes was procured, he died that very night. As he lay dying his talk was wild and incoherent; but at the very last, as my great-great-great-aunt well remembered, he suddenly grew calm, straightened himself in the bed, and said, with great earnestness: "Sheer up the plank midway—"

That was all. He did not live to finish the sentence. At the moment, my great-great-great-aunt believed the words to be nothing more than a delirious use of a professional phrase; and this belief received color from the fact that a little before, in his feverish fancy, he had been capturing a Spanish galleon, and had got about to the part of the affair where the sheering up of a plank midway between the main and mizzen masts, for the accommodation of the Spaniards in leaving their vessel, would be appropriate. Thinking the matter over calmly afterwards, and in the light of subsequent events, she came to the conclusion that he was trying to tell her how and where his treasure was hid. Acting upon this belief, she sheered up all the planks about the house that seemed at all promising. She even had the cellar dug up and the well dragged. But not a scrap of the treasure did she ever find.

And the worst part of it was, that from that time onward our family had no luck at all. Excepting my elderly cousin, Gregory Wilkinson—who inherited a snug little fortune from his mother, and expanded it into a very considerable fortune by building up a large manufacture of carpet-slippers for the export trade—the rule in my family has been a respectable poverty that has just bordered upon actual want. But all the generations since my great-great-great-uncle's time have been cheered, as poverty-stricken people naturally would be cheered, by the knowledge that the pirate hoard was in existence; and by the hope that some day it would be found, and would make them all enormously rich at a jump. From the moment when I first heard of the treasure, as a little boy, I believed in it thoroughly; and I also believed that I was the member of the family destined to discover it.

## II.

I was glad to find, when I married Susan, that she believed in my destiny too. After talking the matter over quite seriously, we decided that the best thing for us to do was to go and live either in or near Lewes, so that my opportunities for investigation might be ample. I think, too, that Susan was pleased with the prospect of having a nice little house of our own, with a cow and peach-trees and chickens, where we could be very happy together. Moreover, she had notions about house-keeping, especially about house-keeping in the country, which she wanted to put into practice.

We found a confirmation of my destiny in the ease with which the preliminaries of my search were accomplished. The house that we wanted seemed to be there just waiting for us—a little bit of a house, well out in the country, with a couple of acres of land around it, the peach-trees really growing, and a shed that the man said would hold a cow nicely. What I think pleased Susan most of all was a swallow's nest under the eaves, with the mother swallow sitting upon a brood of dear little swallows, and the father swallow flying

around chipping like anything.

"Just think of it!" said the dear child; "it is like living in a feudal castle, and having kestrels building their nests on the battlements."

I did not check her sweet enthusiasm by asking her to name some particular feudal castle with a frieze of kestrels' nests. I kissed her, and said that it was very like indeed.

Then we examined the cow-stable—we thought it better to call it a cow-stable than a shed—and I pulled out my foot-rule and measured it inside. It was a very little cow-stable, but, as Susan suggested, if we could not get a small grown-up cow to fit it, "we might begin with a young cow, and teach her, as she grew larger, to accommodate herself to her quarters by standing cat-a-cornered, like the man who used to carry oxen up a mountain." Susan's allusions are not always very clearly stated, though her meaning, no doubt, always is quite clear in her own mind. I may mention here that eventually we were so fortunate as to obtain a middle-sized cow that got along in the stable very well. We had a tidy colored girl who did the cooking and the rough part of the house-work, and who could milk like a steam-engine.

As soon as we got fairly settled in our little home I began to look for my great-great-great-uncle's buried treasure, but I cannot say that at first I made much progress. I could not even find a trace of my great-great-great-uncle's house in Lewes, and nobody seemed ever to have heard of him. One day, though, I was so fortunate as to encounter a very old man—known generally about Lewes as Old Jacob—who did remember "the old pirate," as he irreverently called him, and who showed me where his house had been. The house had burned down when he was a boy—seventy years back, he thought it was—and across where it once had stood a street had been opened. This put a stop to my search in that direction. As Susan very justly observed, I could not reasonably expect the Lewes people to let me dig up their streets like a gas-piper just on the chance of finding my family fortune.

I was not very much depressed by this turn of events, for I was pretty certain in my own mind that my great-great-great-uncle had not buried his treasure on his own premises. The basis of this belief was the difficulty—that must have been even greater in his time—of transporting such heavy substances as gold and silver across the sandy region between Lewes and where the *Martha Ann* used to lie at anchor in Rehoboth Bay. I reasoned that, the burial being but temporary, my relative would have been much more likely to have interred his valuables at some point on the land only a short distance from the *Martha Ann's* anchorage. When I mentioned this theory to Susan she seemed to be very much impressed by the common-sense of it, and as I have a great respect for Susan's judgment, her acquiescence in my views strengthened my own faith in them.

To pursue my search in the neighborhood of Rehoboth Bay it was necessary that I should have the assistance of some person thoroughly familiar with the coast thereabouts. After thinking the matter over I decided that I could not do better than take Old Jacob into my confidence. So I got the old man out to the Swallow's Nest—that was the name that Susan had given our country place: only by the time that she had settled upon it the little swallows had grown up and the whole swallow family had gone away—under pretence of seeing if the cow was all right (Old Jacob was a first-rate hand at cow doctoring), and while he was looking at the cow I told him all about the buried treasure, and how I wanted him to help me find it. When I put it in his head this way he remembered perfectly the story that used to be told about the old pirate's mysteriously lost fortune, and he entered with a good deal of spirit into my project for getting it again. Of course I told him that if we did find it he should have a good slice of it for helping me. I told Susan that I had made this promise, and she said that I had done exactly right. So, after we had given him a good supper, Old Jacob went back to Lewes, promising that early the next week, after he had got through a job of boat-painting which he had on hand, he would go over with me, and we would begin operations on the bay. He seemed to think the case very promising. He said that when he was only a tot of a boy his father had pointed out to him the *Martha Ann's* anchorage, and that he thought he could tell to within a cable's length of where the schooner used to lie. I did not know how long a cable was, but from the tone in which Old Jacob spoke of it I judged that it must be short. I felt very well pleased with the progress that I was making, and when I told Susan all that Old Jacob had told me, she said that she looked upon the whole matter as being as good as settled. Indeed, she kept me awake quite a while that night while she sketched the outlines of the journey in Europe that we would take as soon as I could get my great-great-great-uncle's treasure dug up, and its non-interest-bearing doubloons converted into interest-bearing bonds.

### III.

The day after I had this talk with Old Jacob I was rather surprised by getting a telegram from my cousin Gregory Wilkinson, telling me that he was coming down to pay us a visit, and would be there that afternoon. I was not as much astonished as I would have been if the telegram had come from anybody else, because Gregory Wilkinson had a way of telegraphing that he was going to do things which nobody expected him to do, and I was used to it. Moreover, I had every reason for desiring to maintain very friendly relations with him. He had told me several times that he had made a will by which his large fortune was to be divided between me and a certain Asylum for the Relief and Education of Destitute Red Indian Children that he was very much interested in; and he had more than hinted that the asylum was not the legatee that was the more to be envied. This made me feel quite comfortable about the remote future, but it did not simplify the problem of living comfortably in the immediate present. My cousin was a very tough, wiry little man, barely turned of fifty. There was any quantity of life left in him—his father, who had been just such another, had lived till he was eighty-nine. There was not much of a chance, therefore, that either the asylum or I would receive anything from his estate for ever so long—and I may add I was very glad, for my part, that things were that way. Gregory Wilkinson was a first-rate fellow, for all his queerness and sudden ways, and I should have been

sorry enough to have been his chief heir. One reason why I liked him so much was because he was so fond of Susan. When we were married—although he had not seen her then—he sent her forks, and he had lived up to those forks ever since.

Susan was rather flustered when I showed her the telegram; but she went to work with a will, and got the little spare room in order, and stewed some peaches and made some biscuits for supper. Susan's biscuits were something extraordinary. Gregory Wilkinson came all right, and after supper—he said that it was the nicest supper he had eaten in a long while—she did the honors of the Swallow's Nest in the pretty way that is her especial peculiarity. She showed him the cow-stable, with the cow in it, and the colored girl milking away in her usual vigorous fashion, the chickens, the garden, the peach-trees, and the nest under the eaves where the swallows had lived when we first came there. Then, as it grew dark, we sat on the little veranda while we smoked our cigars—that is, Gregory Wilkinson and I smoked: all that Susan did was to try to poke her finger through the rings which I blew towards her—and I told why we had come down there, and what a good start we had made towards finding my great-great-great-uncle's buried money. And when I had got through, Susan told how, as soon as I had found it, we were going to Europe.

We neither of us thought that Gregory Wilkinson manifested as much enthusiasm in the matter as the circumstances of the case demanded; but then, as Susan pointed out to me, in her usual clear-headed way, it was not reasonable to expect a man with a fortune to be as eager to get one as a man without one would be.

"Very likely he'll give us his share for finding it," said Susan; "he don't want it himself, and it would be dreadful to turn the heads of all those destitute red Indian children by leaving it to them."

I should have mentioned earlier that, so far as we knew, my cousin and I were my great-great-great-uncle's only surviving heirs. The family luck had not held out any especially strong temptations in the way of pleasant things to live for, and so the family gradually had died off. Whatever my search should bring to light, therefore, would be divided between us two.

By the time that Old Jacob got through with his boat-painting, Gregory Wilkinson had gathered a sufficient interest in our money-digging to volunteer to go along with us to the bay. We had a two-seated wagon, and I took with me several things which I thought might be useful in an expedition of this nature—two spades, a pickaxe, a crow-bar, a measuring tape that belonged to Susan, an axe, and a lantern (for, as Susan very truly said, we might have to do some of our digging after dark). I took also a pulley and a coil of rope, in case the box of treasure should prove so heavy that we could not otherwise pull it out from the hole. Old Jacob knew all about rigging tackle, and said that we could cut a pair of sheer-poles in the woods. We were very much encouraged by the confident way in which Old Jacob talked about cutting sheer-poles; it sounded wonderfully business-like. Susan, of course, was very desirous of going along, and I very much wanted to take her. But as we intended to stay all night, in case we did not find the treasure during our first day's search, and as the only place where we could sleep was an oysterman's shanty that Old Jacob knew about, she saw herself that it would not do. So she made the best of staying at home, in her usual cheery fashion, and promised, as we drove off, to have a famous supper ready for us the next night—when we would come home with our wagon-load of silver and gold.

It was a long, hot, dusty drive, and the mosquitoes were pretty bad as we drew near the coast. But we were cheered by the thought of the fortune that was so nearly ours, and we smoked our pipes at the mosquitoes in a way that astonished them. After we had taken out the horses and had eaten our dinner (Susan had put us up a great basket of provisions, with two of her own delicious peach pies on top) we walked down to the bay-side, with Old Jacob leading, to look for the place where the *Martha Ann* used to anchor. I took the tape-measure along, both because it might be useful, and because it made me think of Susan.

I was sorry to find that the clearer the lay of the land and water became, the more indistinct grew Old Jacob's remembrance of where his father had told him that the schooner used to lie.

"It mought hev ben about here," he said, pointing across to a little bay some way off on our left; "an' agin it mought hev ben about thar," with a wave of his hand towards a low point of land nearly half a mile off on our right; "an' agin it mought hev ben sorter atwixt an' atween 'em. Here or hereabouts, thet's w'at I say; here or hereabouts, sure."

Now this was perplexing. My plan, based upon Old Jacob's assurance that he could locate the anchorage precisely, was to hunt near the shore for likely-looking places and dig them up, one after another, until we found the treasure. But to dig up all the places where treasure might be buried along a whole mile of coast was not to be thought of. We implored Old Jacob to brush up his memory, to look attentively at the shape of the coast, and to try to fix definitely the spot off which the schooner had lain. But the more that he tried, the more confusing did his statements become. Just as he would settle positively—after much thinking and much looking at the sun and the coast line—on a particular spot, doubts would arise in his mind as to the correctness of his location; and these doubts presently would resolve themselves into the certainty that he was all wrong. Then the process of thinking and looking would begin all over again, only again to come to the same disheartening end. The short and long of the matter was that we spent all that day and a good part of the next in wandering along the bay-side in Old Jacob's wake, while he made and unmade his locations at the rate of about three an hour. At last I looked at Gregory Wilkinson and Gregory Wilkinson looked at me, and we both nodded. Then we told Old Jacob that we guessed we'd better hitch up the horses and drive home. It made us pretty dismal, after all our hopes, to hitch up the horses and drive home that way.

My heart ached when I saw Susan leaning over the front gate watching for us as we drove up the road. The wind was setting down towards us, and I could smell the coffee that she had put on the fire to boil as soon as she caught sight of us—Susan made coffee splendidly—and I knew that she had kept her promise, and had ready the feast that was to celebrate our success; and that made it all the dismaller that we hadn't any success to celebrate.

When I told her how badly the expedition had turned out she came very near crying; but she gave a sort of gulp, and then laughed instead, and did what she could to make things pleasant for us. We had our feast, but notwithstanding Susan's effort to be cheerful, it was about as dreary a feast as I ever had anything to do with. We brought Old Jacob in and let him feast with us; and he, to do him justice, was not dreary at all. He seemed

to enjoy it thoroughly. Indeed, the most trying part of that sorrowful supper-party was the way in which Old Jacob recovered his spirits and declared at short intervals that his memory now was all right again. He even went so far as to say that with his eyes blindfolded and in the dark he could lead us to the precise spot off which the schooner used to lie.

Susan was disposed to regard these assertions hopefully; but we, who had been fumbling about with him for two days, well understood their baselessness. It was not Old Jacob's fault, of course, but his defective memory certainly was dreadfully provoking. Here was an enormous fortune slipping through our fingers just because this old man could not remember a little matter about where a schooner had been anchored.

After he had eaten all the supper that he could hold—which was a good deal—and had gone home, we told Susan the whole dismal story of how our expedition had proved to be a total failure. It was best, we thought, not to mince matters with her; and we stated minutely how time after time the anchorage of the schooner had been precisely located, and then in a little while had been unlocated again. She saw, as we did, that as a clew Old Jacob was not much of a success, and also that he was about the only thing in the least like a clew that we possessed. Realizing this latter fact, and knowing that his great age made his death probable at any moment, Susan strongly advised me, in her clear-sighted way, to have him photographed.

## IV.

Gregory Wilkinson seemed to find himself quite comfortable in our little home, and settled down there into a sort of permanency. We were glad to have him stay with us, for he was a first-rate fellow, and always good company in his pleasant, quiet way, and he told us two or three times that he was enjoying himself. He told me a great many more than two or three times that he considered Susan to be a wonderfully fine woman; indeed, he told me this at least once every day, and sometimes oftener. He was greatly struck—just as everybody is who lives for any length of time in the same house with Susan—by her capable ways, and by her unflinching equanimity and sweetness of temper. Even when the colored girl fell down the well, carrying the rope and the bucket along with her, Susan was not a bit flustered. She told me just where I would find the clothes-line and a big meat-hook; and when, with this hastily-improvised apparatus, we had fished the colored girl up and got her safely on dry land again, she knew exactly what to do to make her all right and comfortable. As Gregory Wilkinson observed to me, after it was all over, from the way that Susan behaved, any one might have thought that hooking colored girls up out of wells was her regular business.

As to making Susan angry, that simply was impossible. When things went desperately wrong with her in any way she would just come right to me and cry a little on my shoulder. Then, when I had comforted her, she would chipper up and be all right again in no time. Gregory Wilkinson happened to come in one day while a performance of this sort was going on, and for fear that he should think it odd Susan explained to him that it was a habit of hers when things very much worried her and she felt like being ugly to people. (The trouble that day was that the colored girl, who had a wonderful faculty for stirring up tribulation, had broken an India china teacup that had belonged to Susan's grandmother, and that Susan had thought the world of.) That evening, while we were sitting on the veranda smoking, and before Susan, who was helping clear the supper-table, had joined us, Gregory Wilkinson said to me, with oven, more emphasis than usual, that Susan was the finest woman he had ever known; and he added that he was very sorry that when he was my age he had not met and married just such another.

He and I talked a good deal at odd times about the money that our great-great-great-uncle the pirate had buried, and that through all these years had stayed buried so persistently. He did not take much interest in the matter personally, but for my sake, and still more for Susan's sake, he was beginning to be quite anxious that the money should be found. He even suggested that we should take Old Jacob over to the bay-side and let him try again to find the *Martha Ann's* anchorage; but a little talk convinced us that this would be useless. The old man had been given every opportunity, during the two days that we had cruised about with him, to refresh his memory; and we both had been the pained witnesses of the curious psychological fact that the more he refreshed it, the more utterly unmanageable it had become. The prospect, we agreed, was a disheartening one, for it was quite evident that for our purposes Old Jacob was, as it were, but an elderly, broken reed.

About this time I noticed that Gregory Wilkinson was unusually silent, and seemed to be thinking a great deal about something. At first we were afraid that he was not quite well, and Susan offered him both her prepared mustard plasters and her headache powders. But he said that he was all right, though he was very much obliged to her. Still, he kept on thinking, and he was so silent and preoccupied that Susan and I were very uncomfortable. To have him around that way, and to be always wondering what he could possibly be thinking about, Susan said, made her feel as though she were trying to eavesdrop when nobody was talking.

One afternoon while we were sitting on the veranda—Susan and I trying to keep up some sort of a conversation, and Gregory Wilkinson thinking away as hard as ever he could think—a thin man in a buggy drove down the road and stopped at our hitch-ing-post. When he had hitched his horse he took out from the after-part of the buggy a large tin vessel standing on light iron legs, and came up to the house with it. He made us all a sort of comprehensive bow, but stopped in front of Susan, set the tin vessel upon its legs, and said:

"Madam, you behold before you the most economical device and the greatest labor-saving invention of this extraordinarily devious and richly inventive age. This article, madam"—and he placed his hand upon the tin vessel affectionately—"is Stowe's patent combination interchangeable churn and wash-boiler."

Susan did not say anything; she simply shuddered.

"As at present arranged, madam," the man went on, "it is a churn. Standing thus upon these light yet firm

legs" (the thing wobbled outrageously), "with this serviceable handle projecting from the top, and communicating with an exceptionally effective churning apparatus within, it is beyond all doubt the very best churn, as well as the cheapest, now offered on the American market. But observe, madam, that as a wash-boiler it is not less excellent. By the simple process of removing the handle, taking out the dasher, and unshipping the legs—the work, as you perceive, of but a moment—the process of transformation is complete. As to the trifling orifice that the removal of the handle leaves in the lid, it becomes, when the wash-boiler side of this Protean vessel is uppermost, a positive benefit. It is an effective safety-valve. Without it, I am not prepared to say that the boiler would not burst, scattering around it the scalded, mangled remains of your washer-woman and utterly ruining your week's wash.

"And mark, madam, mark most of all, the economy of this invention. I need not say to you, a housekeeper of knowledge and experience, that churning-day and wash-day stand separate and distinct upon your household calendar. Under no circumstances is it conceivable that the churn and the wash-boiler shall be required for use upon the same day. Clearly the use of the one presupposes and compels the neglect of the other. Then why cumber your house with these two articles, equally large and equally unwieldy, when, by means of the beautiful invention that I have the honor of presenting to your notice, the two in one can be united, and money and house-room alike can be saved? I trust, madam, I believe, that I have said enough to convince you that my article is all that fancy can paint or bright hope inspire; that in every household made glad by its presence it will be regarded always and forever as a heaven-given boon!" Suddenly dropping his rhetorical tone and coming down to the tone of business, the man went on: "You'll buy one, won't you? The price—"

The change of tone seemed to arouse Susan from the spellbound condition in which she had remained during this extraordinary harangue.

"O-o-o-oh!" she said, shudderingly, "do take the horrid, horrid thing right away!" Then she fled into the house.

I was very angry at the man for disturbing Susan in this way, and I told him so pretty plainly; and I also told him to get out. At this juncture, to my astonishment, Gregory Wilkinson interposed by asking what the thing was worth; and when the man said five dollars, he said that he would buy it. The man had manifested a disposition to be ugly while I was giving him his talking to, but when he found that he had made a sale, after all, he grew civil again. As he went off he expressed the hope that the lady would be all right presently, and the conviction that she would find the combination churn and wash-boiler a household blessing that probably would add ten years to her life.

"What on earth did you buy that for?" I asked, when the man had gone.

"Oh, I don't know. It seems to be a pretty good wash-boiler, anyway. I heard your wife say the other day that she wanted a wash-boiler. She needn't use it as a churn if she don't want to, you know."

"But my wife never will tolerate that disgusting thing, with its horrid suggestiveness of worse than Irish uncleanness, about the house," I went on, rather hotly. "I really must beg of you to send it away."

"All right," he answered. "I'll *take* it away. I'm going to New York to-morrow, and I'll take it along."

"And what ever will you do with it in New York?" I asked.

"Well, I can't say positively yet, but I guess I'll send it out to the asylum. They'd be glad to get it there, I don't doubt—not as a churn, you know, but for wash-boiling."

Then he went on to tell me that one of the things that he especially wanted done at the asylum with his legacy was the construction of a steam-laundry, with a thing in the middle that went round and round, and dried the clothes by centrifugal pressure. He explained that the asylum was only just starting as an asylum, and was provided not only with very few destitute red Indian children, but also with very few of the appliances which an institution of that sort requires, and that was the reason why he had selected it, in preference to many other very deserving charities, to leave his money to.

I must say that I was glad to hear him talking in this strain, for his sudden announcement of his intended departure for New York, just after I had spoken so warmly to him, made me fear that I had offended him. But it was clear that I hadn't, and that his going off in this unexpected fashion did not mean anything. He always did have a fancy for doing things suddenly.

Susan was worried about it, in just the same way, when I told her; but she ended by agreeing with me that he was not in the least offended at anything. Indeed, that evening we both were very much pleased to notice what good spirits he was in. His preoccupied manner was entirely gone, and, for him, he was positively lively. Evidently, whatever the thing was that he had been thinking about so hard, he had settled it in a way that satisfied him.

Just as we were going to bed he told me, in what struck me at the time as rather an odd tone, that he was under the impression that he had somewhere a chest full of old family papers, and that possibly among these papers there might be something that would tell me how to find the fortune that Susan and I certainly deserved to have. As he said this he laughed in a queer sort of way, and then he looked at Susan very affectionately, and then he took each of us by the hand.

"Oh!" said Susan, rapturously (when Susan is excited she always begins what she has to say with an "Oh!" I like it). "To think of finding a piece of old yellow parchment with a quite undecipherable cryptogram written on it in invisible ink telling us just where we ought to dig! How perfectly lovely! Why *didn't* you think of it sooner?"

"Because I have been neither more nor less than a blind old fool. And—and I have to thank you, my dear," he continued, still speaking in the queer tone, "for having effectually opened my eyes." As he made this self-derogatory and quite incomprehensible statement he turned to Susan, kissed her in a great hurry, shook our hands warmly, said goodnight, and trotted off up-stairs to his room. His conduct was very extraordinary. But then, as I have already mentioned, Gregory Wilkinson had a way of always doing just the things which nobody expected him to do.

He had settled back into his ordinary manner by morning; at least he was not much queerer than usual, and bade us good-bye cheerily at the Lewes railway station. I had hired a light wagon and had driven him over in

time for the early train, bringing Susan along, so that she might see the last of him. What with all three of us, his trunk and valise, and the churn-wash-boiler, we had a wagon-load.

Susan was horrified at the thought of his giving the churn-wash-boiler to the asylum. "Even if they only are allowed to use it as a wash-boiler," she argued, earnestly, "think what dreadful ideas of untidiness it will put into those destitute red Indian children's heads!—ideas," she went on, "which will only tend to make them disgrace instead of doing credit to the position of easy affluence to which your legacy will lift them when they return to their barbaric wilds. If you *must* give it to them, at least conceal from them—I beg of you, conceal from them—the fatal fact that it ever was meant to be a churn too."

Gregory Wilkinson promised Susan that he would conceal this fact from the destitute red Indian children; and then the train started, and he and the churn-wash-boiler were whisked away. We really were very sorry to part with him.

## V.

Two or three days later I happened to meet Old Jacob as I was coming away from the post-office in Lewes, and I was both pained and surprised to perceive that the old man was partially intoxicated. When he caught sight of me he came at me with such a lurch that had I not caught him by the arm he certainly would have fallen to the ground. At first he resented this friendly act on my part, but in a moment he forgot his anger and insisted upon shaking hands with me with most energetic warmth. Then he swayed his lips up to my ear, and asked in a hoarse whisper if that old cousin chap of mine had got home safely the night before; and wanted to know, with a most mysterious wink, if things was all right *now*.

I was grieved at finding Old Jacob in this unseemly condition, and I also was ruffled by his very rude reference to my cousin. I endeavored to disengage my hand from his, and replied with some dignity that Mr. Wilkinson at present was in New York, whither he had returned several days previously. But Old Jacob declined to relinquish my hand, and, with more mysterious winks, declared in a muzzy voice that I might trust *him*, and that I needn't say that my cousin was in New York, when he and him had been a-ridin' around together to the bay and back ag'in only the day before. And then he went off into a rambling account of this expedition, which in its main features resembled the expedition that we all three had taken together, but which displayed certain curious details as it advanced that I could not at all account for. By all odds the most curious of these details was that they had taken along with them a large tin vessel, Old Jacob's description of which tallied strangely closely with that of the churn-wash-boiler, and that they had left it behind them when they returned. But as he mixed this up with a lot of stuff about having shown my cousin the course of an old creek that a storm had filled with sand fifty years and more before, I could not make head nor tail of it.

Yet somehow there really did seem to be more than mere drunken fancy in what he was telling me; for in spite of his muzzy way of telling it, his story had about it a curious air of truth; and yet it all was so utterly preposterous that belief in it was quite out of the question. To make matters worse, when I begged the old man to try to remember very carefully whether or not he really had made a second trip to the bay, or only was telling me about the trip that the three of us had made together, he suddenly got very angry, and said that he supposed I thought he was drunk, and if anybody was drunk I was, and he'd fight me for five cents any time. And then he began to shake his old fists at me, and to go on in such a boisterous way that, in order to avoid a very unpleasant scene upon the public streets, I had to leave him and come home.

When I told Susan the queer story that Old Jacob had told me she was as much perplexed and disturbed by it as I was. To think of Gregory Wilkinson driving around the lower part of the State of Delaware in this secret sort of way, in company with Old Jacob and the churn-wash-boiler, as she very truly said, was like a horrible dream; and she asked me to pinch her to make sure that it wasn't.

"But even pinching me don't prove anything," she said, when I had performed that office for her. "For—don't you see?—I might dream that I was dreaming, and asked you to pinch me, and that you did it; and I suppose," she went on, meditatively, "that I might even dream that I woke up when you pinched me, and yet that I might be sound asleep all the while. It really is dreadfully confusing, when you come to think of it, this way in which you can have dreams inside of each other, like little Chinese boxes, and never truly know whether you're asleep or awake. I don't like it at all."

Without meaning to, Susan frequently talks quite in the manner of a German metaphysician.

The next day we received a letter from Gregory Wilkinson that we hoped, as we opened it, would clear up the mystery. But before we had finished it we were in such a state of excitement that we quite forgot that there was any mystery to clear up. My cousin wrote from his home in New York, and made no allusion whatever to a second visit to Lewes, still less to a second expedition with Old Jacob to Rehoboth Bay. After speaking very nicely of the pleasant time that he had passed with us, he continued:

"I enclose a memorandum that seems to have a bearing upon the whereabouts of the hidden family fortune. I am sorry, for Susan's sake, that it is neither invisible nor undecipherable; but I think that for practical purposes visible ink and readable English are more useful. I advise you to attend to the matter at once. It may rain."

The enclosure was a scrap of paper, so brown with age that it looked as though it had been dipped in coffee, on which was written, in astonishingly black ink, this brief but clear direction:

*Sheer uppe ye planke midwai atween ye oake and ye hiccorie saplyngs 7 fathom Est of Pequinky crik on ye baye. Ytte is all there.*

There was no date, no signature, to this paper, but neither Susan nor I doubted for a moment that it was the clew to my great-great-great-uncle's missing fortune. With a heart almost too full for utterance, Susan went straight across the room to the big dictionary (Gregory Wilkinson had given it to us at Christmas, with a

handy iron stand to keep in on), and in a trembling voice the dear child told me in one single breath that a fathom was a measure of length containing six feet or two yards, generally used in ascertaining the depth of the sea. Then, without waiting to close the dictionary, she throw herself into my arms and asked me to kiss her hard!

Susan wanted to start right off that afternoon—she was determined to go with me this time, and I had not the heart to refuse her; but I represented to her that night would be upon us before we could get across to the bay, and that we had better wait till morning. But I at once went over and hired the light wagon for the next day, and then we got together the things which we deemed necessary for the expedition. The tape-measure, of course, was a most essential part of the outfit. Susan declared that she would take exclusive charge of that herself; it made her feel that she was of importance, she said. During all the evening she was quite quivering with excitement—and so was I, for that matter—and I don't believe that we slept forty winks apiece all night long.

We were up bright and early, and got off before seven o'clock—after Susan had given the colored girl a great many directions as to what she should and should not do while we were gone. This was the first time that we ever had left the colored girl alone in the house for a whole day, and Susan could not help feeling rather anxious about her. It would be dreadful, she said, to come home at night and find her bobbing up and down dead at the bottom of the well.

As we drew near the bay I asked several people whom we happened to meet along the road if they knew where Pequinky Creek was, and I was rather surprised to find that they all said they didn't. At last, however, we were so fortunate as to meet with quite an old man who was able to direct us. He seemed to be a good deal astonished when I put the question to him, but he answered, readily:

"Yes, yes, o' course I knows where 'tis—'tain't nowhere. Why, young man, there hain't ben any Pequinky Crik fur th' better part o' sixty year—not sence thet gret May storm druv th' bay shore right up on eend an' dammed th' crik short off, an' turned all th' medders thereabouts inter a gret nasty ma'sh, an' med a new outlet five mile an' more away t' th' west'ard. Not a sign o' Pequinky Crik will you find at this day—an' w'at I should like ter know is w'ere on yeth a young feller like you ever s' much as heerd tell about it."

This was something that I had not counted on, and I could see that Susan was feeling very low in her mind. But by questioning the old man closely I gradually got a pretty clear notion of where the mouth of the creek used to be; and I concluded that, unless the oak and hickory had been cut down or washed away, I stood a pretty good chance of finding the spot that I was in search of. Susan did not take this hopeful view of the situation. She was very melancholy.

Following the old man's directions, I drove down to the point on the road that was nearest to where the Pequinky in former times had emptied into the bay; then I hitched the horse to a tree, and with Susan and the tape-measure began my explorations. They lasted scarcely five minutes. With no trouble at all I found the oak and the hickory—grown to be great trees, as I had expected—and with the tape-measure we fixed the point midway between them in no time. Then I went back to the wagon for the spade and the other things, Susan going along and dancing around and around me in sheer delight. It is a fortunate trait of Susan's character that while her spirits sometimes do fall a very long distance in a very short time, they rise to proportionate heights with proportionate rapidity.

The point that we had fixed between the trees was covered thickly with leaves, and when I had cleared these away and had begun to dig, I was surprised to find that the soil came up freely, and was not matted together with roots as wood soil ought to be. I should have paid more attention to this curious fact, no doubt, had I not been so profoundly stirred by the excitement incident to the strange work in which I was engaged. As for Susan, the dear creature said that she had creeps all over her, for she knew that the old pirate's ghost must be hovering near, and she begged me to notify her when I came to the skeleton, so that she might look away. I told her that I did not expect to find a skeleton, but she replied that this only showed how ignorant I was of pirate ceremonial; that it was the rule with all pirates when burying treasure to sacrifice a human life, and to bury the dead body over the hidden gold. She admitted, however—upon my drawing her attention to the fact that the treasure which we were in the act of digging up had been placed here by my relative only for temporary security—that in this particular instance the human sacrifice part of the pirate programme might have been omitted.

Just as we had reached this conclusion—which disappointed Susan a little, I think—my spade struck with a heavy thud against a piece of wood. Clearing the earth away, I disclosed some fragments of rotten plank, and beneath these I saw something that glittered! Susan, standing beside me on the edge of the hole, saw the glitter too. She did not say one word; she simply put both her arms around my neck and kissed me.

I rapidly removed the loose earth, and then with the pickaxe I heaved the plank up bodily. But what we saw when the plank came away was not a chest full of doubloons, pieces-of-eight, moidores, and other such ancient coins, mingled with golden ornaments thickly studded with precious stones; no, we saw the very bright lid of a tin box, a circular box, rather more than two feet in diameter. There was a small round hole in the centre of the lid, into which a little roll of newspaper was stuffed—presumably to keep the sand out—and beside this hole I noticed, soldered fast to the lid, a small brass plate on which my eye caught the word "Patented." It was strange enough to find the tin box in such perfect preservation while the stout oak plank above it had rotted into fragments; but the wisp of newspaper, and the brass plate with its utterly out-of-place inscription, were absolutely bewildering. My head seemed to be going around on my shoulders, while something inside of it was buzzing dreadfully. Suddenly Susan exclaimed, in a tone of disgust and consternation: "It's—it's that perfectly horrid churn-wash-boiler!"

As she spoke these doomful words I recalled Old Jacob's drunken story, which I now perceived must have been true, and the dreadful thought flashed into my mind that Gregory Wilkinson must have gone crazy, and that this dreary practical joke was the first result of his madness. Susan meanwhile had sunk down by the side of the hole and was weeping silently.

As a vent to my outraged feelings I gave the wretched tin vessel a tremendous poke with the spade, that caved in one side of it and knocked the lid off. I then perceived that within it was an oblong package carefully



tied up in oiled silk, and on bending down to examine the package more closely I perceived that it was directed to Susan. With a dogged resolve to follow out Gregory Wilkinson's hideous pleasantry to the bitter end, I lifted the package out of the box—it was pretty heavy—and began to open it. Inside the first roll of the cover was a letter that also was directed to Susan. She had got up by this time, and read it over my shoulder.

*"My dear Susan,—I have decided not to wait until I die to do what little good I can do in the world. You will be glad, I am sure, to learn that I have made arrangements for the immediate erection of the steam-laundry at the asylum, as well as for the material improvement in several other ways of that excellent institution.*

*"At the same time I desire that you and your husband shall have the benefit immediately of the larger portion of the legacy that I always have intended should be yours at my death. It is here (in govt. 4's), and I hope with all my heart that your trip to Europe will be a pleasant one. I am very affectionately yours,*

*"Gregory Wilkinson."*

"And to think," said Susan—as we drove home through the twilight, bearing our sheaves with us and feeling very happy over them—"and to think that it should turn out to be your cousin Gregory Wilkinson who was the family pirate and had a hoard, and not your great-great-great-uncle, after all!"

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