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Title: Idonia: A Romance of Old London

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Illustrator: C. E. Brock

Release Date: October 20, 2010 [EBook #34105]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Al Haines

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK IDONIA: A ROMANCE OF OLD LONDON ***



The great ledger-book—which I now saw turned to an engine of our salvation. [Chapter XIV](#)

IDONIA:
A ROMANCE OF OLD LONDON

BY
ARTHUR F. WALLIS

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES E. BROCK

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1914

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THE COLONIAL PRESS
C. H. SIMONDS & CO., BOSTON, U. S. A.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The irregular pile of buildings known as Petty Wales, of which considerable mention is made in this book, formerly stood at the northeast corner of Thames Street. The chronicler, Stow, writes of "some large buildings of stone, the ruins whereof do yet remain, but the first builders and owners of them are worn out of memory. Some are of opinion ... that this great stone building was sometime the lodging appointed for the princes of Wales when they repaired to this city, and that therefore the street, in that part, is called Petty Wales;" and he further adds: "The merchants of Burdeaux were licensed to build at the Vintry, strongly with stone, as may yet be seen, and seemeth old though oft repaired; much more cause have these buildings in Petty Wales ... to seem old, which, for many years, to wit, since the galleys left their course of landing there, hath fallen to ruin." It appears to have been let out for many uses, some disreputable; and a certain Mother Mampudding (of whom one would like to know more) kept a part of the house for victualling.

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IDONIA

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH I LEARN FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT I HAVE AN UNCLE

The first remembrance I hold of my father is of a dark-suited tall man of an unchanging gravity on all occasions. He had, moreover, a manner of saying "Ay, ay," which I early came to regard as the prologue to some definite prohibition; as when I asked him (I being then but a scrubbed boy) for his great sword, to give it to a crippled soldier at our gate, who had lost his proper weapon in the foreign wars—

"Ay, ay," said my father, nodding his grey head, "so he lost his good sword, and you would make good the loss with mine. Ay, 'twas a generous thought of yours, Denis, surely."

I was for reaching it down forthwith, where it hung by the wall in its red velvet scabbard, delighted at the pleasure I was to do my bedesman.

"Go to your chamber, boy," said my father in a voice smaller than ordinary.

"But, sir, the sword!" I cried.

"Ay, the sword," he replied, nodding as before. "But, go warn Simon Powell that he look to his poultry-lofts. And learn wisdom, Denis, for you have some need of it, in my judgment."

The same temperate behaviour he ever showed; granting little, and that never to prayers, but sometimes upon good reasoning. He seemed to have put by anger as having no occasion for the use of it, anger being neither buckler nor broadsword, he would say, but Tom Fool's motley. This calmness of his, I say, it was I first remember, and it was this too that put a distance between us; so that I grew from boyhood to nigh manhood, that is until my eighteenth year, without any clear understanding of what lay concealed behind his mask of quiet. That he had a passion for books I soon discovered, and the discovery confirmed me in the foolish timidity with which I regarded him. For hours together would he sit in the little high room beyond the hall, his beard buried in his ruff, while the men awaited his orders to go about the harvesting, and would read continuously in his great folios: the Lives of Plutarch, or Plato, or the Stoick Emperor, or other such works, until the day was gone and all labour lost. I have known our overseer to swear horrid great oaths when he learned that Master Cleeve had received a new parcel of books by the carrier, crying out that no estate would sustain the burden of so much learning so ill applied.

Our house stood within a steep combe close under the Brendon hills, and not far from the Channel, by which ships pass to Bristol, and outward-bound to the open sea. Many a time have I stood on a rise of ground between the Abbey, whence it is said we take our name of Cleeve, and the hamlet on the cliff above the seashore, gazing out upon the brave show of ships with all sails set, the mariners hauling at the ropes or leaning over the sides of their vessels; and wondered what rich cargo it was they carried from outlandish ports, until a kind of pity grew in me for my father in his little room with his ruffled ruff and his Logick and Physick and Ethick, and his carrier's cart at the door with Ethick and Physick and Logick over again.

At such times Simon Powell was often my companion, a lad of a strange wild spirit, lately come out of Wales across the Channel, and one I loved for the tales he had to tell of the admirable things that happened long since in his country, and indeed, he said, lately too. I cannot call to mind the names of the host of princes that filled his histories, save Arthur's only; but of their doings, and how they talked familiarly with beasts and birds, and how they exchanged their proper shapes at will, and how one of them bade his companions cut off his head and bear it with them to the White Mount in London; which journey of theirs continued during fourscore years; of all these marvels I have still the memory, and of Simon Powell's manner of telling them, which was very earnest, making one earnest who listened to him.

For ordinary teaching, that is, in Latin and divinity and arithmetick, I was sent to one Mr. Jordan, who lived across the combe, in a sort of hollow half way up the moor beyond, in a little house of but four rooms, of which two were filled with books, and his bed stood in one of them. The other two rooms I believe he never entered, which were the kitchen and the bedchamber. For having dragged his bed, many years before, into the room where he kept the most of his books, he found it convenient, as he said, to observe this order ever afterwards; and being an incredibly idle man, though a great and learned scholar, he would lie in bed the best part of a summer's day and pluck out book after book from their shelves, reading them half aloud, and only interrupting his lecture for extraordinary purposes. My father paid him handsomely for my tuition, though I learned less from him than I might have done from a far less learned man. He was very old, and the common talk was that he had been a clerk in the old Abbey before the King's Commission closed it. It was therefore strange that he taught me so little divinity as he did, unless it were that the reading of many pagan books had somewhat clouded his mind in this particular. For I am persuaded that for once he spoke of the Christian faith he spoke a hundred times of Minerva and Apollo, and the whole rout of Atheistical Deities which we rightly hold in abhorrence.

My chief occupation, when I was not at school with Mr. Jordan nor on the hills with Simon, was to go about our estates, which, although they were not very large, were fair, and on the whole well ordered. Our steward, for all his distaste of my father's sedentary habit, had a reverence for him, and said he was a good master, though he would never be a wealthy one.

"His worship's brother now," he once said, "who is, I think, one of the great merchants of London, would make this valley as rich and prosperous as any the Devon shipmasters have met

with beyond the Western Sea."

I asked him who was my uncle of whom he spoke, and of whom I heard for the first time.

"'Tis Master Botolph Cleeve," he said. "But his worship does not see him this many a year, nor offer him entertainment since they drew upon each other in the great hall."

"Here, in this house!" I cried, for this was all news to me, and unsuspected.

"In this house it was, indeed, Master Denis," replied the steward, "while you were a poor babe not yet two year old. But there be some things best forgotten," he added quickly, and began to walk towards where the men were felling an alder tree by the combe-brook.

"Nay, Peter Sprot," I cried out, detaining him, "tell me all now, for things cannot be forgotten, save they have first been spoken of."

He laughed a little at this boyish argument, but would not consent at that time. Indeed, it was near a year afterwards, and when I had gained some authority about the estate, that he at length did as I demanded.

It was a sweet spring morning (I remember) with a heaven full of big white clouds come up from the westward over Dunkery on a high wind that bent the saplings and set the branches in the great woods stirring. We had gone up the moor, behind Mr. Jordan's house, with the shepherd, to recover a strayed sheep, which, about an hour before noon, the shepherd chanced to espy a long way off, dead, and a mob of ravens over her, buffeted about by the gale. The shepherd immediately ran to the place, where he beat off the ravens and afterwards took up the carcase on his shoulders and went down the combe, leaving us twain together.

"It is not often that he loses any beast," said the steward. "'Tis a careful man among the flocks, though among the wenches, not so."

I know not why, but this character of the shepherd put me again in mind of my uncle Botolph, upon whom I had not thought for a great while.

"Tell me, Peter Sprot," I said, "how it was my father and my uncle came to fighting."

"Nay, they came not so far as to fight," cried the steward, with a start.

"But they drew upon each other," said I.

He sat silent for a little, tugging at his rough hair, as was his wont when he meditated deeply.

After awhile, "You never knew your lady mother," he said, in a deep voice, "so that my tale must lack for that which should be chief of it. For to all who knew her, the things which befell seemed a part of her beauty, or rather to issue from it naturally, though, indeed, they were very terrible. Mr. Denis, it is the stream which runs by the old course bursts the bridges in time of winter, and down the common ways that trouble ever comes."

"But what trouble was in this," I asked, in the pause he made, "that it were necessary I should have known my mother to comprehend it?"

"Nay, not the trouble, master," he answered, "for that was manifest to all. But 'twas her grace and beauty, and her pretty behaviour, that none who knew not Madam Rachel your mother, may conjure e'en the shadow of.

"You were a toward lad at all times," he went on, "and when your brother was born, though you were scarce turned two, you would be singing and talking from dawn to dark. Ah! sir, your father did not keep his book-room then, but would be in the great chamber aloft, with you and your lady mother and the nurse, laughing at your new-found words and ditties, and riding you and fondling you—God save us!—as a man who had never lived till then.

"'Twas when little Master Hugh came that all changed. For what must 'a do, but have down Mr. Botolph from London to stand sponsor to him, at the christening. He came, a fine man, larger than his worship, and with a manner of bending his brow, which methought betokened a swiftness of comprehension and an impatience of all he found displeasing. Indeed, there was little he did not observe, noting it for correction or betterment. Though a city man and a merchant, Mr. Botolph had but to cast an eye over this place, and 'Brother,' said he, 'there be some things here ill done or but indifferent well'; and showed him that the ricks were all drenched and moulded where they stood, and bade him build them higher up the slope. Master Cleeve took his advice in good part, for they were friends yet.

"But within a little while, I know not how, a shadow fell athwart all. In the farm, matters went amiss, and the weather which had formerly been fine became foul, with snow falling, though it was come Eastertide, and all the lambs sickened. The maids whispered of Mr. Botolph, who had never so much as set eyes on my lady till that time (she having kept her bed to within a week of the christening), that he had spoken no word since the hour he saw her in, nor scarce once stirred from his chamber. His worship, they said, took no heed of this melancholy in his brother, or rather seemed not to do so, though he played no longer with you, and had small joy of the

infant. But with Madam Rachel he sat long in chat, cheering her, and talking of what should be done in due season, and of how he would remove the state rooms to the upper floor (as was then generally being done elsewhere), and would build a noble staircase from the old hall; and of many other such matters as he had in mind.

"So for a week, and until the eve of the christening, nought could be called strange, save that Mr. Botolph kept himself apart, and that the shadow on all men's minds lay cold. I doubt if any slept that night, for without the wind was high as now it is, and charged with snow. We could hear the beasts snorting in their stalls and the horses whinnying. Little do I fear, Master Denis," said the old man, suddenly breaking off, "but I tell you there was something abroad that night was not in nature.

"'Twas about midnight that we heard laughter; your lady mother laughing in her silver voice, which yet had a sort of mockery in it, and his worship answering her now and then. After awhile comes he to my room, where I yet sleep, beyond the armoury.

"'Peter,' he says, 'hast seen my brother Botolph?'

"I told him no, but that I supposed he was in the guest-room down the long corridor.

"'Madam Cleeve cannot sleep,' says he again, 'thinking that he is out in the storm, and would have us seek him.'

"I lit a candle at this, for we had spoken in the dark hitherto, and when it had burned up, I saw his worship dressed and with his boots on. His sword he held naked in his hand, and with his other hand he would press upon his brow as one whose mind is dull. The gale nearly blew out the candle the while I dressed myself, and again we listened to the noises without.

"I took a staff from behind the door.

"'Whither shall we go?' he asked me.

"'Surely to his room, first of all,' said I, 'for it is likely that my lady is deceived.'

"'I think so,' he said gravely, and we went upstairs.

"Without summoning him, Mr. Cleeve opened the doors of his brother's chamber, and at once started back.

"'He is not within,' he said, in a low voice, and neither of us spoke nor even moved forward to search the room thoroughly. It was very manifest to us that the shadow under which we had been moving for many days was now to lift; and the certainty that it would lift upon black terror held us in a sort of trance.

"I am not of a ready wit at most times, Mr. Denis, but somehow without the use of wit, and almost upon instinct I said: 'Go you again to your own chamber, master, and if all be well there, be pleased to meet me below in the great hall,' and with that, hastening away, I left him.

"I ran at once to the stair, which has a window overlooking the base court; and as I ran methought the sound I had heard before of horses whinnying, was strangely clear and loud, they being safe in stable long since and the door shut. The candle which I still bore just then a gust of wind extinguished, so that I could scarce find my way to the window, so black was all, and I so distraught. But once there, I needed not to look a second time, for down below in the snow of the yard stood a great coach with four sturdy hackneys that kicked and whinny'd to be gone. 'Twas so dark I could distinguish nought else, yet I continued to stand and stare like a fool until on a sudden I heard another sound of steel clashing, which sent my blood to my heart, and a prayer for God's pity to my lips.

"It was in the hall I found them, my master and Mr. Botolph; he cloaked as for a journey; and beyond, swooning by the fire which had not yet burned out, but threw a dull light along the floor, Madam Rachel, your mother.

"Not many passes had they made, as I think, when I came between them. And indeed they did not resist me, for your father turned away at once, striding across the red floor to my lady, while Mr. Botolph, with just a sob of breath between his teeth, stole off, and as I suppose by the coach, which we heard wheel about and clatter up the yard. I got me to my cold bed then, Mr. Denis, leaving my master and mistress together. It was the chill she took that cruel night which became a fever suddenly, and of that she died, poor lady, and at the same time the infant died too."

He twitched his rough sheepskin coat about him as he concluded his tale, for the sky was gathering to a head of tempest, and after a little while we went down the moor towards the combe where the great house lay in which I had been born, and where, as I knew, my father at this moment was sitting solitary over some ancient folio, in the endless endeavour after that should stead him in his battle with the past.

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH PTOLEMY PHILPOT COMMENCES HIS STUDY OF THE LATIN TONGUE

It is, I conceive, natural in a young man to use more time than wisdom in the building of hopes which be little else than dreams, though they appear then more solid than gross reality. Thus I, in laying out my future, saw all as clear as our own park-lands, and where I misliked anything there I altered, working with a free hand, until the aspect of my condition was at all points to my taste, and I itched to enter forthwith into the manhood I had so diligently imagined.

Unwittingly, perhaps, I had allowed Simon Powell's tales of fantasy to get the mastery of my mind, and in such sort that no prince of all his mountains ever marched so lightly from adventure to adventure, nor came off with so much grace and so acclaimed as I. My life (I told myself) was to borrow no whit of my father's aversion from the world, which disposition of his, for all my pity of the cause of it, I could not find it in my heart to praise. Alas! I was but nineteen years of my age, and pride was strong within me, and the lust of combat.

With Simon himself I consorted less frequently than of old, for I stood already in the estate of a master; being acknowledged as such by all, from Peter Sprot himself to the maids who came into the fields for the gleaning, and courtsey'd to me as I rode between the stooks on my white mare. But although I had necessarily become parted from my wild preceptor, I had, as I say, my mind tutored to dreaming, which but for Simon might have been dull and content with petty things, whereas it was with a gay arrogance that I now regarded the ordering of the world, and held myself ordained a champion to make all well. For this I hereby thank Simon Powell with all my heart; and indeed it is a benefit well-nigh inestimable. To such a height then had this humour of errantry gone, that I would snatch at every occasion to gratify it; and so would ride forth through the gate before the grey Combe Court, and setting my mare at a gallop, would traverse the lanes athwart which the level morning sun cast bars of pale gold and the trees their shadows, and be up on the wide rolling moors or ever the mists were stirring in the valley or the labourers risen to their tasks. Many a fancy held my busy brain at such times, and as I looked backward upon our great irregular house, which was built, a part of it, in the year of Agincourt, so quiet it lay amidst its woods and pasture lands that it seemed a place enchanted, upon which some magician had stolen with a spell of sleep. 'Twas no home for active men, I said, and laughed as I turned away and urged my poor jade again onward. Contempt is very close to joy in a lad's heart, and his valour rouses (like old Rome) to the summons of the goose-voice within him.

Some six months had passed since the steward first acquainted me with the calamity which had made shipwreck of my father's life, when, upon a memorable, clear, October morning, I rode forth as my custom was, intending to shape my course towards the little hamlet of Roodwater, and so by the flats to Dunster. The orchard-trees about the old Abbey were rimed with frost, and a keenness in the air lifted me so that I could have wept or sung indifferently. The dawn had scarce broke when I set out, and 'twas not till I had ridden three or four miles that the smoky redness of the sun showed between the pine stems on a spur of hill behind me. My thoughts were all of victory, and in this temper the events of the time, albeit I am no politician, confirmed me. For news had reached us a little since of the disclosure of that horrid plot of Throgmorton and the two Earls against Her Grace and our most dear Sovereign, and of how sundry suspected persons of high estate were arrested and confined. The Papists everywhere were said to be in great confusion, for though many, and some said the most part, were loyal subjects enough, yet the defection and proved villainy of the rest shook all faith in those that professed still the old religion and allegiance to the Pope. The Queen's ships were straitly ordered to watch the ports, and even as I descended the hill beyond Roodwater to the seashore, I saw, a little off Watchet Quay, a ship of war riding at anchor, and a cock-boat pulling away from her side.

Moreover, it was no great while since, by order of Her Majesty's Council, that notable Bond of Association had been signed for the better defence of the Queen, my father signing with the rest, as a chief person of these parts and a magistrate.

I am no politician, as I say, but there is small need of knowledge in State affairs to make a man love his home; and when a plot of the magnitude which this of Fr. Throgmorton's had, is brought to light, why, every man is a politician perforce and a soldier too.

For Queen Mary Stuart, who was now more closely guarded, as indeed was meet, and who later was to be led to her death, I say nought of her, for tales be many, and men's minds confused, when it comes to question of a woman sinning, and that the fairest of them all. That she was guilty I suppose no one reasonably doubteth, and obnoxious to peace and good government, but, when all is said, there is the pity of slaying a delicate lady in order to the securing ourselves; and such a deed makes quiet a cowardly thing, and puts a colour of shame on justice herself.

But that business was not come yet by two years and more, and for the present all our thoughts were of gratitude for our deliverance from the subtlety of forsworn plotters, and of courage and loyalty and the will to be feared.

I spurred my mare down the rough lane, and was soon out upon the level shore of the bay, beyond which lies Dunster in a fold of steep moor, and the wooded promontory of Minehead further to the west. The tide was out as I rode at full gallop along the bow of thin turf which bounds the coast; while across the reach of sand the little waves lapped and fretted with a sweet, low sound.

The sun was now risen pretty high, and the fisher-folk were busied here and there with their nets and tackle as I passed them by. It was nigh eight o'clock when I drew rein in Dunster market, before the chief inn there—a clean place, and of good entertainment. My purpose was immediately to break my fast, for I had a fierceness of hunger upon me by reason of the sharp air and the early hour, and afterwards to visit a certain sea captain whom I knew to be lodged there, Mr. Jonas Cutts, of the *Three Lanterns*, one of Her Majesty's ships, though but a small one; he being a gentleman I had met with upon the occasion of my father's signing the Bond of Defence. What my further purpose was, if indeed 'twere aught but to hear wonders and talk big about the Spaniards, I cannot now charge my remembrance, but to him I was determined to go after breakfast and waste an hour before returning home.

I inquired his lodging out, therefore, over my dish of eggs, but learned to my disappointment that he had left it suddenly, before daybreak, to join his ship at Minehead, where it lay. This intelligence, little though it affected me, save as it robbed my idleness of some plea of purpose, I took ill enough, rating my host like the angry boy I was, and dispraising the closeness of the ward upon our coasts, though I had formerly praised the same, and indeed had meant to enlarge with the captain upon this very theme.

In a very sour humour then I departed from the inn, and while my mare was baiting took a turn about the town.

And so fair did I find all, the high street wide and sweet and the houses thereon neat and well ordered, the great castle, moreover, on a mount at the nether end, very fencible and stately builded, that it was not long ere my spirits rose again, and I thought no more upon Captain Cutts and his departing. Methought the countryside had never seemed so pleasant as now under its web of frost, and the trees a kind of blue of the colour of silver-work tarnished by age, the sky red behind them reaching up from grey. I left the middle part of the town soon and got into the lanes, where at length I came by chance upon an ancient mill, which was once, I learned, a monkish mill whither every man had perforce to bring his grain to be ground. Now as I stood idly by the gate of the mill-house I heard voices of men in talk, and, without further intention, could not but catch some words of their discourse. It was evident that a bargain was going forward, and that one sold grudgingly.

"Nay," said the one voice, "for this standard of red buckram, sevenpence and no less, Master Ptolemy."

"Thou putttest me to uncommon great charges, Master Skegs," replied the other invisible; "what with thy gilding and thy scarlet hoods, and now this standard of the devil! Ay, and besides there is that crazy mitre of Cayphas, which, o' my conscience, is not worth the half a groat."

"A cost me two shillings not twelvemonth since," cried the first invisible in a manifest rage, "yet am I willing to sell it thee for one shilling and ninepence as I have set it down in the bill, where is also to be found a coat of skins; item, a tabard; item, Herod's crest of iron; all which I have grossly undervalued. Ah! there be some," he interjected, in a whining voice, "there be some that would buy up all Jewry for a parcel of bawdy, torn ballads. Art not ashamed, Ptolemy Philpot, thou a Christian man, to purchase so divine a tragedy for so mean a sum?" But the invisible Ptolemy not replying, the invisible Skegs proceeded:

"Well, thou hast heard my price, master, which is three pounds sixteen shillings in all, and look you! to avoid all bitterness and to make an end, I will throw in the parchment beasts of the Deluge for the same."

What manner of cheapening was here I could not conceive, and so (still chiding my lack of manners) crept through the gate and to a coign of the mill-house, where I might observe these strange traders in parchment beasts and red buckram. And observe them I did, indeed, and they me at the same instant; which discovery so confused me that I stood before them first on one foot and then on the other, with no sense to go or stay, nor to cover my discourtesy with any plausible excuse. Howbeit, one, whom I took (and rightly) to be Ptolemy, burst into laughter at this my detected intrusion, and bade me step forward and judge betwixt them. He was a big man, with a child's face for all that he wore a great beard, and a terrible nose of the colour of the stone they call agate, it being veined too and marvellous shining. Yet his voice was small like a child's, and I saw at once that in any bargain he was like to get the worse of it. The other man, whose name was Skegs, had a woeful pallor, but an undaunted behaviour and a very fierce eye. Between them stood the cause of their difference, which was a sort of wheeled pageant or cart of two stages; the upper being open and about five feet in breadth, with a painted cloth behind; the lower room enclosed, and was, I learned, for the convenience and disposal of the puppet master (this being a puppet-show and the puppets appearing, as players do, on the stage above).

Coming forward, then, as I was bidden, I very modestly awaited the argument between Mr. Skegs and Ptolemy, being pleased to be trusted in so notable a cause. But it fell out otherwise,

for Skegs swore by the body of St. Rumbold he would have no arbitrament, and that his price was three pound and sixteen shillings, as he had already said.

"It is a great sum," said Ptolemy, in his piping reed voice.

"How, great?" retorted Skegs, "seeing I sell thee the pageant-car itself, together with Nicodemus, Pilate, and four stout Torturers, besides the holy folk, and all their appurtenance. And were I not at the gate of the grave myself, I would not part with so much as Joseph's beard for twice this reckoning."

"He gives you also certain parchment beasts, Mr. Ptolemy," said I, very judicially.

"I retract the beasts," cried the pageant master, whose red eyes blazed terribly, and he danced with vexation of my ruling.

"Look you, now," grumbled Ptolemy, running his great hand through his beard, "was ever such a fellow!"

"'Tis a part of the Deluge," said Mr. Skegs, "and to bring in beasts before the judgment-seat of Pilate were against all Scripture. But contrariwise, as it toucheth the Interlude of the Deluge, mass! without those beasts of mine, the cats and dogs too (as the verse goes)—

"'Otter, fox, fulmart also;
Hares hopping gaily'

withouten these wherefore was Noah's ark builded, and so great a stir made?"

"But if you be about to die, Master Skegs," I put in, "as you say you are, of what advantage is this same Deluge to you?"

"Ay, truly," cried Ptolemy, "for thou hast no wife, man, nor any dependent on thee. So thou be decently buried, 'tis all one whether I have the parchment beasts or thou."

"Would you spoil me of my heritage?" cried the pallid man in an extremity of rage, "and strip me naked before I be come to the grave? I say thou shalt not have the beasts."

"Wilt thou sell me the Deluge outright?" asked Ptolemy after a silence, "for I am no hand at this chaffering."

"Ay, for a further fourteen shillings, I will," said Skegs promptly, "which maketh in all four pounds and ten shillings; and for that, I give thee Noah, a new figure of wood, and Noah's wife, who truly is somewhat worsened by usage, but not past mending; Shem also, Ham and Japhet, stalwart lads all, and their wives corresponding. An ark there is, moreover, which was builded in Rye by a shipwright out of battens and good gummed canvas. The beasts be all whole, save the weasel, but that signifieth not. I have a schedule of them, and the parts of the players in good scrivener's hand. All these shalt thou have for a matter of four pounds thirteen shillings and fourpence."

"Four pounds and ten shillings, Master Skegs," said Ptolemy, dismayed at this unconscionable addition.

"Said I aught of the ark when I named that price?" asked Skegs scornfully. "Wouldst thou haggle with a dying man, Ptolemy Philpot?"

"I will furnish the remainder shillings," I whispered to Ptolemy, who stood in a maze to answer such imposture as Skegs sought to lay upon him. "Strike the bargain, Mr. Ptolemy, and pay when thou hast checked over the tale of beasts."



**The argument between Mr. Skegs & Ptolemy.
Chapter II**

He thanked me like a pleased stripling, and, to be short, purchased all for the sum named, which, there being seven or eight pieces not found, and Japhet's leg burst from the pin, methought sufficient, albeit Mr. Skegs at every turn sought to increase it, or else detract some piece of note, as Mount Ararat in pasteboard and the dove with a sprig of olive.

"I have forgot the raven," he screamed after us, as at length we went away with our cartful of miracles. "'Twas new varnished at Michaelmas, and there is the cost of the varnish you must repay me, which is three-pence halfpenny," at which, when we replied not, he ran into the mill-house in a sort of fury, and as I understood, died there a week later, muttering upon his "cocks and kites and crows," his

"Rooks and ravens, many rows;
Cuckoos, curlews, whoso knows,
Each one in his kind;"

and putting a price upon each particular fowl, like any poulter in Cheape. I never met a man so engrossed in business to so little purpose, nor one (to do him justice) so little put out of his humour of acquisition by the near approach of death. He had bought the mill, so Ptolemy told me, out of his former profits, knowing nothing of the miller's trade, but because it was to be got at an advantage.

When we were out of the yard Mr. Philpot again thanked me immoderately for my aid, which he said he would never forget (and as the event proved, he did not); and told me moreover that he was bred to the wax-chandlery, but had left it, having a taste for letters.

"How will this pageant help you any whit the more to study?" I asked him.

"I shall go about the country," he replied, "and so I doubt not shall fall in with very famous scholars, who are often to be found where they be least expected. Have you ever read Horace now?" he asked me quickly.

I told him, a little.

"When I shall have learned Latin," he said, in his childlike manner, "I shall do so also, and, indeed, I have bought his Satires already, but can make little of them. The Romans must have

been a marvellous learned people," he observed with a sigh, "and 'tis small wonder they conquered the world."

"Is there any attendance upon these old interludes?" I demanded, as we passed upward through the town towards my inn, where I was to take out my mare.

"Why, as to that," he replied something moodily, "I know not certainly as yet, although I hope so, seeing that my proficiency in the Latin tongue dependeth upon the popular favour towards them; and, indeed, I may have been over eager at the bidding, since there doubtless hath been some decline from the love of such plays that the vulgar was used to show upon all occasions of their being enacted. Notwithstanding, I have a design, as yet unperfected, by which, if I get no hearing for my mysteries and moralities, I may yet prosper; and that is (to let you into the secret), to turn this musty Deluge into a modern battle upon the high seas, with Mr. John Hawkins for Noah—good seamen both; the figure of Japhet, too, that hath by good fortune lost a leg, might serve, with but slight alteration, for a veteran tall boatswain, and Ham with the red beard, would as readily become a master-gunner. Ay, a little skill would do all, Mr. Cleeve; and for the Spaniards, why, such as were necessary to my purpose might be fashioned out of the greater beasts, without any very notable difference from the original."

I would have questioned him further upon this venture of his, which was surely as bold as any that Mr. Hawkins had made to the coast of Guinea or the Indies, had not I at that moment espied our overseer, Peter Sprot, by the door of the inn, his horse blown and sweating, and himself sitting stiff with hard riding. I ran to him at once, demanding if he sought me, which I knew already was so, and felt a fear at my heart lest my father was suddenly fallen ill.

"His worship is not ill," replied Peter, "but sore troubled, and sends for you home without delay." He cast a hard eye upon Ptolemy Philpot as he spoke, for he had observed us in company, and being something strait in matters of religion, held shows and dancing and such-like to be idolatry and lewd sport. I have known him break a babe's rattle that shook it on a Sunday, and quote the Pentateuch in defence of his action.

"What hath troubled him, Peter?" I asked eagerly, while the ostler brought out my mare.

"'Tis a letter," he said, and with that shut his mouth, so that I knew it was vain to inquire further.

Now, as I was managing my beast, that was restive with the cold air, comes Mr. Ptolemy to my side, and ere I understood his purpose had thrust up a little parchment-bound book for me to read the title of it, whispering that he would have read it long since himself, but that 'twas in Latin.

I told him briefly I could not read it then, being in an itch to be gone; but he still detained me.

"There is one particular word there set down," said he, "that I have often lighted upon in other books also, which if you would translate 'twould ease me mightily."

"What word is that?" cried I, impatiently.

"It is *Quemadmodum*," said he.

But before I could interpret to him, my mare had scoured away after Peter Sprot's hackney, and we were a bowshot distant ere I had recovered my seat.

CHAPTER III

HOW A BROTHER, HAVING OFFENDED, WAS FORGIVEN

I found my father sitting as his wont was in the high wainscoted book-room beyond the hall. When I entered he looked up from a pile of papers he had been diligently perusing, and smiled upon me pleasantly. I was surprised to note the serenity of his brow, having indeed prepared myself for a worse condition of health in him than Peter Sprot had allowed. But whatever trouble he had he laid it by to bid me good-morrow, and to excuse himself for so hastily summoning me.

"Upon so fine a morning, Denis," he said, "I would not willingly have cut short your pleasure, and do not so for my own business, which is simple enough at most times, as a man's should be who hath ever studied to be quiet." He paused a small while and cast his eye over an open book that lay beside him on the table, and I knew it to be the "Discourses of Epictetus." A wonder crept into my mind at this, that while the words of Scripture would oftentimes be in his mouth, his reading was generally in the heathens, and his way of life more according to the ancient Stoicks (of whom Mr. Jordan had often discoursed), than to the precepts of the Church of England of which he nevertheless professed himself a member. Such fancies however being foreign to the

matter, I put them from me, expecting the sequel anxiously, and in the meantime assuring my father that I would never have gone thus upon my twilight journey had I known he required me; which was indeed true, and he acknowledged it handsomely.

"I know where to trust and where to doubt, Denis," he said, in his quiet voice, "and I know likewise that where trust is broken there stands occasion for lenity, though the using of it is hard at all times; severity being more aptly come by, and by the vulgar commended."

I knew by this that his thoughts had slid from the present into that sad channel of the past, and marvelled that he could speak so of forgiveness where his honour had been engaged, and, in the event, my mother's life forfeit.

"'Twas well that Peter had some inkling of your road," my father went on and in a livelier manner, "else we might still be seeking you o'er half Exmoor. But tell me what it was led you to Dunster, lad?" And he looked at me methought somewhat keenly as he spoke.

"I had hoped to meet with Captain Cutts," I returned boldly, though I was conscious of the emptiness of the reason, "and to hear of the chance of war."

To my surprise my father appeared relieved by my answer, but presently explained himself.

"It had lain upon me that you were perhaps courting some lass there, Denis; not that I should censure you therefor, but having need of you myself awhile, I would not suddenly interfere with that is proper enough for you to consider of at your age. Well, so much for prologue," he broke off swiftly, and betook himself again to scanning the papers on his desk.

"So Mr. Cutts having avoided the town before you arrived," he said presently, glancing up, "the direct purpose of your errand failed."

I was about to reply when he added: "You have little cause to grieve in that, Denis, seeing his commission is cancelled and he to be apprehended for malpractices of which I have here the note before me."

"I would all such villains were hanged as soon as apprehended," cried I, in a sudden rage at this disclosed infamy; but my father put up his hand peremptorily to stop me.

"Hast ever heard of thine uncle Botolph?" he asked me presently, and with the same piercing glance as before.

I told him yes, and that Peter Sprot had related some part of his story to me.

"That was not altogether well," replied my father with a little movement of his brows, "and not what I looked for from his discretion." He set his ruff even and took up his pen as if to write, but sat so awhile without either writing or speaking.

"I forced him to tell me," I said, for I thought he blamed Peter for what was truly my own curiosity.

"Tut," said my father, "'tis a small matter, and being known saves many words to no purpose. I have received a letter from him," he said.

This amazed me, for I had thought him (I know not wherefore) to be dead.

"Why, where is he?" I asked.

"He is in the Tower," said my father.

At these words my blood leapt to my heart in a tumult, for I knew well enough what this meant, and that in such a time of danger as now we lived in, when all was suspicion and betrayal, few men that had once come into that foul dungeon ever left it living. Until now I had found frequent matter for rejoicing in this very process and summary action of the Council, being confident that 'twas for the better security of the realm, and deriding them that would have accorded an open trial to all, and the means of a man's clearing himself at the law. But now that our own family stood thus impeached, I had nothing to say, nor ought to think, but upon the terror of it and the disgrace to our house and ancient name.

"What is the cause?" I inquired, when I had something recovered myself; but my lips were dry and my face (I am assured) as white as paper.

"He has had licence granted to write," returned my father; "which is a mark of favour not oftentimes bestowed. He saith he is well treated, though for the rest his chamber is but a mean cold one and evil smelling, and the ward upon him strict, especially when he is had in to the Constable for examination, which hath been several times renewed. As for the cause, there would appear by his letter to be little enough, save such as gathers from a host of fears, and from his known devotion to my Lord of Arundel; which indeed was the direct occasion of his apprehension. Of a former intimacy with that witless Somerville moreover, he is accused, and the mere supposition of it goes hard against him; but upon this head he hath strong hope of his exculpation, having only, as he writes, once met with the man, and then in a public place without

any the least concealment."

He rose from his seat as he ended speaking, and took a turn or two about the room, his hands clasped behind his back and his head bent in thought. I suppose that never before had I observed my father with so close attention, having ever held him (as I have said) in a kind of negligent contempt for his mild and bookish ways. But now I perceived a nobility of bearing in him which took me strangely, and withal, a secret strength. His scholar's indifference he had quite cast aside, and appeared full of purpose, shrewdly weighing each circumstance of his brother's case, and examining the good and bad in it, in order to the more directly assist him. This unused activity of his so engaged me that for awhile I could do nought but follow him with my eyes, until the vision of my father always thus (as thus he might have been, save for that great weight of sorrow warping him from his natural aptness), this vision, I say, so moved me in his favour and against my uncle Botolph, who was surely now receiving chastisement for his former sin, that I could not contain myself.

"But, sir," I cried, "why should you concern yourself for a man that hath wronged you so basely as my uncle did? And besides that," I bethought myself to add in order to strengthen our excuse for leaving him alone, "besides that, there is the unseemliness of your aiding a man that the Queen's Majesty is offended withal. It is very probable he is implicated in these treasons, who hath brought such treason into household affairs, and the likelier still for his denying it."

Something in my father's countenance stayed me there, else would I have spoken more; for there is nought so easy as to persuade ourselves 'tis right to do nothing in a dangerous pass.

"Ay, ay," said my father slowly, "then your advice is to leave my brother to perish."

"You are a magistrate, sir," I stammered, "and it surely behoves you to assist in the arrest of traitors."

"Ay, and so it doth, Denis," said he, nodding, "but then, this gentleman being already arrested, it seems that my poor assistance therein is rendered in advance superfluous."

"But you are minded to help him, sir," said I, "so far as you be able."

"Leaving that aside," he said, "let us return to your former argument, which was, as I remember, that because he had once badly wronged me so I should not now concern myself on his behalf. Why then do you afterwards bring me in as a magistrate, when you have so potently addressed my prejudice as a man? Nay, Denis," he said, smiling at my discomfiture, "you speak for my ease, I know well, and I thank you; but this may not be. Nor, indeed, does your uncle desire it to be as you understand the case. He prays me here," he struck the open letter lightly, "to gain him fair trial, if such a thing may be come by, and by it he is content to be judged. Were it I, who stood in this jeopardy, Denis, and not he, would you deny me your offices?"

His grave manner and contempt of the revenge I had held out to him, wrought upon me so that I could not answer him, but going forward I knelt and kissed his hand. I think now he was the best man I ever knew, and one that, without hesitancy, ever chose the untainted course.

We fell to business after that with a will; my father opening with me upon many matters of procedure at the law, in which I was surprised to find him perfect, and giving me his reasons for supposing that my uncle Botolph would be suffered to stand upon his delivery in open court. He read me his whole letter too, which I had to confess was very simply written and bore the impress of truth.

"You see that he speaks here of councillors to defend him, which is very needful," my father continued, "though the emoluments of that office be higher than I had hoped to find. He writes that a less sum than five hundred pounds would avail little, which, if it include the necessary expenses of seeking out witnesses (of whom he names one in Flanders who must be brought home), if it include this, I say, and the procuring of documents, that may well be, though I am sorry to find justice sold at so high a rate."

"But, sir, can you employ so much money in this affair?" I asked, for it sounded an infinite treasure to me.

"I think so," he replied, "though I would it were not so urgent. I must however encumber the estate for awhile, Denis; as indeed hath been done before by my grandfather, at the time the Scriptures were printed in English secretly, three score years since; which work he was bold to forward, and spared neither pains nor moneys therein. But that concerns thee not, Denis," he broke off, "and for the getting together of the ransom, for so it is, I will engage to effect it. Only your part will be to convey it to London and deliver it to my brother's agent and good friend, one Mr. John Skene, an attorney of Serjeants Inn, in Fleet Street, who will use it, as your uncle believes, and I doubt not, to advantage."

Our conference ended, and my doubts resolved of what it stood me to do, I went away, leaving my father still in his book-room, who had letters to write to Exeter, about the business of the loan. The discourse I had had, and especially the peril imminent over one so near in blood to us, had excited my imagination greatly; so that 'twas a long while ere I could examine each particular soberly, as a merchant doth a bill of goods, and, as it were, piece by piece. Everything

hung confused in my brain like a wrack of cloud, which, parting, discloses now one thing and now another but nothing clearly, nor whole. Immersed in such considerations I had wandered a great way, and unawares had begun to mount the steep hill that stands above the Combe Court, and now gazed down through the trees upon our house, which I had once likened to a place enchanted, so evenly did all go there and with the regularity of one breathing in his sleep. The old gabled tower, with the great bell in the clochard or belfry beside it, I had oftentimes laughed at with Simon Powell, as at a thing of more pretence than usage; the alarm not having been rung therefrom for nigh a hundred years. But now the sight of it brought tears to my eyes for the very peace which clung about it. For well I knew that I was come at the end of my time of quiet and was to adventure forth of my old home into regions full as strange and difficult as any of Simon's uncouth caves and elvish forests. And I thought of that hero of his which bade them cut off his head and bear it, still sweet, to the White Mount in London, whither I was now going.

Then I looked again down upon the yard before the house, with its fine brick gate upon the road, and behind the house, upon the base court with the offices beside it, and the stables beyond, and beyond again the green bottom of the combe and the cattle feeding. It was a fair estate, and one that no man would encumber in a trivial cause. But once before it had been so laid under bond, which was, as my father said, in order to the advancement of the glory of God; and now, the second time 'twas so to be for no better purpose than the enlargement of a traitor. A youth argues narrowly perforce, being hedged between lack of experience and lack of charity, but the force of his conclusion, for this very want, I suppose, hath an honest vigour in it which is beyond the competence of many an elder man. So I, being persuaded of my uncle Botolph's villainy, there on that hillside swore that, albeit I would faithfully labour for his release, as I was bound to do, yet I would thereafter bring him to book with a vengeance. And how I kept my word you shall see.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH I SAY FAREWELL THRICE

In the middle of the month of November our business was pretty well settled, and the day of my departure ordained, which was to be upon the Wednesday following, there being a friend of my father's about to journey to Devizes on that day, with whom it was intended I should so far travel. To be honest, it was with some feelings of concern that I expected this my first entrance into the world, where I was to meet with a sort of folk I had no knowledge of: learned attorneys of the Inns, Judges of the Queen's Bench (if we ever got so far); and that gaunt figure of the Constable with the keys of the Tower at his girdle and a constant lamentation of prisoners in his ear. My duty at the beginning was plain enough, my father having often rehearsed the same to me; as that I should take lodging in Fetter Lane at the house of one Malt, a hosier, who should use me honestly, he being a West-Country man. Thereafter and as soon as my convenience would allow, I was to betake myself to a certain goldsmith of repute, whose shop stood hard by the new Burse in Cornhill, and there receive gold in exchange for the letters I bore, the which my father had gotten upon articles signed in Exeter. So provided, I was to put myself under the direction and command of Mr. Skene, who would employ me as his occasions required.

The last day of my home-keeping broke in fair weather, of which I was glad, for I purposed to spend it in bidding farewell to my neighbours and the persons I especially loved about the estate.

And first I sought my old companion Simon, whom I found by the brook, in a place where there be otters, some ten or twelve furlongs up the valley that descends into our combe from the westward, where the trees grow very thickly and in summer there is a pleasant shade. Thither we had often gone together in times past, and there I shrewdly guessed I should discover him.

I came upon him crouched beside the stream among the withered bracken, his cross-bow laid aside with which he had been fowling, and a great dead pheasant cock in the grass at his feet. I hailed him twice before he heard me, when he rose at once and spreading his sheepskin mantle for me (the air being very bitter) he told me he had thought I forgot him.

"I should not have gone without bidding thee farewell, Simon," I replied, for his reproach stung me the more that I had neglected him of late, and knew not wherefore. "I have been deeply engaged about this journey to London, and the hours I have been idle my mind hath been too anxious for chat. 'Tis an employment I mislike, Simon," I said earnestly, "and one I do not see to the end of."

"When does his worship think it will be concluded?" asked Simon Powell.

"Oh, these things depend upon their law-terms," I said, willing to let him perceive my knowledge in such affairs. "The Bench doth not try causes unremittingly."

"Ay," he said, nodding, the while he regarded me with a strange look of the eyes, "but subject

to the judges' convenience, I would have said. Will you return by Lady Day, think you?"

"Why, that is four months distant," I cried, for his question had something startled me. "I shall surely be safe home in half that time."

But Simon shook his head. "Since I first heard of this errand," he said, "the thought of it hath never left me, sleeping nor waking, Mr. Denis. And as there be some things that every man may tell certainly that they will happen, as the seasons to pass in due order, and the red deer to come down to the pools in the evening, and the sun to set and rise; so there be other things, though not in the rule of nature, which a man may yet discern that hath bent his will that way. So did that knight who, in a dream, saw strange and way-worn men bringing tribute to Arthur from the Islands of Greece, which was not then, but was certainly to be, and now in these days we shall see the same; ay, Arthur receiving tribute from all the nations and not Greece only, and everywhere triumphing."

I sat suspended in amaze while he spoke thus, his dark eyes sparkling and his fingers straitly interlaced. It was a mood he had never before revealed, though he had often, as I have said, told me tales of his old heroes and wizards, but not with this stress of fervour and (as it were) prophetic sureness. Such power as he manifested in his words surely confounds distinctions of rank and erases the badge of servant. For there may be no mastery over them that can convince our souls, as this Welsh lad convinced mine.

When he spoke again, it was with some shame in his voice, as though he had betrayed his secret mind and feared my laughter; which had he known it, he need by no means have done.

"My meaning is," he went on, "that I feel this adventure which you set about will continue longer than you imagine, Mr. Denis, though I have no proof thereof; at least, none I may put into words; and you may well deride the notion. Notwithstanding, it sticks with me that you will not return to the Combe Court until many a strange accident shall have befallen, of which we be now ignorant."

"Why, however long it be, Simon," said I cheerily, for I wished to lighten our conversation somewhat, "you may rest well-assured of my remembrance of you, and that though I wander as far forth as to those same Islands of Greece you spake of, yet shall my affections draw me home again."

He leapt to his feet at that, with an apparent gladness that warmed me marvellously, though 'twas but a frolic sentence I had made, and spoken smiling. So do we often probe into the future with a jest, and, as it were, speak the fool's prologue to our own tragedy.

Our leaving-taking ended in laughter, then, as perhaps 'tis best, and Simon remaining to shoot fowl, I left him to bid farewell to old Peter Sprot; who gave me good advice in the matter of stage-plays and the choice of food, which I promised, so far as I was able, to observe.

"For other things," he said, "I leave you to your conscience, master, as in the end, 'tis necessary. But this I say: that I have small love of players, and such as, not content with the condition and quality they were born to, must needs pretend to principalities and lordships, which they sustain for a weary hour or so, and after return, like the swine of the Scripture, to their wallowing in the mire."

"I think there is no probability of my playing any prince's part, Peter," quoth I.

"Nor of seeing it played neither, I hope," he replied, "for though we be all sinners, yet we sinners that witness neither stage-plays nor pageants, Mr. Denis, be hugely better than they that do; and mark me, sir, it shall so appear hereafter."

This I knew to be a thrust at Mr. Ptolemy and his puppet-show no less than at the public theatre in Finsbury Fields, which had then been set up about seven or eight years.

"Eat beef and mutton, Mr. Denis," he proceeded gravely, "and fish also. There is a good market for fish in London, though they that vend there be something inclined to blasphemy; I know not wherefore; but strange dishes eschew, and particularly those of the French. For the French nation is given up to Popery, dancing and the compounding of unwholesome foods. Nay, this late commerce of our nobility with the effeminate and godless Frenchmen hath gone far to the ruin of both stomach and religion that should be simply fed, the one by such meats as I have named, mutton (eaten with onions, Mr. Denis), beef, and in cold weather, pork; the other by sound doctrine and preaching of the Word." He paused awhile, and I thought had concluded his admonition; when he seemed to recover something notable. "There be divers ways of dressing a capon, Mr. Denis," said he, "of which the goodwife hath a particular knowledge, as also of the sauces to be served therewith. These I will, by your leave, procure to be transcribed for your use, and so, God keep you."

I thanked him heartily for his good will, although I secretly admired the fashion in which he interlarded sound doctrine with strong meats. But every man out of the abundance of his heart speaketh, and I knew that Peter dealt with me lovingly in meddling virtue with appetite in so singular a manner. Now, when I had parted from the honest steward, I considered with myself whom next I should salute, and determined that it should be the maidservants and Ursula the

cook; and to this end returned toward the house, but unwillingly, for I have ever been abashed in the presence of womenfolk, at least within doors, where a man is at a disadvantage but they at their ease. And so greatly did this distaste and backwardness grow upon me that I hung about the gate of the yard behind the house, fearing to venture forward, and as it were into a den of mocking lions, until I should more perfectly have rehearsed my farewell speeches. It was then (as I always believe) that a door was opened unto me of that Providence which rules our motions, and a way of escape made plain; the which door was my old pedagogue, Mr. Jordan, whom I suddenly remembered (though I had scarce thought upon him these two years) and whom I had such a compelling inclination to visit as sent the maids out of my head, and my heels out of the yard on the instant. When I bade good-bye to Ursula and the rest on the morrow, I was in the open air and mounted, so that I cared not a jot for their laughter (which indeed soon led into tears; my own being pretty near to my eyes too), but made them a great speech as full of ego as a schoolboy's first lesson in Latin.

Up the hill towards Mr. Jordan's house I climbed therefore to beg his blessing upon me, and to thank him for all he had done for me in times past. It was near dinner-time by this, and I conceived the kindness of cooking the old scholar's meal for him as he lay in bed; for I doubted not to find him so, as I had rarely found him otherwise than on his pallet with a great folio or two by way of counterpane, and a Plato's "Republick" to his pillow. There had been a little snow fallen in the night which still clung upon the uplands, and when I had ascended to his dwelling I found a drift about the door and the thatched eaves considerably laden upon the weather side of them with snow. But what surprised me mightily was certain vestiges before the threshold, and regularly iterated, as by a sentinel's marchings to and fro. My bewilderment increased moreover, or rather gave place to alarm when I chanced to observe beside the window of that I knew for his study (to wit the room he slept in), a great halberd resting, and a military steel cap. Then did I painfully call to mind those former pursuits of my poor old preceptor when (as was reported) he had been a novice in the old Abbey of Cleeve, and knowing the present ill estimation in which the Papists everywhere were held, I understood that Mr. Jordan had not escaped the vigilance of the Commission, but was now under arrest, or at least that his liberty was so encroached on as made it mere confinement within his own house. Greatly distressed for this opinion, I approached near to the little window, of which the shutter (there being no glass) hung on the jar, and timorously gazed within. The bed stood empty, and no one that I could see was in the chamber. This confirmed me in my suspicion, and at the same time emboldened me to demand admittance. Some hope that my witness (or rather the weight of our authority) would bestead him, moved me to this course, and I knocked loudly on the door. Hardly had I done so, when I heard from within a horrid clatter of arms upon the flags as of a man falling in a scuffle, and so without more ado I lifted the latch and sprang into the house. Mr. Jordan lay at full length along the floor.

"Who hath done this, Master?" I cried out in a sudden gust of wrath, for he was an old man and a reverend. He lifted himself painfully, regarding me as he did so with an inscrutable mildness which I took to be of despair. His assailant was evidently fled in the meanwhile, or perhaps went to summon a posse comitatus for my tutor's apprehension.

"I will undertake your enlargement," said I, and indeed felt myself strong enough to dispose of a whole sergent's guard unaided.

"I am beholden to you, young master," replied Mr. Jordan, "and now that I look more closely, I take you to be that degenerate young Denis Cleeve, to whom Syntax and Accidence were wont to be as feloes in the wheel of Ixion, and Prosody a very stone of Sisyphus. Art thou not he, my son?"

"I am Denis Cleeve," I answered impatiently, "but I think my lack of Latin concerns us not now, when we are in danger of the law."

"Ah! thou hast come into some scrape," he said, sitting up on the stones, and gathering up his knees. "Such as thou art, was the Telamonian Ajax, whom Homer represents as brave enough, though in learning but a fool. Why, what hast thou done, little Ajax, that thou hast wantonly forfeited the protection of the laws? But be brief in the telling, since I sit here in some discomfort, having entangled a great sword in my legs and fallen something heavily, which in a man of my years and weight is as if Troy herself fell; a catastrophe lamentable even to the gods."

At this I could not contain my laughter, partly for the mistake into which he had been led that I feared a danger which was in truth his own, and partly for the accident of the sword which had tripped him up thus headlong; but more than either for the tragi-comick simile he had used in comparing himself in his downfall with the ancient city of Troy.

"To return to my first question," I said as soon as I had settled my countenance. "Who hath set upon you? and whither has he fled?"

"None hath set upon me, young sir," he replied sadly, "and ergo, we need search for no fugitive. I had armed myself, and the harness encumbering me (as indeed I have had little occasion for its use these forty years), I fell, in the manner you saw. And had not nature folded me in certain kindly wrappages of flesh above the common, my frame had been all broken and disjointed by this lapsus, which even now hath left me monstrous sore."

I lifted him to his feet, though with some difficulty, for it was true that nature had dealt

liberally with him in the matter of flesh; and having set him in a chair, I asked him how it was he came thus accoutred, since it was not (as he affirmed) to withstand any molestation.

"Why, 'tis in order to molest others, numskull!" he cried, making as if to pass upon me with his recovered weapon. "And for withstanding, 'tis to withstand the Queen's enemies, and affront them that pretend annoyance to her Grace's peace. I am the scholar in arms, boy! the clerk to be feared. I am Sapia Furens, and wisdom in the camp. Furthermore I am, though a poor professor of the Catholick Faith, yet one that detests the malignity of such as would establish that faith again by force of arms. It is by way of protest therefore, and in the vigour of loyalty, that I buckle on this, alas! too narrow panoply; and when I should be setting towards my grave, go forth upon my first campaign."

"You are taking service in the Queen's army, Mr. Jordan?" I stammered, for the prospect of it was hardly to be credited.

"If she will receive it, yea," he returned, with a melancholy determination. "And if she reject me as that I am too far declined from juvenility, I will crave at the least a pair of drums, having served some apprenticeship to parchment, Denis, so that I could doubtless sound a tuck upon occasion."

Beneath his apparent levity I could discern the hardness of his purpose, and honoured him extremely, knowing the rigour which attendeth service in the field and the conversation (offensive to a scholar) of the gross and ignorant soldiery. While I thus pondered his resolution, he proceeded quietly in his work of scouring certain antique pieces and notched blades that he told me had been his father's; and when they responded to his liking he would lunge and parry with them according to some theoretick rule he had, the which I suspected to have been drawn from the precepts of a Gothick sergeant, at the Sack of Rome. His pallid broad countenance was reddened by this exercise, and an alertness so grew upon his former unwieldy motions that I admired him for the recovery of the better part of youth, although he must at that time have passed his three score years and ten. And ever and anon as he scoured or smote, he would utter some tag of Latin apposite to the occasion (at least I suppose so) and seemed to gather a secret comfort from the allusion. I have never encountered with a man so little moulded to the age he lived in, nor so independent of its customary usages. His words were, as I have said, generally spoken in the dead languages, while his features were rather formed upon the model of those divines that flourished half a century since, and are now but seldom met with in any. I have seen a picture of the Archbishop and Lord Chancellor, Warham, which greatly resembled Mr. Jordan, and especially in the heavy eyelids and the lines of sadness about the mouth. On ordinary occasion my old tutor wore moreover a close-fitting cap of black velvet such as Master Warham wore also, cut square over the ears and set low upon the brow.

I have drawn his character somewhat tediously perhaps, but it is because he has become in my imagination a sort of symbol and gigantic figure that stands between my old life and my new. When I look back upon my boyhood there is Mr. Jordan a-sprawl on his bed amid a host of books, and when the prospect of my early manhood opens it is half obliterated by his genial bulk.

I learned to my satisfaction that he purposed to depart on the morrow for London, where also he hoped to pass muster into some company of the Queen's troops. His delight, I think, was equal to my own, when I told him that I was bound thither likewise, and we accordingly parted until daybreak with mutual encouragements and good will.

CHAPTER V

PRINCIPALLY TELLS HOW SIR MATTHEW JUKE WAS CAST AWAY UPON THE HEBRIDES

I awoke long before dawn on that memorable Wednesday which was to set a term to my pleasant and not altogether idle life in the Combe. Yet early as I had awakened, my father preceded me, and coming into my attic chamber where I had always slept in the tower, sat down by my bedside, fully dressed, while I was still rubbing the sleep out of my eyes. What passed betwixt us in that still hour I may not recount, but let it suffice that it left me weeping. There be words spoken sometimes that have the effect and impress of a passage of time, so potently do they dissever us from the past, leading us into a sudden knowledge which by time only is generally acquired, and that painfully. Such an experience it was mine to gain then, so that my boyish follies and the ignorant counterfeits which make up a boy's wisdom fell away the while my father discoursed gravely of this and that, and I marvelled how I could ever have held such stock of vain opinions. Alas! for my presumption, and alas! too, that opinions as vain may beset a man full as closely as a boy; and follies the more indecent that they be wrought without ignorance.

One thing I find it in my heart to speak of, because it exemplifies my father's forbearance, though at a cost which he would well have spared. My uncle's name having been made mention

of between us, my thoughts flew from him to the mother I had never known, and in a luckless hour I demanded whether my father had not any picture of her, that I might carry her image clear in my mind. His brow clouded as I begged this favour, and rising from his seat, he went to the window, where he seemed about to draw aside the shutters that closed it, but desisted. I could have bitten my tongue out for my imprudence, but could think of no words to recover or mitigate it and so sat still, gazing upon his tall figure all dim in the twilight, and wishing for my life that he would refuse my request.

But he did not. For with a strong motion he suddenly flung back the shutters, letting in the grey light, and turned upon me with a smile.

"Why, that is a natural thing to desire, Denis," he said, "and one I ought to have thought to do without your asking." He put his hand into the bosom of his doublet as he spoke, so that I certainly knew he had worn her picture all these years against his heart. He plucked out presently a little case of green leather clasped with silver, and oval in shape, and, having first detached it from the silver chain by which it was secured, he laid it in my hands and straightway left the room.

'Twas a face very pale limned, in which there yet appeared each minutest feature, hue, and lock of hair even, so ingeniously was all done. Behind the face was a foil of plain blue to show it off; and so exact and perfect as the thing was, it lay in my palm no bigger than a crown piece. I examined it closely. There was a kind of pride in the eyes which looked at you direct, and the eyebrows descended a little inwards towards the nose, as one sees them sometimes in a man that brooks not to be crossed, but seldom in a girl. Her mouth and chin were small and shapely, yet otherwise of no particular account. I judged it to be the picture of one that saw swiftly and without fear, and moreover that the mere sight of things, and a quick apprehension of them, determined her actions. Somehow so (methought) looked that scrupulous Saint that doubted his Lord without proof of vision; whereat calling to mind his tardy and so great repentance, I felt a catch of hope that my mother repented likewise, and by her repentance was justified.

My father entering then, I gave up the locket, which he took from me quietly, saying it was by an Exeter youth that had since gone to Court and painted many notable persons there; one N. Hillyard, whose father had been High Sheriff of Exeter twenty years since, his mother being a London woman named Laurence Wall, and that the lady's father had been a goldsmith; moreover (which was singular) 'twas to one of the same family (I think a son) that I was directed to present my letters of exchange. The hour then drawing towards the time I was to meet with my father's friend, and there being many things to be attended to, I dressed hastily and was soon ready below, where I found my father again, and Sprot, in the great hall, with my clothes and other necessaries, which they bestowed in two or three deerskin wallets that lay open on the floor. These were to go forward by the carrier, who undertook to deliver them as far as to Devizes, whence I was to hire such means of carriage as seemed advisable, whether by sumpter-beasts or waggon, for the rest of my journey.

A little after, and when I had taken breakfast, we heard a noise of horses in the forecourt, and knew it for Sir Matthew Juke, of Roodwater, my companion, and his retinue. My father went at once to the door and invited him in, but he would not dismount, he said, thinking indeed 'twas already time to set forward. He spoke in a quick petulant fashion and was (as I since discovered) in a considerable trepidation upon certain rumours of thieves in the wild country betwixt Taunton and Glastonbury, the which greatly daunted him. He wore a cuirass over his doublet, and carried his sword loose in the scabbard, while his men bore their pieces in their hands openly. A wain with his goods in, that followed, had an especial guard; though they seemed to be but mere patches spared from the farm, and I was assured, would have dropped their calivers and fled at the first onslaught.

I was soon horsed, with a dozen hands to help, and a ring of women beyond, admiring and weeping and bidding me God speed; to whom I addressed myself, as I have said, with as much gratitude as little modesty; being strangely excited by the circumstance and noise which attended our departure. I had a pair of great pistols in the holsters of my saddle which I could scarce forbear to flourish in either hand, and the sword at my belt delighted me no less, it being the first I had yet worn.

"'Tis the one you would have given to the cheat," my father had told me as he tightened my belt-strap. "But give it to none now, Denis, nor draw it not, save in defence of yourself (as I pray God you need draw it seldom), and of such as, but for you, be defenceless."

At our parting, I bent at a sign, when he kissed me, and I him, and so set forward with our train. A great shout followed us, and at the hedge-end stood Simon Powell, his bonnet in his hand, which he waved as we went by, crying out a deal of Welsh (having forgot the Queen's English altogether, he told me afterwards), and in so shrill a voice as set the knight's horse capering and himself in a rage of blasphemy.

We fell in with Mr. Jordan, whom I had almost feared had given over his enterprise, some mile or so distant, at a smith's in a little village we passed through, where he was having his armour eased about the middle, and a basket hilt put upon his sword.

"Who is this fellow?" asked Sir Matthew testily, when I hailed and accosted him.

"It is my old preceptor, sir," said I, "who is coming with us, if he have your leave."

"Hast heard of any robbers by the way, Doctor?" inquired the knight at that, and I saw he was marvellous glad of this increase in his auxiliaries.

"I hear of nought else," replied the scholar sturdily, while the other turned very pale. But continuing, the scholar said: "Seeing that in a treatise I wrote awhile since and caused to be printed, there is a notable paragraph hath been bodily seized upon by a beggarly student of Leyden, and impudently exhibited to the world as his own. Heard you ever such? Robbers quotha? How of my labour, and inquiry into the nature of the lost digamma—"

"Hold!" cried Sir Matthew. "I see we talk athwart. This lost thing or person of yours (for I understand no whit of what it may be) is nothing to the purpose. I spoke of robbers on the highway, villains and cutpurses."

"Of them I reckon little," said Mr. Jordan coolly, "seeing I have no purse to be cut."

"They are dangerous nevertheless," said the other loftily.

"For which reason you go sufficiently attended," muttered the scholar, with a cursory eye backward upon the knight's warlike following; and with that we all fell, although for different causes, into an uniform silence. At length, being come to the top of a hill up which we had ascended painfully for near the half of an hour, and especially the waggons found it hard to overcome, we stood out upon an open and circular piece of ground, bordered about by noble great beech trees, but itself clear save for the sweet grass that covered it; and the turf being dry and the air refreshing after our late labour, we were glad to dismount there and rest awhile.

Sir Matthew ordered one of his men to fetch cooked meat and two bottles of wine from the cart, and showed himself very generous in inviting us to join him at this repast.

"I have always gone provided in these matters," he told us as we sat together thus, "since I went upon my first voyage to the Baltic, being but a boy then, although accounted a strong one." (I know not wherefore; for he must ever have been little, and his back not above two hands' breadth.) "Howbeit," he continued, "we had the ill luck to be cast away upon the Hebrides, the weather being very tempestuous and our ship not seaworthy; so that about the fourth day it broke in pieces utterly. I held to a piece of the keel," he said, looking anxiously from one to the other as his memory or invention helped him to these particulars, "upon which, too, clung our purser, whom I did my best to comfort in this our common and marvellous peril. How we got to shore I never understood, but we did, although half dead, and the purser raving."

"Since which time," said Mr. Jordan, pausing in the conveyance to his mouth of a great piece of a fowl's wing, "you have, as you say, gone provided against the repetition of such accidents, even upon the dry land."

"And wisely, sir, as I think," added Sir Matthew.

"Was there then no food to be had in Scotland?" asked Mr. Jordan simply.

"Not where we landed, in the Hebrides," replied the knight tartly. "As to the rest of that country I know nothing, save that 'tis a poor starved foggy place, and the people savage, half naked and inclining to Presbytery, which is a form of religion I abhor, and to any that professeth the same I am ready to prove it wholly erroneous and false."

The knight's tale seeming likely to digress into theology, we ended our dinner hastily without more words; albeit from time to time later, it was evident that Sir Matthew's thoughts were still upon shipping and the sea; so that scarce an accident we met with but he found in it occasion for casting us naked on the Hebrides, or drowning us in the Baltic.

We had halted, I say, upon a considerable eminence, and the ground falling away in our front very steeply, the view thence was of an unparalleled breadth and variety. For stretched at our very feet, as it seemed, lay a fair and fertile champaign diversified here and there with woodland and open heath. Beyond the vale rose the wild and untracked downs all dark and clouded; and to the left hand (as we stood) the bar of the Quantock Hills. Surely a man must travel far who would behold a land more pleasant than this sweet vale of Taunton; nay, were he to do so, as indeed the exiled Israelites found pleasanter waters in Babylon than they had left in Jewry, yet must he needs (as they did) weep at the remembrance of it; for there is no beauty ascendeth to the height of that a man's own country hath—I mean at least if it be the West Country, as mine is.

We continued our progress, going through two or three hamlets where the old folk and children stood about the doors to watch us pass, for we were a notable spectacle, and Sir Matthew Juke a stern figure in the van; travelling thus without any great fatigue, for we kept at a foot's pace on account of the waggon, and of Mr. Jordan also, who had no horse. I frequently besought him to ride my own mare, but he would not until we were within sight of the great belfry tower of St. Mary's Church in Taunton, when he consented, being indeed pretty faint by that, and thanked me handsomely out of Æsop.

In Taunton we dined, and there too I hired a beast for the scholar because (to speak the

truth) I could not bear to be parted any longer from my holsters with the new pistols in. No adventure befell us worthy recording, or rather nothing of such magnitude as Sir Matthew's shipwreck which I have above set down, until we reached Glastonbury, where we were to lie that night.

On the morrow we departed early, observing still the same order, save that we rode more closely before the baggage upon a persistent report in the inn of a horrid robbery with murder on the Frome road: which town lay in our way to Devizes. Even the Baltic dried up at this, and we kept a pretty close look-out as we crossed the flat marsh lands thereabout; and once Juke shot off his piece suddenly upon some alarm, but with so trembling and ill an aim that Mr. Jordan's high crowned hat (that he still wore) was riddled through the brim, and a verse of Ovid's which was in his mouth, cut off smartly at the *cæsura*. Matter of ridicule though this were, I had been alert to note some other circumstance of more gravity (as I conceived) though I spoke not of it then; the cause of my anxiety being indeed too near for open conference thereupon. For I had, by accident, observed certain becks and glances to pass between two of the fellows of our guard; the one of whom, a pikeman (by name Warren), trudged beside the cart wherein were laid up the knight's goods, and his fellow in the plot (to call it as I feared it) was the elder of the two horsemen that wore the knight's livery and were particularly engaged in his defence. After two or three such furtive signals run up, as it were, and answered betwixt these twain, I could be in no further doubt of their purpose, but studied what to do, should they fall upon us suddenly. That their main design was to seize upon the contents of the waggon that was by all supposed valuable, I made sure; but what I could not yet guess was the degree of complicity or indifference in which the rest of our company stood towards the projected assault. I conceived them to be chiefly cowards, however, and resolved therefore, if I might, to enlist their aid upon the first advantage: for cowards ever succeed to the party that rises dominant, and protest their loyalty loudest when 'tis most to be questioned.

Because I was a boy, I suppose, but at all events very impudently, my conspirators took small pains to hide their deliberations from my eyes, having first assured themselves that neither Juke nor the scholar had any cognizance of their doings. And this disdain of me it was that brought matters to a head; for I could no longer brook it, but, wheeling my horse about, I faced them both, and drawing a pistol from my holster shouted: "Halt, sirs! here be traitors amongst us."

I never saw men so immediately fall into confusion as did all of them, but chiefly the rearward, that, every man of them, fled hither and thither with little squealing pitiful cries; some running beneath the waggon or behind it; others leaping off the causeway amidst the fenny ooze and peat-bogs that it wends through in these parts, where they were fain to shelter themselves in the grasses and filthy holes that everywhere there abound. I caught a sight of Sir Matthew, on the instant, exceedingly white, and his sword half drawn; but he then losing a stirrup (as he told me afterwards he did) was borne from the conflict unwillingly a great way down the road ere he could recover himself. Only the younger serving man, whose name was Jennings, and Mr. Jordan, retained their courages, and both came at once to my assistance, which in truth was not too soon. For the footman (that is the villain with the pike) ran in under my guard and dealt me a keen thrust into the thigh which sore troubled although it did not unhorse me. I returned upon him with my pistol, discharging it close to his body, and hurt him in the shoulder, as I knew, because he dropped his pike and clapped his hand there, grinning at me the while like a dog.

Just then I heard the click of a snaphance, and perceived that the caliver that Jennings carried had hung fire; and following upon this, a great laughter from the elder man, whose name was Day, a hard-favoured fellow, having a wicked pursed mouth and little dull green eyes.

"Shouldst 'a looked to thy priming, Master Jennings," he called out mockingly; by which I saw that he had tampered with the poor man's piece while we lay at the inn in Glastonbury; and this much said, he raised his own piece and fired directly at him, who fell at once all huddled upon his horse's neck, stark dead. Before I could draw forth my second pistol, Mr. Jordan had rid forward very boldly, though armed but with his antique broadsword, and laid about him with good swinging blows, the one of which happening upon his opponent's mare, it cut into her cheek with a great gash, at the same time bursting the rein and headstall, to the end she was quite unmanageable, and despite of Day's furious restraint (who, to do him credit, would have continued the contest, two to one), charged away at a great pace, carrying him with her along the road until they were fairly out of sight.

When I had satisfied myself that the villain would certainly not return, I drew my sword and looked about for his companion, the pikeman, whom I had wounded; but whether he had crept into the concealment of the high bog grass, as the most part of the guard had done, or else had gone backward down the road, I could not get any certainty; and Sir Matthew who now rode up said he had not gone that way, else he would assuredly have met and slain him, which, seeing that the man was disabled, is likely; and so I gave over the search.

It cost us some pains to rally our forces, but in the end we did, Mr. Jordan persuading them very cogently with his great sword wherever he found them: he having groped for the digamma in stranger places, he said, and worn away the better part of his life in the prosecution of things more hard to come by than this, our bog-shotten escort.

We reverently bestowed the body of poor Jennings upon the stuff in the waggon, and with heavy hearts (though not without some thrill of victory in mine) set onward again towards Frome

and Devizes, which last place the knight was now in a fever to attain to before sundown.

"I think I have not been in such jeopardy," he said, "since I suffered shipwreck off the barren coast of the Hebrides, as I related to you yesterday."

"The dangers would be about upon an equality," quoth Mr. Jordan.

Nothing occurred to renew our fears nor to cause us to assume a posture of defence for the remainder of our passage; the only accident any way memorable being that through some mischance we got into the town of Devizes at the wrong end of it, and were diligently proceeding quite contrary to our purposed direction before we discovered our error. I set this down because I have so done since also (in spite of clear information received), and have therefore cause to regard Devizes as something extraordinary in the approaches thereto, although Sir Matthew, to whom I spoke of it, said that such divergences were common enough at sea, where a man might set his course for the Baltic and fetch up off the Hebrides, or indeed the devil knew where.

CHAPTER VI

HOW THE OLD SCHOLAR AND I CAME TO LONDON

I leave you to imagine whether Sir Matthew made much or little of our adventure in the marshes, and of the part he took therein, when, having parted from us, he found himself free to relate the same privately to his family; they having preceded him (without any escort at all) to his new great mansion in Devizes. Upon our part, we, that is Mr. Jordan and I, having inquired out the Inn to which my chattels had been already carried, took up our lodging there for the night, being pretty well fatigued (and I wounded too) so that of all things we desired rest. Nevertheless my old schoolmaster would by no means suffer me to go to bed until he had procured me a surgeon, who bound up my thigh and took his fee without any word good or bad; afterwards going himself into the kitchen (I mean Mr. Jordan did) in order to my more careful attendance, so that the host his daughter brought me up of her best, and called me poor child, though I was older than she by half a year.

Now, I learned next morning that Mr. Jordan at his supper had put so heroical a construction upon our exploit as transformed us into men above nature almost, and I loathed to descend into the common room where all the ostlers and maids would be gaping after us for a pair of paladins. Mr. Jordan took the prospect of such adulation very coolly, saying that the wise man was he that nothing moved; but for all that I saw he liked it, and indeed he had been at considerable pains to prepare the ovation he now affected to despise. However, it so fell out that when at length we descended amongst the people of the Inn, our arrival quite failed of applause, and that for the simplest, although a tragical, reason.

For it appeared that when, on the yesternight, Sir Matthew, having discharged his baggage-wain and bestowed his goods and valuable stuff within the house, had gone to bed, it being then about midnight and all quiet, comes there, lurking through the dark night, that villain serving-man Day, whose late defeat had nothing distracted him from his hopes of plunder. With his poniard he cuts out a panel of the postern door, and privily entering thereby, goes rummaging through the house from loft to cellar, cutting and wasting what he could not carry off, but for the money, of which he found good store, and sundry gold ornaments thereto that were my lady Juke's, he fills his doublet full of them, as is proved upon him, said the teller, beyond dispute.

"But then," proceeded the man, who now held our whole company expectant, "even as he was about to steal away by the way he had come, he heard a little grating noise, as of a weapon which one struck against some impediment, close beside him in the dark where he was; and supposing this to be the knight who had unluckily heard him, he drew boldly upon him with his sword. The other thrust out upon the instant, and a horrid conflict ensued, the men coming to grips shortly and stabbing out of all rule. At length the serving-man, whose name is Day, dealt his adversary his death-blow and prepared to flee away with his booty, when it appeared (and as Day himself told me it surprised him out of measure) his legs would not bear him; so that he fell along the floor from sheer loss and effusion of blood, a subtle blow having pierced him unawares and mortally hurt him. Thus they lay both until the morning, when the servants, and I that am the butler, found them there, the one of them already stark and the other close upon his end and all aghast."

"Then thy master be murdered, Roger Butler," cried an old fellow from the tail of the press.

"Not so, Father Time," shouted the butler with a great laugh, "although Day, by that same error, was led into striking down one he should have gone in leash withal, namely his fellow-thief, one Warren, that was gone about the same game as himself."

"Why, 'tis the very knave that dealt Mr. Cleeve here that great wound I told you of," cried Mr.

Jordan, when the clamour of voices had somewhat lessened; the which speech of his I could have wished not spoken, for now all turned about, demanding this and that of me, and swearing I was a brave lad; with such a deal of no-matter as put me into an extremity of rage and shame, so that I was glad to escape away to the hall, where I fell to at the ordinary, and drank to their confusion.

But for all my spleen it was indeed a merry tale, beside that it was a marvellous judgment upon two rogues. Day, it seemed, had breath enough left in him properly to incriminate Warren, who was, as I say, already dead, and then rolled over and died too. There was an inquest held of necessity, as well upon the thieves as upon poor Jenning that Day killed before; which process somewhat detained us; but in the afternoon of the day following, having satisfied the Coroner, we were permitted to depart on our way.

Nevertheless there was a deal of time lost upon our reckoning, it being now Saturday morning, and although we were now no further to be hindered with the slowness of Juke's waggon, yet there was still a good four score miles to go, and the Sunday falling on the morrow when we were bound to rest, we could by no means reach London before Monday at night, or even the Tuesday forenoon. My baggage I had sent on by the common carrier, who engaged to transmit it at Reading, whither he plied, to another carrier going to London.

We rode out of the base court of the Inn gaily enough, and soon came upon the high Wiltshire downs, which, there having been a deal of snow fallen in the night, lay about us in that infinite solemnity of whiteness that stills a man's heart suddenly, as few things else have the power to do.

Nought could we discern before and around us but ridge after ridge of snow, above which hung a sky of unchanging grey; all features of the country were quite obliterated, and but that some cart had gone that way a while since, of which we picked out and followed the wheel marks scrupulously, it had wanted little but we should have ridden bewildered into some deep drift and perhaps perished. Indeed, we were fortunate in that; and keeping close upon the track, although but slow going, in time descended into the market town of Marlborough, which we reached early in the afternoon. Here we refreshed ourselves and our beasts, and then away into the Savernake forest, traversing it without mishap, and so out upon the high road again by Hungerford, and into Newbury a little after nightfall; having covered above thirty miles in all, the ways bad too, and the day, because of the late season, very short.

On the Sunday we remained all day in the Inn, except that I went in the morning to the Church there, when I heard a sermon by the curate upon Wars and the Rumours thereof, wherein he advised us very earnestly to examine our pieces and have them ready to hand and not to keep our powder in the loft under the leaky thatch. He brought in somewhat, too, about the Sword of the Spirit and the Shield of Faith, but listlessly, and I saw that no one attended much to that, all men being full of fear of the Papists, to which they were particularly moved by Mr. Will. Parry's malicious behaviour in the House of Commons. The scholar did not accompany me to the Church, I suppose because he was himself a Papist, though perhaps no very rigorous one, but feigned a stiffness from riding; and when I returned I found him in the larder, where he was discoursing amply of the Scythians and their method of extracting a fermented liquor from the milk of mares, which was of a grateful potency, but (he lamented) not now to be obtained.

I wrote home a letter to my father after dinner, and in the evening entertained the curate, who had got to hear of our going to London, and came to speak with us thereon. He was an honest man, and of an ingenuous complacency, which he manifested in telling us very quietly that his Grace of Canterbury was of the same university as he, and he doubted not, would be pleased to hear of him, and that he had taken another rood of ground into the churchyard; all which I promised, if I should meet his lordship, to relate.

We departed as was our custom, betimes on the morrow, travelling towards Reading, and thereafter to Windsor, where we beheld with admiration the great Castle of her Majesty's that is there; howbeit we went not into the place, but left it on our right hand, and proceeded still forward. But the night falling soon afterwards, we were fain to put up in the little hamlet of Brentford upon the river Thames, whither we learned that 'twas fortunate we had without accident arrived, a certain haberdasher of repute having been robbed of all he carried upon the heath we had but lately rid over into that place, and left for dead by the wayside.

Perhaps it was this outrage which had made for our safety, and that, being so far satisfied with the spoil of silks and rich stuff taken, the malefactors had hastened to dispose of it to some that make a living by that cowardly means, and are mostly dwellers about the Stocks market, in the narrow lanes thereby, although some (as Culver Alley) have been stopped up against such notorious use of thieves.

Notwithstanding, I here affirm, that in the morning, when we saw the monstrous charges our lodging stood us in, we found we had not far to seek for a thief as big as any; and having paid the innkeeper, told him so.

But now we were come almost within view of the great City of which I had so many times dreamed, and so beyond limits had advanced its imagined glory, until it seemed to draw into itself all that was noble and rich and powerful in the world; being Rome and Carthage too, I thought, and the Indies added! nay, and only not Paris or Florence, because it scorned the comparison. In such an exaltation I sat my horse, looking to right and left as we rode through the

lanes past Hammersmith and Kensington, all the way being still deep in snow; although hardened here by the traffic of country carts, or rather (I said) by great equipages of the Court and the Queen's troops. Mr. Jordan spoke twice or thrice upon indifferent matters, and chiefly, I remember, of Olympus; but I regarded him contemptuously, having come into a place where Olympus would be very cheaply esteemed as a hill, we having our own Ludgate Hill, which, if not so high, is in all other respects as good or better. But when he told me that we must soon each take our leave of the other, all that vain mood left me, and I wished him from my heart a thousand benefits and safety in his enterprise, in which I would have joined him willingly had I not been bound to this business of my uncle. He told me he should go to Moorfields, where he had heard there was frequent exercise of arms, and there learn how to set about his enrolment.

About this time we came to Charing Cross, where no further speech was possible between us; such strangeness we met with, and unused fashion of things; and proceeding by way of the Strand, we noted an infinite succession of sights, of which the least elsewhere would have staggered me, but now giving place to others as marvellous, or more, they did but increase my appetite for amazement, which they alternately satisfied and renewed. Upon the clamour and the infinite throngs of the townsfolk, I but briefly touch, for they transcend all description, as do the palaces of the Savoy and Arundel House that we passed by; and the Earl of Essex his mansion, and other the inns of the great nobles which lie upon the right side of this famous street, and betwixt it and the Thames. Somerset House, moreover, that is still building, we saw, and artificers yet at work thereupon, which will be, I think, when builded, the finest palace of all. At Temple Bar a man leaves the liberty of the Duchy (as it is called) and enters within the liberty (albeit yet without the walls) of the City of London, and here, a little distance further on, I found Fetter Lane upon the left hand, where my lodging was, and so (having first learned where I should have word of him) sorrowfully parted with Mr. Jordan at the end of it, he going still eastward towards Paul's, and I up the lane, that is northward, to Mr. Malt's, where I was well received, and led to a clean and pleasant chamber in the gable, which he told me was to be mine.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH I CONCEIVE A DISLIKE OF AN EARL'S SERVANT AND AN AFFECTION FOR A MAN OF LAW

I think I overlaid my conscience in the night, seeing I stayed abed until near seven o'clock next morning, a thing I had never before done; but, indeed, I had now some colour of excuse for so doing, for besides my wound in the thigh, which the cold had made woefully to ache, there was my new clothes which the carrier had not yet delivered, and I was mighty loth to go abroad in my travel-stained riding dress and great boots. As I lay there, the light then gathering mistily in my chamber, I could hear the noises of the City and the cries of the multitude of small vendors that go about the streets, as having no booth nor open shop wherein to display their petty merchandise. From a church near by I heard bells pealing, and soon from other churches too. Below my window there was a maid singing, and a man with her that hawked ballads, bawling their titles till my ears tingled. Nevertheless, the confusion of all these strange cries and sounds heartened me marvellously, and had I but got my new-fashioned doublet of dark cloth and hose therewithal, I had been the merriest man of the parish, as I was certainly the most curious. After awhile I could lie no longer, but leapt up, and running to the casement, found London white, a sky of frost, and a brave gay world before me.

My chamber, as I said, was a sort of great attic in the gable, and full as high up in the house as was my old tower room at home. But 'twas less the height that astonished me, than the nearness into which the houses were thrust together from either side of the street, so as they almost met by the roofs; and I swear, had I been so inclined (and he too) I could have crossed staves with the barber that had his dwelling over against mine, or almost stolen his pewter shaving dish from the sill where it lay. Of these conceits of mine, however, the barber was necessarily ignorant, being then busily engaged upon the exercise of his craft, which he carried on perforce above stairs, the shop below and the other rooms being used by a haberdasher and alderman, that had his goods stored there. I noted the barber particularly as well for his extraordinary grace and courtesy, as for the activity he manifested in his occupation. No hand's turn would he do but a flourish went to it, and always his body bending and his head nodding and twisting to that extent, I wondered how the man he shaved could sit his chair in any degree of comfort. Perhaps he did not, though he seemed to suffer the little man's attentions coolly enough, and when he went away, paid him, I perceived, handsomely, and strode off with a careless ease, that minded me, with some shame, of my own country manners. My thoughts being thus returned upon my late secluded life, I fell into a melancholy mood which was a little after happily dissipated by the maid bringing me my new clothes and telling me moreover that the family stayed for me at breakfast.

I was soon enough dressed after this and, settling my starched ruff, of which the pleats somewhat galled me, descended to the room where they dined; and there found the whole family

of the Malts (that with the infant made up nine) set at the board and very ready for their delayed meal. A long grace was said by the youngest maid, whose eyes were fierce upon the eggs the while, and after that we fell to. Madam Malt spoke kindly to me once or twice of my business, of which I had already given her some slight and grudging particulars, but for the most part she conversed in sidelong frowns with her children, of whose conduct it was evident she wished I should think well. But in truth I cared nothing for their conduct nor much for their persons (for all they were personable enough) being in a fever to be gone upon my errand to the goldsmith's and to commence work in earnest.

Breakfast done then, I lost little time upon formalities and broke in upon Madam Malt's excuse of her third (or fourth) daughter's mishap over the small beer, with excuses of my own for leaving her; and so taking up my hat left her staring. So eager indeed was I, that I ran out of the door into the arms of a gentleman that stood by and nearly sent him on his back in the snow. When he had recovered himself, with my aid, and stood fronting me, I knew him directly for the man whom I had seen in the barber's chair, and faltering upon my apology let fall some foolish words by which I might be thought to claim his acquaintance. He frowned suddenly at that and gazing upon me earnestly said—

"It were easy to perceive you are of the country, young sir, and not used to our town customs."

"How so?" I asked very hotly, for his disdain went the deeper into me that it was founded upon reason.

"By your pretending to an intimacy with me," he replied, and drew himself up very haughtily as he said it, "who know not your name even, although doubtless you know mine, as all do, seeing the place I keep, and the especial favour of my lord to me; yet I say that is no ground for your familiarly accosting me in the public way."

"Why, as to that," I cried out scornfully, "I know nothing of you save that I saw you but now in the barber's chair, swathed up in a towel and your face all lathered."

He turned very pale at this out of mere discomfiture, and I expected would have run upon me with his sword, so that I clapped my fist upon my own and stepping closely to his side said—

"Sir, I am, as you imagine, but lately come out of the country and therefore know not your customs here in London. But if there be places reserved for the settlement of such brabbles as this, let us go thither with all my heart." And then, after a breath or two taken: "For all that," I added, "I had it in my mind to say I meant no insult, and if I offended you, I am sorry."

He stood without replying either to my threats or my amends, but gazed upon me with a look that I saw meant mischief; though whether to be done now or at a convenient time and secretly, I could not guess.

He was a fine bold man, of an height a good span greater than my own. He wore no hair on his face, but that I could see under his plumed cap was thick and black. His dress was of rare stuff and I supposed very costly, being all slashed and brodered, and tagged with gold. Indeed, had he not let slip that boast of intimacy with some lord I should have been sure of his being a lord himself and perhaps master of one of those great palaces upon the Strand. Thus, then, we stood thwarting each other a considerable space, and I (at least) doubting of the upshot, when a great fellow in a livery of blue, with a badge on his sleeve, came running up the lane, and casting an eye upon me, pushed in between us and spoke with the tall man low and seriously. There remaining therefore nought to hinder me longer about that brawl, I went off, but asked one that stood by what was the badge the man in livery bore, and he answered 'twas the Earl of Pembroke's emblem of the green dragon, and that they twain that communed together thus secretly were both of his household of Baynards Castle by Blackfriars.

Without further mishap, but pondering rather heavily upon my late one, I made my way through the streets, past the noble church of Paul's on the south side of it, to Mr. Wall the goldsmith hard by the Exchange. I have neither space nor words nor confidence either, to speak of all the things I met with, beyond imagination marvellous to me; and even where I was disappointed of my expectation; as in the little width of the streets, and of Paul's that it lacked the spire it once had; together with much else that lacked completion or seemed at hazard builded; even there, I say, I found my idea bettered by the fact, and a strange beauty in the irregularity and scant ordering of the City, that the more bewildered me as I went the further into the midst of it.

I found Mr. Wall in his shop, or house rather, a little down the lane named of the Pope's Head tavern, where he expected me with the money ready, that my father had desired him to have at my disposal. He overread my letters of credit somewhat closely, after which he put to me two or three such pertinent questions as sufficed to show a shrewd aptitude in affairs of business, yet without any the least pedantry, or vexatious delays. Indeed he dispatched all with an easy unconcern, as if such matters were of every day and not considerable; although the sum to be paid methought large enough in all conscience. The while I counted over the gold pieces he talked idly, but with a pleasant humour, of Mr. John Davis that was said to be projecting with others a voyage for the discovery of the Northwest Passage (the which he undertook in the

summer following), and of Mr. Sanderson, a merchant well known to him, that was especially committed to this adventure.

"I would myself have gone upon this discovery," he said, "but for the misfortune of a singular queasy stomach that layeth me low or ever I be come upon the ship. Yet I thank Heaven I am not of their number that, having themselves failed, pretend that success is the constant attendant upon incompetence."

When it came to the carriage of my gold he very courteously offered to send his porter therewith, and as the weight was more by far than I had looked for, I thanked him, and gave the bags to the man, who for his part made nothing of them, but walked away briskly down Cornhill, I following him as a convoy might follow a treasure ship, close upon her chase. In such sort we arrived in time at the Serjeants Inn in Fleet Street, where I had engaged to meet Mr. John Skene, that was my uncle's attorney. In that Inn, or warren rather (for indeed it is nothing less), we searched for any of the name of Skene, but could find none; however, a stranger who chanced to pass over the court while we stood at gaze courteously directing us, we soon after came upon his chambers, which were at the head of a narrow stair in the south building and the eastern end thereof; whereupon my porter gave me my leathern sacks into my hands saying he must now go, which (I having paid him) he presently did.

Mr. Skene admitted me with a deal of ceremony, being, I could see, a man of extreme punctuality and withal one to whom I took an immediate liking. He was I think the most handsome-featured man I have ever met with, in height tall, and of a stately port, his body stout although not at all gross, and his hair, which was very plentiful, gone a perfect silver. I supposed his age to be nearing three score, but he might have been younger. His eye was very bright and kindly and seemed to smile even when his lips were drawn close in meditation. The black gown he wore as suited to his profession very well befitted his grave demeanour; about his neck was a plain linen band, but the cap which the Serjeants generally use he had not on, and I supposed kept it only for wearing in the Court. His business room into which I had come appeared meanly furnished, excepting in books and quires, of which there was a great number scattered everywhere, but his table and the two or three chairs were nothing so good as our own at home, and the floor unswept and foul. While I took notice of these small matters Mr. Skene was reaching from a shelf a great file of papers tied with silk; which having got, he turned about and surprised me at that occupation.

"A poor hole, you think, Mr. Cleeve," he said, with a merry smile at my embarrassment, "but we men of law have scant occasion for leisure in which to look about us, and luxury would be ill circumstanced here where life and death be too often at grips. Come," he added after a pause, "I do not mean to take the pulpit over you, but to bid you expect such plainness in me as you find in my chamber; and so, enough," he ended, and therewith drew out a parchment with a great seal attached to it, upon which he pondered a while.

"You have the main of this affair?" he asked abruptly, touching the skin as he spoke.

"Yes," I replied, "at least so much as that my uncle Botolph is in the Tower, and hopes to clear himself if he may be brought to trial."

"Then you have it all, or nearly so," he said nodding. "He was arrested upon an order of the Council and secretly conveyed by water to the place where he now lies. By especial grace I have once been admitted to see him, and learned from his own mouth, although I needed not to hear that I was already assured of, namely, the entire innocence that he hath as touching these late revolts."

He sat silent awhile and perhaps awaited my reply, albeit my reply when he heard it seemed not much to his mind, and I myself was surprised at my boldness in speaking it.

"It lies upon my conscience, sir," said I, "to tell you that, had I my will, my uncle should by no means come by this franchise we be deliberating so painfully to procure. I believe him to be a most absolute villain, and had not my father moved herein, I should have let him rot in his dungeon and ne'er stirred a finger in this cause."

I stopped there for mere lack of breath, being quite overcome by my heat of passion against my uncle, but when I would have excused myself, Mr. Skene prevented me with a motion of his hand. The pleasant light in his eyes was clouded with a grave anxiety.

"These be hard words, Master Denis," he said, "and I hope are justified; or rather, I hope not; else I cannot for my honour undertake this prisoner's defence. But tell me briefly upon what grounds you believe him to be so worthless of relief."

This put me into an unlooked for difficulty, because I could not bring myself to tell him aught of my mother, and yet had I no other reason to give him. But he, as if perceiving he had said something to vex me, hastened to set me at my ease, and leaning forward upon his desk, said—

"You are still very young, Mr. Denis, and the young are apt to prejudge. But for the cause of your anger I may tell you frankly that I know it; and respect you both for it and also for your reticence in naming it. I have been acquainted with your uncle," he went on, speaking still in a thoughtful manner, but as if some pleasure joined with the recollection of which he was to notify

me: "I have been acquainted with him above seven years now, and can lay claim to know his private mind so far as a man's friend may do. You spoke of a fault of his, when he was scarce older than yourself. Are we to send him to the block for that? It is not the charge under which he now lies, Mr. Denis, nor is it one"—he spoke this with so great an earnestness that I dropped my eyes before his—"nor is it such an impeachment as you would be willing to stand beside the block where he lay dead and say, 'I let him die because a score of years since a certain frail lady held him higher than her honour.'"

"Sir," I cried out at that, "have a care! The lady was my mother."

He started back as if I had shot him. "I knew not that," he said, and repeated it twice or thrice. "I had not thought it pressed so near. Forgive me; I should have guessed it from your manner, if not from his narration. But he was ever thus," he proceeded, half to himself. "It hath been so, since our acquaintance even." He stopped short, leaning back in his chair and then suddenly again forward: "If you desire it," he said, "I will go no further in this matter. He deserves no pity, but rather the last penalty of the law; and I make no question but that by our abstention, he will come into the way to receive it."

For awhile I could not speak, so wrought upon was I by this temptation, which was none other than that I had set before my father, and he rejected. At length I shook my head and without another word burst into tears. Mr. Skene waited until I was something recovered, settling his papers the while, and seeming to write upon his tablets; for which delicacy I thanked him in my heart. When next he spoke, he changed the direction of our discourse, inquiring pleasantly why I had troubled myself with so great a sum as five hundred pounds, in coin, when my own letters would equally have served.

"I know not where to store it safely," he said, "until such time as I shall be able to use it, or a part of it only, as I hope; which may be not for many days or weeks even. If you take my advice, Mr. Denis, you will restore it to Mr. Wall, whom I know very well, and beg him to disburse it to you, as you, or I rather, may require."

I blushed for my small knowledge that had led me into this laughable error, and although the attorney made little of it I perceived he thought but meanly of my dealings in exchange.

In the end I wrote a letter to Mr. Wall requiring him to do as Mr. Skene had advised, and requesting him further to fetch away my unlucky bags of gold, which in the meanwhile the attorney promised to bestow in one of the closets where his title-deeds and capital muniments were lodged for their better security against thieves and fire. This done, he told me to come to him again on the morrow and a little earlier than I had done that day; by which time he would have, ready drawn and fair writ, our petition to the Council praying for a fair trial at law of Mr. Botolph Cleeve that was now detained in the Tower during her Majesty's pleasure, and also to be furnished with the several counts of the indictment against him directed, which it lay upon us to be possessed of in order to the preparing of our answer thereto. I marvelled at the industry and rapid address of the man in these necessary (but by me unthought of) particulars, and told him that I wished I loved my uncle better that I might rejoice the more in the certainty of his release. He shook his head at that, however, saying that at the best 'twas not impossible the prisoner would be brought to trial even; and that for the event he could promise nothing, having indeed more fear of it than he had yet allowed.

I parted from him soon after, and it being then dinner time I was glad to find a tavern hard by the Temple Bar where I partook heartily of the excellent ordinary that is there maintained; and a little while afterwards Mr. Richard Malt entering (a son of the worthy hosier with whom I lodged), he entertained me with discourse of the comedies that were then playing at the public theatres, and of the famous players that were his friends; from all which I concluded that Mr. Richard would scarce make so diligent a hosier as his father, whom indeed he continually disparaged, terming him old baffle-head, and swearing he had never so much as heard of the "Arraignment of Paris" nor of "Campaspe" even; upon which I shrugged up my shoulders as who should say: Is such ignorance possible in this age? and determined to apply myself to some discreet person secretly, that should instruct me in all matters of the stage, without delay.

And so for that while did my uncle Botolph go clean out of my head.

CHAPTER VIII

A CHAPTER OF CHEATS

On the morrow I rose very contrite for the proneness of my mind towards pleasures, and calling to remembrance with an excessive sadness, that protestation of our bailiff's against stage-plays and ungodly shows. Indeed I began to fear lest Mr. Richard should prove altogether a perverter of my youth, and promised myself I would avoid his company henceforward, nor inquire

any further after Campaspe and the rest. Which resolved upon, I felt joyfuller (as a man's recovered virtue doth generally induce that comfortable feeling) and took pleasure in the thought that I was this day to relieve the oppressed, and succour them that were in prison: or at least one of them.

But all these salutary thoughts broke a-scatter, when, chancing to cast an eye across the street, I saw my gallant that I had withstood yesterday, again set in his barber's chair, where he indolently reclined; and the barber dancing before him like a second David with razor for timbrel. An instant desire took me, to know who my late adversary might be (so that in any future debate I might have a name to clap villain to) and bethought me of an easy way whereby to satisfy myself. Having patiently awaited his departure therefore, I stole downstairs and over the lane; mounted to the barber's, three steps at once, and was in his chair demanding to be shaved ere a man could tell three score.

"Your worship does me a great honour," cried the antick fellow, "and I will dispatch your business in a trice," which he did, my beard being, I confess, no great thing as yet.

"Your house is well spoken of," I said carelessly, when he had done, and I stood cleansing my chin at the basin.

"It is well attended," he replied, bowing, "and that by the best."

"Tell me some that use it," I said in a meditative manner, "it may hap that I know them."

"There is John a Nokes," replied the barber, with alacrity, "that is host of the Chequers; but he comes hither no more. And there is Mr. Nicholas Lovel, that promised me he would come on Wednesday last, though indeed he failed so to do; and there is moreover the Master of the Worshipful Company of Painter Stainers whom I used to meet with at their great hall in Trinity Lane."

"And him you shave," said I, seeing that he paused there.

"Nay, for he hath a singular great beard," he said, "and when he sits in Council amidst his Company of the Painter Stainers there is none appeareth more lofty and worshipful than he. I have been a serving man there," he added with a conspicuous pride, "and worn their livery, so that it behoveth me to speak well of them, and to pray for their continuance in prosperity."

"That is all as it should be," quoth I, "but for my question, good master barber, I do not find you have answered it."

"Cry you mercy," said the little barber with an innocent air, "but methought I had answered you full and fairly."

"Hath any come hither this morning," I demanded, "besides myself?"

"It is still very early, sir," he replied, rubbing his hands together the while, "but I hope at noon, now, by the which hour as you know, a man's beard commenceth to prick sorely..."

"Hold!" I cried, "I speak not of your hopes, but of your performance. Have you shaved any man this day?"

"Oh, none, sir," he replied, as though it were a thing indecent, and I shocked him.

"You lie," said I coolly, "for one went forth but now."

The barber: "Surely you mistake, sir ... but now I bethink me it was no doubt my lord of Pembroke."

"So then my lord of Pembroke serves my lord of Pembroke, belike," I answered, laughing sourly, "and wareth his cast suits, as did he that went hence."

I never saw a man so taken aback, and all his graces drooped about him like a sere garland.

"Come, sir," said I at length, in a great voice, for I was both wrathful at this fetch, and feared something behind it, "who is this black-a-vised tall man in brave apparel, that you shave each morning?"

"Oh, good Mr. Cleeve," he cried out trembling, but got no further, for I had him by the collar.

"Thou hast my name pat enough," said I, very low, and shifted my fingers to his throat, which I must have held pretty tight, seeing his face went black and his eyes started forth of it. "To the purpose," I proceeded and released my grasp somewhat.

He wrested himself loose and stood away gasping.

"Who is the tall man of the narrowed eyes and black complexion?" I demanded.

"I dare not tell," he whispered, and as it were shook that answer from his lips.

"He spies upon me, and uses thine house for that purpose," I said, and gathered certainty from the mere relation of my doubts. "But wherefore doth he so? That thou must tell me, master barber, and presently, else will I beat thee with thine own barber's staff."

I made as if to seize him again, but he backed off, howling.

"If you swear," he began, and seeing I paused, "you must swear by the Book," he said sharply, for I had squeezed his voice as thin as a knife; "and take what guilt of perjury should be mine in speaking."

I said I would vouchsafe not to reveal who it was that told me, but that was the extent of my promise; for the rest, I went in danger of my life, it seemed, or at least of my peace and quiet, which my absolute silence would but tend to confirm and increase.

The barber appeared satisfied of the justice of this, and having fetched out a Testament from a cupboard by the door, laid it open in my hand, but then again hesitated.

"This being so private a matter," he mumbled, "I will first bolt the door at the foot of the stair, and thereafter will let you into so great a secret"—he advanced his pinched and sallow face close to my own and let his voice fall so low that I could scarce hear him—"a secret so great that your blood shall run cold to hear it."

This coming so pat upon my suspicions, I promise you my blood ran cold at the sheer hint of it, and I suffered him to leave me and bolt the great door on the stair, in order to our more perfect privacy. And bolt the door indeed he did, but upon the wrong side of it; himself fleeing away in an extremity of apprehension lest (I suppose) I should get at his pulpy fat neck again and strangle him outright: which consideration moved him to put the door betwixt us while there was time; although I believe I should have burst it down despite its great thickness had it not been that the haberdasher's 'prentices heard me, and opened it from without. But the barber was clean gone by that, with his yellow face and his fulsome big secret and the devil to boot. The fellow's name was Pentecost Soper (so many syllables to so slight a man), and I have never set eyes on him since.

In no very good humour I returned to the family of the Malts and in ill case to be spoken to. Yet was I obliged to attend how Madam Malt's third (or fourth) daughter came to spill the small beer at breakfast yesterday, and the history being interrupted at the least a score of times by laughter and denials and (from the infant) by woeful lamentations, it fell out that I had concluded my meal while the tale still hung about the start, like an over-weighted galleon off a lee-shore; until at length Madam Malt (an indifferent mariner) confessed herself at fault, crying—

"But there! I will tell you all another time, Mr. Denis. It is a rare tale I warrant you, though Mistress Judith would have had me keep it secret; as a maid must have her secret, since time was a week gone in Genesis."

A day that had begun thus, with two secrets so necessary to be divulged as were the barber's and Mistress Judith's, was (had I known it) to issue in such horrid disclosures as were to change for me the whole course of my living, and indeed awhile to suspend upon a doubtful balance the very living itself. Consequent upon my promise to the old attorney, I made haste to repair to his lodging as early as I judged it proper to do so, and therefore after breakfast, it lacking then a little of nine o'clock, I put on my cloak and hat and set forth. One consideration I had as I walked, which had weighed heavily upon me since my last conference with him, and that was whether, and if so when, I should attempt to get speech of my uncle in prison. It seemed to me right, and indeed due both to my father and myself (looking to the hardships of my journey directly across England) that he should both know and thank us for the diligence we were using in his behalf; and it was to come at some means whereby I might procure this I had in view, that I intended to speak with Mr. Skene, no less than to conclude that we had already put in motion.

'Twas a foggy and thick morning, the weather having suddenly in the night passed from its extreme of cold into an opposite of mildness, so that the snow was almost everywhere thawed, and the streets foul and deep in mire. I was glad enough to turn out of Fleet Street, where every cart and passenger I met with left me more filthily besprent; so that twice or thrice I was like to have drawn upon some peaceable citizen that unawares had sent his vestige mud upon my new bosom. So hastening into the Inn yard I traversed it and was soon at Mr. Skene's door, where I knocked loudly and awaited him. The door was soon opened to me. "Is Mr. Skene within?" I asked; for he himself came not, as yesterday he had, but an ancient woman, in a soiled coif and apparel marvellous indecent, stood in the doorway.

"Lord! there be no Skenes here," she said in a harsh voice, "nor aught else but confusion and labour and sneaped wages, and they delayed. Skenes!" she ran on like a course of mill-water, "ay, Skenes and scalds and the quarten ague, and what doth the old fool live for, that was Ann by the Garlickhithe fifty year since, and worth nigh five-and-thirty marks or ever Tom Ducket beguiled her out of the virtuous way to the havoc of her salvation; with a murrain o' his like and small rest to their souls. A bright eye was mine then, master, that is dull now, and the bloom of a peach by the southward wall. But now 'tis age and a troubled mind that irks me, besides this pestering sort of knaves that live by the law. Ah! Garlickhithe was fair on a May morning once, lad, and the fairer, they told me, that Ann was fair featured who dwelt there."

I had suffered the old hag to rave thus far, out of mere astonishment. For how came it, I asked, that she who cleansed the chamber knew nothing of the man who occupied his business there. My brain faltered in its office, and I reeled under the weight of my fears.

"Who then uses these rooms?" I inquired when I could manage my words.

"None to-day nor to-morrow, I warrant, so foul it is," replied the old wife, and fell to work upon the floor again with her soused clouts, while she proceeded, "but the day after 'tis one Master Roman from Oxford removes hither to study at the law. Let him pay me my wages by the law, lawfully, as he shall answer for it at the Judgment, for I have been put to charges beyond belief in black soap (that is a halfpenny the pound in the shops at Bow), and let no one think I take less than fourpence by the day, for all I live on the Bank-side over against the Clink."

Without more ado I flung into the chamber past her, and running to the closet where my money was, had it open on the instant. But the first sight showed it to me quite bare. Nevertheless, I groped about the vacancy like a man mad (as I was indeed), crying out that I was infamously deceived and robbed of five hundred pound. Now searching thus distractedly, and without either method or precaution, I chanced to hit my leg a sore great blow against the iron of the latch, and opened my wound afresh which was not near healed, so that it bled very profusely. But this, although it weakened me, hindered me nothing, I continuing a great while after to turn all upside down and to bewail my loss and Skene's villainy that had undone me.

In the end, however, my fever of dismay abating a little or giving place to reason, I bethought myself of Mr. Wall, the goldsmith, to whom perhaps the attorney had thought it safer to convey the gold; and straightway therefore made off to his house on Cornhill, in a remnant of hope that my apprehensions should after all prove to be ill-grounded.

He saw me coming, I suppose, for he left his shop to greet me; but when he observed my infinite distress, he would listen to no word of mine until he had fetched forth a bottle of Rhenish, and made me drink of it. The good wine refreshed me mightily, as also, and indeed more, did the quiet behaviour of Mr. Wall, who counselled me wisely to rest myself first and after to confine myself to relating the bare matter without heat or flourish of any kind. "For out of an hot heart proceed many things inconvenient, as the Apostle plainly shewed," he said, "whereas out of a cold head proceedeth nothing but what is to the purpose, and generally profitable; at least in the way of business, Mr. Denis, I mean in the way of business, which is doubtless the cause of your honouring me again with your company."

Upon this I told him all, without passion, and directly as it had befallen. His face, as I spoke, gradually came to assume a deeper gravity, but he did not interrupt my narration, though I perceived that in part it was not altogether clear. When I had made an end he sat long, and then rising, went to his desk and returned to me with a paper, which was the same I had given to Skene on the yesterday.

"Do you acknowledge that for your hand, Mr. Denis?" he asked me briefly.

"It is mine," I replied wondering.

"Be pleased to read it," said he.

So in a trembling voice I read it aloud, word for word as I had writ it under Skene's direction; wherein I desired Mr. Wall that he would disburse to our attorney, as he should have need of them, such sums as should not in the total exceed five hundred pounds.

"And such was my intention," cried I, infinitely relieved to find all as I supposed it. But observing that the goldsmith regarded me something oddly, I added: "I mean that he required the gold, not in bulk, but in parcels from time to time; and as to that I took away yesterday, that you were to send for it again."

"You say not so here," said he very quietly.

But upon the instant he had said it, I perceived how the villain had used my letter, which was to double his booty already gotten; he having not restored the former sum I had meant this to be in the place of, but having even possessed himself of this treasure likewise. My inadvertent laxness of instruction (purposely so phrased by Skene himself) had given him the opportunity he sought, and I was now by my folly and misgiven trust, a thousand pounds upon the score in the goldsmith's books.

There was no occasion for argument betwixt us, where all was manifest enough, nor yet, by him, for empty expressions of regret, seeing he had but acted punctually upon my demand. For his pity, I had it, I knew, though Mr. Wall refrained himself from any expression of it. But another feeling he had, I could see, which was a doubt whether my father's credit was sufficient to bear this inordinately increased burden; nay, whether he would not repudiate the note I had so ineptly set hand to, staying his conscience on the satisfaction of his proper bond. I had my answer to that ready, had Mr. Wall proposed the question; but to his honour he did not. All he put in contribution to our debate related to Skene's presentation of my note, which being fairly written and legally expressed, he had neither reason nor scruple for withholding the loan. As for the bearer of the message, he was a gentleman of a very noble quiet manner, said Wall, and to this

description of Skene I could not but consent.

In fine there being nought left to say, save on my part that I would immediately write an account of all to my father (whom I would not otherwise commit) we parted at the door, and I returned slowly through the great unfriendly City, sick at heart. Now I had not proceeded far upon my way when it came upon me that I would seek out my old tutor, Mr. Jordan; for I greatly yearned after comfort and kindly speech, which I knew would be his to give, upon the first hint of my misfortune. By good hap I remembered the lodging where he had said he might be found, which was in a room of a great house called Northumberland House in the parish, and over against the Church, of St. Katherine Colman; which mansion having fallen from its first estate (as many other within the City have done also) is now parted among such as do pay rent for their use of chambers therein, as few or many as they please.

Thither then I inquired out direction; but whether it were by reason of the intricacy of manifold streets and alleys, or of the mist that from first overcasting the sky had now descended and thickly muffled up even the considerable buildings, or else of the opening again of my wound that sorely sucked away my strength; I say whatsoever the cause were, I soon confessed myself at a stand and quite bewildered. And moreover to make bad worse, I perceived myself to have run into a foul and steep lane, of a most unsavoury stench; the way being nought else than a kennel pestered with garbage. None seemed to be inhabiting this unclean byway, or at the least not occupying their business in it; but the doors stood shut all, and the windows so guarded as one might think the plague had visited the place and died for lack of life to feed on.

Meanwhile the fog seemed to mitigate something of its blackness before me; and this it was, I suppose, that drove me still forward rather than by returning upon my steps to encounter the worst of it that yet hung like a pall between the desolate houses.

At length I issued at the bottom end into a sort of wide place or yard (for I could not rightly tell which it were, so dim all lay and I so confused by pain), but by a certain saltness in the air I guessed it might be near beside the river, and perhaps led down to one of the wharves or hithes thereupon. But that I was out of all bearing I knew, and the knowledge sank my courage utterly, so that I could no more, but sat down upon a stock by the wayside and wept for very bitterness.

I remember that I said it over like a creed an hundred times that I was alone, and although I said it not, it beat upon my brain that I was very near to death.

Soon after I seemed to stumble, and perhaps did indeed sink down from the timber I rested on; whereat, opening my eyes hastily, I saw face to face with me, a maid with the countenance of an angel, and an infinite compassion in her eyes. But the fever altogether had me then, so that what I report I may not now verify; yet methought she took me by the hands and raised me, saying (as to herself), "Dear heart, how chill he is," and then, "Lo! the hurt he hath, poor lad! and it not stanch'd but bleeding."

After that I must have swooned, for I remember no more; or at least not such as I believe did happen, though from the cloud of wild dreams that began to beset me there drew together as it were a masque of half-truth in a scene not wholly fantastick. For I stood again in the midst of a long and steep street, very dark and tempestuous, of which the houses falling together suddenly with a great noise formed a sort of rift or tunnel by which I might escape; and at the end of this length of ruin I perceived a pale blue light burning, to the which painfully groping my way I saw it was borne by a maid that came toward me; and all this while I heard a mighty rushing as of water, and voices mingled with it, loud and laughing. Then as the lass with the light approached me nearer I knew her for Madam Malt's third (or fourth) daughter, and the rushing sound I perceived to be the stream of small beer she had spilt; and the laughter grew and increased horribly and the light went out. And so, at length, I fell away into an inevitable and profound forgetfulness.

CHAPTER IX

TELLS HOW I CHANGED MY LODGING AND LOST MY MARE

I mind me of a sad play once I saw, that is played now in a duke's palace, and after in a glade within a forest, where one of the persons, a noble youth whom his presumption hath caused to be banished from his mistress, saith, "Hope is a lover's staff; walk hence with that." The play is called a comedy because it ends upon delight, yet after a world of heaviness encountered, and such thwarting of wills, as makes one weep to behold. And perhaps when all's said, we do wrong to name anything of this world tragical, seeing we cannot look to the end of it, and indeed sometimes (one must suppose) a play is but half played out here, and that the sad half with all the tears. 'Tis another hand manages the curtain, and, alas! that the too soon dropping of it hath made many to say in their hearts, "There is no God."

Much in this kind occupied my brain, when at length I was partially recovered after my continued and grave sickness. I still lay abed, taking babes' food and physick, and asking no questions, being yet too weak for that, and so that I were left in peace, careful for nought else. My body might have been another's, so little did it appear to encumber me; a certain lightness and withal a sense of freedom from the common restraints of life possessed me. I had, as it were, overpassed the lists of experience, and become truly a new creature. In this security and enfranchisement of my spirit I found an infinite, and my only, pleasure in speculating upon the meaning of things I had never so much as called in question hitherto, and then first perceived how wide a gulf lay betwixt that a man may be and that a man must do. I saw all bad but what rests still in idea, and bitterly condemned the never-ending hurry of effort and business by which the course of life is fouled, upward almost to her source.

This exalted mood lasted I think about a week, during which time I had got to so high a pitch of philosophy as I cannot now think on for blushing; settling my notions after my own fashion very conveniently, and mighty intolerant of those currently held. But afterwards, that is, about the tenth day of my clear mind, I suffered myself to descend some way toward common sense, which to my surprise I found not so disagreeable as might have been. Certain 'tis I still saw all in a mist of phantasy, and different from what it truly was; but, notwithstanding, it marked my first motion of health, and a recovery of my heritage in the world. Once set on this road, I soon grew to be restive of the remnant of malady which yet kept me weak, and began to fear I should ne'er be able again. At times I would be melancholy and fret by the hour at my pitiful lot; then again would fall to piecing together the events that had preceded this my disease, but could not get them orderly, or at the least, not whole.

At such a time it was that suddenly and without premonition, my memory recovered the picture of that fair maid bending over me and murmuring, "*Dear heart!*" I leapt up in bed on the instant, and would have had on my clothes before any could hinder me, had not my impotence held me without need of other prevention, and I sank back all dismayed.

Henceforward my mind had matter enough and to spare with the thoughts of her alone. If I desired life now it was that I might continue to think of her and of her manner of saying, "*Dear heart! how chill he is!*" and "*Lo, the hurt he hath, poor lad!*" I swore I would not exchange those two sentences for a barony, nor the look that went with them for a prince's thanks. That word of thanks brought me to a wonder how I might compass the tendering of my thanks to the maid herself, whom (now I recollected it) I knew not so much as the name of, nor yet her place of lodging. This consideration greatly staggered me, and had nigh sent me into a fever again. But I told myself that it was very certain I must find her in time (and being young, time seemed to be a commodity inexhaustible), and so for that while the fever held off. However, I had still intervals of despair which were black enough; but hope ever ensuing and at each return in larger measure, upon the balance I found comfort. And thus, responding to the text of the old play I have before set down (though I had not then seen it played), I also might have cried, "Hope is the lover's staff," and with that to lean on I determined to walk thence without further delay.

Such were the interior passages (to call them so) of my sickness that was now quite passed; for, with hope at length steadfast with me, it is clear I lacked nothing of my perfect health, excepting only what strong meat and sunlight would soon bring.

And so it was I felt myself ready to go upon a certain discovery I had in mind (and did presently put into execution), which was to determine precisely where in the world I might be! For the whiles I had lain idle this question had intermittently perplexed me: my chamber being very narrow and low, and bearing, I thought, small likeness to my room in Mr. Malt's house, of which the window was a large and latticed one, whereas this I now had was little and barred. My meals, too, were served by a woman I could not remember to have seen; a pleasant, bustling body, with a mouth widened by smiling and eyes narrowed by shrewd discernment. But what troubled me more than all was a persistent sound of water lapping about the house, which led me to suppose I was somehow lodged upon an island; or else in the prison beside the Fleet River—though I thought this could not well be.

Using more precaution, then, than I had done previously, I got out of my bed, and sitting on the edge of it, was soon half dressed. The exercise fatigued me but slightly, and as soon as I had my clothes on completely I ventured across the floor (that was about an ell in width), and leaned forth between the bars of the window...

I burst into laughter at the easy resolution of my doubts, which the first view thence afforded me. For I was upon London Bridge, in one of the houses that are builded thereupon, on either side of it. Below me lay the narrow bridge-way that is spanned across by divers arches (which be houses too), and is full, at most hours, as it was when I beheld it, of people that cheapened stuffs and trinkets at the booths there set up, or else hastened on, north or south continuously.

'Twas the strangest sight by far I had yet seen; this little market-world above the waters, so straitened and fantastick, and withal so intent and earnest upon its affairs, with never a thought to the great shining river (its very cause and origin) that flowed scarce two fathom beneath it. I stood awhile fairly entranced by the prospect, and followed with my eyes every motion and frolick adventure. Thus, there would be a fine lady that bought an infinite deal of scarlet cloth, and a pannier-ass that, in turning, struck it from her arm and unrolled the length of it, so that the ass continued on her way grave as any judge, with her hoofs upon the cloth like a spread carpet,

while my lady stood by, bewailing her loss. Then there would be a company of halberdiers that went by at a great swinging stride to quell some riot (I heard one say) in Southwark by the Bear-garden. By and by, with more noise, comes there a score of mariners that had left their galley in the Pool, and after their late hardships on the sea seemed gone into an excess of jollity, and sacked the shops for toys. Grey-haired mercers that stood and conversed in groups, and coltish apprentices in flat caps and suits of blue I noted, and otherwhiles dancers and mountebanks with a host of idle folk following.

So engrossed indeed was I, that I did not hear the woman, that in the meantime had entered my chamber, calling upon me to return to my bed; until at length she enforced her command with a buffet on my shoulder.

"Thou art but a graceless lad to be chilling thy marrow at an open window," she cried; yet I could see she was rather pleased than wrathful to find me there.

"Nay, I am whole again, mistress," I answered quickly, and then looking forth again, cried, "But who be those that go by in a troop, with great bonnets on and red coats?"

"Why, who but the Queen's yeomen?" she said, and stood beside me to catch a sight of them. "Ay, and there goes my husband's brother at their head, their sergeant, and a proper soldier too, that hath seen service abroad."

"Whither go they?" I asked, breathless for the pleasure I took in this brave show.

"To the Tower, lad. But now, back to your couch, or at least to a chair, for the goodman would speak with you."

"How came I to this house?" I asked, when I had left the window, "for I remember nought of the matter."

"Enough of words," she laughed pleasantly. "And enough too that you be here, and your rantings and ravings o'er. I tell you we were like to have had the watch about us for harbouring a masterless rogue, so impudently did your sick tongue wag; and that at all hours of the night too."

She went away soon after, still laughing; for which I blessed her; it being a comfortable exercise to laugh, and as comforting a sound to hear. I was full dressed, and expecting the good Samaritan her husband a while ere he came, which when he did, I found he was a man of brief speech and one to be trusted. He began by asking how I did, and when I told him I was quite recovered and thanked him for his charity, he put up his hand.

"I did no more than your hurt required," he said. "'Twas fortunate we had this room to lay you in, and a good physician near at hand upon the Bridge. But now tell me (for I think it necessary I should know it) how came you wounded?"

I told him all simply, seeing no reason why I should not, and the whole affair of my uncle; to which he listened in silence, his eyes on my face.

"My name is Gregory Nelson," he said, when I had done, "and of this Bridge, where I have my lodging, I am one of the wardens. You may bide here as long as you list, Master Cleeve, seeing that by this hellish robbery of Skene's you should be nigh penniless, as you be also left without friends to help you, unless it be that Mr. Malt accounts himself so."

"I pay him for my lodging," I said, "but cannot claim any friendship with him."

"Have you any goods left at his house?" he asked me, a little as though he smiled inwardly.

"Some spare apparel I have there," I replied, "and a parcel of linen or so, besides my mare."

"Seeing that you have been absent so long," said Master Nelson, "and without warning, you may chance to find your chattels sold under a sheriff's warrant against charges proved. Nay, that is lawful," he added, seeing I made a motion of dissent, "and indeed you have been near three weeks a truant."

This disclosure shocked me, and particularly when I reflected that my father had no knowledge of anything that had occurred to me, nor yet where I now lay. Two things I did therefore with all speed, first writing a full account of the attorney, how he had robbed me, and of my illness so much as I thought necessary; and secondly, going to Fetter Lane in the hope to recover my goods. On this errand the warden would by no means suffer me to go alone, and I for my part was very glad of his arm to lean upon, as I was also of his companionship by the way.

In discourse I found him to be something more blunt than complacent, and moreover to have set his notions, as it were, by the clock of his profession. Thus, I chancing to speak of the great mansions of the nobles that were frequent upon the bank about the Bridge-end, and making mention of their power that lived therein, he answered me pretty roundly that I was out.

"If there be two or three wise heads amongst them," said he, "there be two or three score otherwise disposed. 'Tis a common error, master, to belaud all alike and merely because their honours be similar. But I say, let her Grace ennoble any the least considered merchant on

Change, and nought should go worse for it, but rather the better. I say further, 'tis in the shops and among the great Companies of the City that England's worthies are now to be found, and her advancement lieth less in the Great Council to be debated on, than in Cheape to be accomplished. But enough!" said he, with a little shake of his head. "I am a servant of this City, and perhaps it is for that I have a bias of thinking well of what the City doth. Yet few will be bold enough to deny that we owe much to our great citizens and merchants, as to Sir Richard Whittington in the old days, and later to Sir Thomas Gresham, that very praise-worthy knight; not forgetting Mr. Lamb that brought sweet water in a conduit to Holborn; nor Mr. Osborne, which was Mayor two year since, and now is Governor of the famous Turkey Company by charter of the Queen established."

"And what of the Queen's Grace herself?" quoth I, for my humour was not a little tickled at this decrying of those in high estate, whose wisdom and guidance we be commonly taught to extol. But at the Queen's name Mr. Nelson had his cap off immediately.

"God bless her," he said very reverently, "and give her a mind to perceive her own and her realm's, true good. And so He doth!" he broke off vehemently, "and hath made her to be the greatest merchant of them all! Ask Master Drake, else, whose partner and fellow-adventurer she was when he sailed from Plymouth with but five poor ships, and returned thence with such treasure of the Spaniards as it took two whole days to discharge upon the quay."

In such converse we walked on, I straitly considering of these things he told, whether indeed those mighty lords, whose names were in everybody's mouth, were truly of less account than men trading in silk and furs and spices, as he would have me believe; and whether, also, overmuch service with the City Sheriffs had not worn out an esteem for greater folk in this honest stout warden of London Bridge.

When at length we arrived at my old lodging in Fetter Lane, Mr. Nelson said he would not enter, but would await me in the street, and so I went in alone. I found Madam Malt in a chamber behind the shop, with her daughters, and very busy upon a great piece, of needlework. She looked up swiftly as I entered, but never a word she spake.

"I come to make account of my prolonged absence," said I, something out of countenance for this unlooked for rebuff.

"Judith," said her mother, sharply, "go see whether my babe wakes yet; Allison do this, and Maud do that," said she, and so emptied her bower of the maids at a word, and left me standing.

"Lord!" quoth I low to myself, "I am come into the garden of the Hesperides surely; yet I wist not that the Dragon was mother of them." But aloud I said, "I am bound to thank you for the hospitality you extended to me, Madam, the which I cannot well repay."

"I thought no less," replied the lady, without raising her eyes from her work, "and therefore made application for distraint, which being granted, I sold such stuff as you thought fit to leave and was not past laundering."

"But there was my mare too," I cried.

"Ay, the poor jade," said she, "the knacker put a price upon her, but it reached not to the value of a feed of oats, so I cried quits and kept her."

"Then you have her yet?" quoth I.

"I have her not," quoth she, "for I gave her a gift to the parson of St. Dunstan's Church that hath been very full of encouragement to us in our trouble."

"Your trouble, Madam?" I began, but she proceeded with a terrible quietness—

"A preached a singular comfortable sermon two Sundays after your stealing off, upon the text, 'Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us,' as would have melted the most shameless, Mr. Denis."

"Let us hope it did then," said I, pretty tired of this oblique attack.

"He was not of the congregation, sir," she blazed out, her eyes on mine.

"He was," I retorted, "for he both preached the sermon and hath my mare. But he shall give her me again, or else I will take her by force."

"Ah, you would despoil the Church then, you heretick Turk!" cried the lady in a thin, hissing voice that befitted the Dragon I had formerly called her in my thoughts. "Was it not enough that you should creep into a Christian household and steal all peace therefrom? What of the looks you were ever casting upon my tender Judith, and she so apt at her catechism and forward in works of grace. Your mare, quotha! What of her pretty beseeching ways that no man hath seen but saith she is rather Ruth than Judith—ay, and shall find her Boaz one day, I tell you, in despite of your heathen wiles and treachery. So, fetch away your beast from a churchman's stall, 'tis easy done every whit as get a simple maid's heart; and then off and abroad, while she weeps at home, poor lass! that is so diligent a sempstress withal, and her father's prop of his age."

Whilst she was delivering this astonishing and very calumnious speech, Madam Malt had arisen from her chair and now stood close above me, wringing her hands that yet kept a hold of her piece of needlework, and shaking with rage. She was a marvellous large woman, with a face something loose-skinned about the jaw, and of a buff colour that mounted to a brownness in the folds and wrinkles. Her voice, as I have said, was very dragonlike, and her whole aspect and presence had something of an apocalyptic terribleness that seemed to draw the clouds about her as a garment. I see her yet in my dreams and awake shuddering.

Once or twice I strove to interpose a denial in the flood of her indictment, and to exonerate myself from her load of false charges, but could nowise make myself heard, or at least heeded, and so gave it over. Indeed, how all would have ended I know not, had not the infant in a lucky hour awakened and lamentably demanded sustenance; whereupon Judith running in (who I am persuaded had got no further than behind the door-chink), the lady's thoughts were by the intelligence that her daughter brought, most happily diverted from me. Judith regarded me with one wistful glance, and then in the wake of the Dragon as she swept from the room, this last of the Hesperides departed from me for ever.

I stood some time very downcast, knowing not what to think, when the door opening a small space, Mr. Richard's head was thrust in, his eyes winking with merriment.

"So you have returned to us, Mr. Prodigal," he whispered, "and have heard moreover how we take your leaving us so without ceremony as you did. Nay, be not melancholy, man," he went on, coming beside me and laying a hand upon my shoulder, "for we that use the playhouse and the jolly tavern understand these things well enough. No need for words where a nod sufficeth. But the women would have no men roysters, good souls! nor hardly allow us the stretch of a lap-dog's leash to gambol in. Eh!" he sang out in a pretty good mean voice, although from his late drinking not well controlled:

"Better place no wit can find
Cupid's yoke to loose or bind.'

But come you with me, Mr. Denis, one of these nights; for we be much of an age, and should sort handsomely together, if I mistake not."

It lies upon my conscience now, that I neither thanked him for his intention, which I am sure was friendly meant; nor yet kicked him out of door for his manifest profligacy. But as it was, I went straight past him, looking him full in the face the while, and out of the house. His cheeks turned a sort of yellow white at this insult and at the surprise of it, while his hand slipped to his belt for the sword he commonly wore, but he had it not by him, as indeed he was all unready and his whole dress disordered after such a night spent as he supposed I should be willing to join him in another, the like of it.

I found Mr. Nelson without, who leaned very thoughtful against a post by the door, and by my countenance I showed him plain enough the upshot of that business.

"'Twas no more than I conceived likely," he said. "These hired lodgings be all one."

Finding nothing convenient to return, I held my peace; and so we walked slowly along Fleet Street, and over the hill by Paul's, to my new abode upon the Bridge.

CHAPTER X

HOW I SAW AN ENEMY AT THE WINDOW

My father replied about ten days after to the letter I had writ him, with another of so sweet a tenour (and yet shrewd enough in the business parts of it), as reading it, I could have gone on my knees to honour him. He made it clear at the outset that my bad bargain must at all hazards be ratified, and Mr. Wall's loan in full repaid. This he undertook to do, saying he had dispatched advices already to the goldsmith, in which he acknowledged the debt, promising moreover to acquit himself of it as soon as he could.

"But at this present, Denis," he wrote, "to do so is not altogether easy, though I hope 'twill not be long ere I shall compass it. And in order to that end I have retired from the Court into a more modest dwelling (as you will perceive by the subscription) in the hamlet of Tolland, having been fortunate in letting at a fair rent the Court to your old companion, Sir Matthew Juke, who, his new mansion in Devizes not at all answering to his expectation, was at the very delivery of your letter hot to be rid of it; and therefore upon my first making offer of our house to him upon leasehold, he very eagerly assented to my proposals."

But if the notion of that thin-blooded knight established in our old home greatly irked me, this

which followed caused me an infinite deal of sorrow; for I was to learn of a secret malady of my father's which he had long been subject to, but had never before disclosed, although it had grievously increased upon him even to the time of my departure from the Combe, so that he sometimes had doubted of his being then alive or, at the least, able to disguise any longer from me his affliction. "Had it been otherwise," he proceeded, "be well assured that upon your first motion of distress I would myself have come to you, as indeed I would yet do (should Providence see fit to restore me) were it not for the too great dispenes of the journey. For I make of it no mystery, Denis, but speak with you openly as to one of man's estate, when I affirm that the charges in this affair be somewhat larger than with our late accustomed easiness we may satisfy. And this bringeth me to the gravest part yet, and that which most I loathe to make mention of, seeing it is not otherwise to be accomplished than in our continued severance. Notwithstanding between friends (as we are) plain speech is best, and I therefore say that I have a mind you should engage yourself in some occupation of trade in London; but such as yourself shall elect to follow; and to you I leave the choosing thereof. I will that you continue prosecuting our original design (I intend your uncle's deliverance) as you shall have the opportunity and I the means. So much sufficeth for this time, and therefore I bid you farewell,

"Who am your well-wishing and most fond father,
"HUMPHREY CLEEVE."

(Followed the sign of the Inn he lay at, which I remembered to have once noted going through Tolland, and passed it by as a place of mean and beggarly entertainment.)

This letter I overread a score of times, and each time with the more admiration that a man of so principal a dignity and so observed, could find it in his mind thus voluntarily to lay by his honourable estate and depart a mere exile from his ancient home; and that with never a murmur of self pity; but quitting all simply and with a grand negligence, as a man might do that puts up a fair-bound book he has been reading, but now hath concluded.

'Twas sometime afterward I let my thought stay upon the meaning of that he had writ of myself; and a longer time ere I could allow the plain truth that we were come into an absolute poverty. I think not well to set down all the shifting considerations that moved me then, nor the weight of humiliation I undertook at this lapse and derogation from our name. But all my dreams brake utterly asunder, and my hopes that had until now sustained me in pride. To be penniless I found a greater evil far than to be sick, and in the first rage of my disappointment, I quite lost all remembrance of my father (sick too) in the wayside tavern I had myself disdained to enter.

I was aloft in my room in the warden's house when this letter was delivered to me in the afternoon of the day following my passage with the hosier's wife, and I remember how I sat by the window looking across the Bridge street, betwixt the tall houses, out upon the River and the great galleys in the Pool, and upon that square grey shadow of the Tower. All I saw appeared to me so large and unfettered, and to be spread so comely in the soft blue air that I could hardly bear to reduce my thoughts to the narrowness and cooped discipline of my own future. The eulogy which Mr. Nelson had seen fit to pronounce upon merchants and traders troubled my spleen not a little at the remembrance of it; and so out of measure did my resentment run that I stood by the mullion gnawing at my nails and casting blame hither and thither, so as none hardly escaped being made a party (as the attorneys called it) to the case of poverty into which I was fallen. Amongst other follies I allowed, was this: that I dared not now seek out my old schoolmaster, lest from the height of his new soldier's calling he should rail down upon me in Latin, which tongue seemeth to have been expressly fashioned for satire.

But such a resolution extended no further than to Mr. Jordan, for I still cherished and held fast to the hope of discovering the maid and of thanking her, as was necessary (or at least upon the necessity of it I would admit no argument); and also of acquainting her of my present and intolerable trouble. That she were, like enough, engaged in some trade, as well as I, I never so much as conceived possible, but drew in advance upon her store of pity for my singular misfortune.

The day grew towards evening as I stood thus, debating of these matters, and the River came over all misted and purple and very grand. Here and there were lights too that went thwarting it, they being the great lanterns of the wherries and barges that continually traversed the stream; and the fixed lights were these set upon the hithes and stairs, or else aloft in the houses by the bankside. 'Twas a wondrous melancholy sight, methought, and seemed a sort of blazon and lively image of surrender, this decline of day into dark. For boylike I omitted the significance of the lights burning, and received the night only into my soul.

"Mr. Denis, will't please you come below?" came a shrill voice athwart these reflections and startled me.

"Is it supper?" I asked something petulantly, for I hated to be disturbed.

"Nay, Master Dumps, 'tis the goodman's brother, the Queen's yeoman, that would speak with your little worship."

Something in her manner forbade my gainsaying her, so I went down into the great kitchen where we commonly sat, and there found the warden, with the yeoman his brother in his scarlet

apparel as I had before seen him; his halberd set up in a corner where it took the glitter of the fire, and his velvet bonnet laid on the table. Mr. Nelson at once presented him to me, upon which he rose up with a salutation in the military manner, very stately, and then sat down without a word.

"I have ventured so far to meddle in your proper affairs, Mr. Cleeve," said Gregory Nelson, "as to inquire of master sergeant here in what sort your uncle is entreated in the Tower, as also whether the Constable would likely grant you access to him, he lying under so weighty an indictment."

"You have done kindly," I said, and told them both of the letter I had received from my father, in which he had iterated his desire I should yet attempt his brother's release, or rather the procuring of his trial to that end. The sergeant nodded once or twice the while I spoke in this fashion, but did not interrupt me. Nevertheless Madam Nelson, who perceived that something was forward of which she had heard never a word, could scarce constrain herself to await the conclusion, which when she had heard, she burst in—

"Ah, truly, Gregory Nelson," said she, setting a fist upon either hip and speaking very high and scornful, "when Providence gave thee me to wife, He gave thee a notable blessing, and one of a pleasant aptitude to discourse, yet not beyond discretion, as we women have a name (though without warrant) to go. But in giving thee to me, He furnished me with nought but an ill-painted sign of the Dumb Man, so out of all reason dost thou hide and dissemble thy thoughts. Why, I had as lief be married to Aldgate Pump as to thee, for all the news thou impartest, or comfort got of thee by the mouth's way; which was sure the way intended of Him that made us with mouths and a comprehension of things spoken. Yea, a very stockfish took I to mate in thee, Gregory, whose habitation should be in Fishmongers Row, on a trestle-stall of Billingsgate."

The cogency of this speech of the warden's wife, great as it might be in abuse, was yet so small in its effect upon her husband, that I was fain to relate to the poor woman (who loved me for it ever after) the whole story of Botolph Cleeve's imprisonment in the Tower, which her husband had (so far prudently) kept silence upon.

"Poor man," cried she pitifully when she knew all, "ah, these poor solitary prisoners! I marvel how good men can find it in their hearts to guard them from escaping thence. Were I a yeoman now," she added, with an eye askance upon the sergeant and after upon her husband, "I would suffer all such freely to depart thence without challenge, as desired it, or at least such as led a Christian life and loved their wives."

"Is my uncle kindly dealt with there?" I demanded of the yeoman, but to that question he hesitated so long in his reply that I cried—

"If he be not, 'tis ill done, so to use a man that I hope to prove innocent of this charge."

"'Tis because he is innocent belike, poor soul," quoth Madam Nelson, "that they do so use him. In this world it hath ever been the virtuous whose faces are ground."

"Do you know where his dungeon is situate?" I asked, starting to my feet as though I would go (and meant to) at once to the Lord Constable, "or if not you, then who doth know it?"

"None doth," he answered me slowly, "because he is not in the Tower."

"What mean you?" cried I, as soon as I could for astonishment. "My uncle is not a prisoner there?"

"I trow otherwise!" retorted the warden's wife, who saw her pity ill bestowed if she believed him.

"There hath been none of his name apprehended, nor none of his description," said the yeoman.

"Then where is he?" I cried out bitterly, for I well enough perceived that all that great sum which we had been enticed into spending was for nothing lost, and ourselves beggars upon the mere fetch and cozening imposture of a knave.

"Where he may be I know not," said the Bridge warden, before the yeoman could answer me, "but I think you came as near to him as might be, when you gave your money into the hands of Mr. John Skene."

"Skene—Skene! He—the attorney? You suppose him to be my uncle?" I gasped forth the words as one drowning.

He nodded. "It maketh the matter simple to suppose so," he said, "which else is hardly to be understood."

Perplexed as I then was, I could scarce believe him, albeit whatever survey of the matter I made, I confessed the indications directed me, after infinite wanderings, ever back to the same point, which was that my uncle had manifestly lied in writing that he was kept prisoner, and by

our belief in that lie, who but himself did he mean should benefit? Yet unless he were indeed Skene (and so received our twice five hundred pounds) he had gained nothing upon that throw, but lost it to another more cunning than he, which were a thing I thought scarcely to be credited.

The weight of this disclosure so whelmed me that I could do nor say no more, but throwing my arm along the table, had my face down in it to hide the tears which would have course, try as I might to restrain them. Good Dame Nelson, all blubbered too, leant over my shoulder to comfort me, although her sympathy must have been something doubtfully extended to one that wept because his uncle was proved to be not a prisoner, but in the full enjoyment of his liberty.

But after continuing in this case some while there came into my mind some considerations of revenge, and they greatly comforting me, I sat upright in my chair, and begged the tolerance of the two men for my late weakness.

"Nay, say no more of it, lad," replied Mr. Nelson, "for no man liketh to think of a villain at large, and in particular, if the villain be of the family."

And so, calling to his wife to serve up the supper, and to us to seat ourselves about the board, he did his best to make me forget, for that while, my troubles.

However I could eat but little, though I made appearance as if I relished the wholesome steaming food; and not I only, but the sergeant-yeoman also, I soon perceived, did eat sparingly, and as one whose mind was absent from the feast. And soon he ceased altogether, laying aside his knife and platter and clearing his throat with a sort of sob (which was the prelude to as moving a tale as ever I heard) and resting his great bearded cheek upon his hand.

"Why, what ails you, master sergeant?" cried Dame Nelson in quick compassion; but it was to his brother, and not her, that he replied—

"You spake truly, Gregory," said he, "when you told Master Cleeve that no man loveth to think of a villain at large if he be of one's own family. But you spake it to my shame."

"I intended it not so, truly," said the warden very earnestly.

"I know it," said the yeoman, "but yet when you brought in the family it touched me pretty near. Stay!" he said, when he saw that Gregory would have interposed some further excuse. "You have not altogether forgot my boy, Jack, that went a shipman in the Green Dragon upon a voyage into Barbary, two year since."

"I remember him very well," answered the warden, while his wife whispered me that he had the finest pair of grey eyes you did ever see.

"I have received certain news of him but this very day," continued the yeoman, "which hath quite taken away my peace, and set my mind amidst perilous thoughts."

"A mercy on us!" cried the woman, starting up from the table; "what words be these, master sergeant?"

"He hath turned Turk," said the yeoman, in a thick voice.

"As being enforced thereto, God help him!" said Mr. Nelson; but his brother shook his head.

"'Twas his own will to do so," he said, and rose from the bench; whereupon we all rose too, though without well knowing wherefore, save that we were strangely affected by his narrative. The yeoman went over to the corner where his great pike rested, and returning thence with it, he stood for some while quite still and upright (in such posture as a soldier doth upon guard), his eyes upon the bright fire which threw the distorted huge shadow of him against the ceiling. At the last, in a small voice, as though he spake not to us, he said—

"From my youth I have been known for a God-fearing man, and one not given over to lightness. To the Queen I pledged my faith once, and have kept it. Had I so much as in one point failed of my word, I would willingly and without extenuation answer the same. And no less have I dealt with Heaven—faithfully, as befits a soldier. Then how comes it that one born flesh of my flesh should do me this shame? Is it my reward and wages for stout service? Nay, had Heaven a quarrel with me, I would abide it. Had I defaulted, I should look to be punished in mine own person. But to defame me through my son; to fasten the reproach and scorn of a renegade upon me because he cowardly threw aside his faith; I say I like not that, nor think not that Heaven hath dealt with me as my captain would." He stayed his speech there quite suddenly, and took up his black bonnet from the table, we all marvelling the while, as much at his words as at the apostasy that had occasioned them. But this speech that ensued, which was spoken with an infinite simplicity as he was going, moved us who listened to him, I think, more than all the rest. "And yet," said he, "there be armies in heaven;" and with that he left us and went his way.

The evening being very chill we were glad enough of an excuse to build up a cheerful great fire on the hearth, and to sit before it for comfort, although in truth we were sad at heart and but little inclined to conversation.

I think 'twas about eight o'clock, and quite dark without, when something happened to divert our thoughts from the yeoman for that night at least, while for the rest I doubt if the yeoman himself were more staggered when he heard of his son's error than I, when, chancing to lean back a little from the heat of the fire (and so turned my head aside), I saw, pressed close to the lattice panes of the window, a face, long and sallow, and with thick black curls clustered about it, which I knew on the instant belonged to that enemy of mine that had secretly spied upon me before, and now with an evident joy discovered me again. But even as I looked he was gone; and I, with an exclamation of wrath, caught up my sword and cap, and sprung out into the street to follow him.

CHAPTER XI

IS SUFFICIENT IN THAT IT TELLS OF IDONIA

There was a press of people about the door as I went forth, which so hindered my passage as Mr. Nelson, who had started up in alarm of my sudden departure, caught me ere I had run a dozen paces, and would have reasoned me into returning. But I would not be led thus nor listen either, and so telling him 'twas a man I greatly desired to have speech of that I followed, shook myself free, and jostled hardly through the throng. To my joy I could yet see the tall figure of my unknown adversary about a stone's cast ahead of me and walking swiftly. But the main part of the shops being now closed, there was but scant light to serve me in my chase, and more than once I feared I had lost him or ever he got half-way to the new tower by the Bridge end. Nevertheless, by that time I had arrived pretty near, and, indeed, soon trod so close in his steps, that I could hear the jar of his hanger against the buckle of his belt; but it being no part of my design to accost him in so public a place, I fell back a little, and when he passed under the bow of the gate-house, where a pair of great lanterns hung suspended, I made as if to tighten a lace of my shoe, bending low, lest upon a sudden return he should observe me; which, however, he did not, but went straight forward. I had supposed it probable he would go off to the left hand, that is, westward, towards Baynards Castle, wherein, as I already knew, he had his lodging; and was greatly surprised, therefore, when, a little way up the street, he turned sharply to the right hand, behind St. Magnus' Church, where the street goes down very steep, and is moreover ill paved and (at such an hour) exceeding darksome. The gallant descended this hill at a great pace, while I for my better concealment followed him somewhat more tardily as being secure of his escape thence, where there was but a scantling of folk about the lane from whom he was very easily to be distinguished, they being ill-habited and of the common sort. In such manner we proceeded a great way, passing in our course by two or three alleys that led down to the Thames, of which I could perceive the gleam of the water, yet so narrowly visible that the sight of it was as a blade of steel hung up between the houses. All this quarter of the City I was perfectly ignorant of, my knowledge being limited to such parts of it only as I had traversed betwixt the Bridge and Fetter Lane, if I except Serjeant's Inn in Fleet Street, which to my cost I had come to know pretty well.

Whereto my exact intention reached, I should have found it difficult to determine, but a settled hatred of the man possessed me, beside some motions of fear (I confess now) that his continued espial had stirred within me; and under the influence of fear, much more than of hatred, we be ever apt to run into an excess of cruelty. Thus I remember well enough the coolness with which I rehearsed my attack upon him, and the considerations I maintained in my mind for and against the waylaying him before he could stand upon his defence. Overrunning him with a critical eye, I could not but admire his great stature and apparent strength, to which I had to add a probable skill in fence, that I lacked, having never been lessoned therein, though I had sometimes played a heat or two with Simon, using a pair of old foils we found one day in the stable loft at home. Notwithstanding, this defect weighed nothing against my will, but rather exalted the desire I had to prove my courage upon him, whose advantage was so every way manifest.

A great moon hung above the Thames, but obscured now and then by wreaths of river mist that a light wind lifted the edge of, yet could not sustain the bulk to drive it. There was no sound but that my enemy made with his accoutrements; for I, lurking along in the black shadows, made none, and the street was now everywhere void. All went pat to my purpose, and I loosened my sword in its sheath. Then I crossed the road.

But even as I did so, my man came to a sudden stand before an old and very ruinous house, having a porch of stone, and within that a door with a grid, whereon I presently heard him give a great sounding rap with the pummel of his sword. And so unexpected was that act of his (though why it surprised me I know not) that I stood quite still in the full light, nor could for my life put into execution my policy that he had thus distracted. The place wherein we had come I saw was near under the Tower, of which I could, by the dim light, perceive the undistinguished mass thwarting the bottom of the lane; and the house to which the man demanded admittance was the last upon the left hand this side the open space before the Tower. He remained some while, half hid in the deepness of the gateway above which a lantern swung with a small creaking noise; the

light of it very dim and uncertain. After my first arrestment of surprise, I had gone aside a little, yet not so far but I could observe him, and the low oaken door at which he knocked. There was something about this silent and decayed building which I liked not, though I could not tell precisely wherefore; for indeed it showed signs of some magnificence in the design of it, but now was all worn out by neglect and foul usage; being turned over to the occasions of shipmen and victuallers for storage of such things as their craft requires. Thus, from a fair great window above, that I judged to have been formerly the window of the hall or chapel, was now projected a sort of spars and rough tackle, by which the slender mullion-shafts were all thrust aside and broken. A high penthouse of timber with a crane under, stood by the wall a little beyond, for the getting of goods in and out, with other such disfigurements and mean devices of trade as a mansion is wont to suffer that great folk have left, and small folk have cheaply come by.

At length I saw the grid within the door to be slid back very warily, and by a faint access of light perceived that the porter bore a taper, as being unwilling to open to one he knew not, or could not see.

A conversation followed, but too low for me to hear it, though I suspected from the manner of the man that he first besought, and after demanded, admittance, which was still denied. Then he betook himself (as I could tell) to threats, and was soon come to wresting at the bars of the grid, like a madman. But that which sent me from my ambush was a cry of terror from the other side of the gate at his so insolent violence; for it was the cry of a girl.

I strode forward.

"Hold!" I said, mastering myself to speak within compass, and taking the man by the sleeve with my right hand, while I kept my left upon my poniard. "A guest that is not welcome should have the modesty to know it."

He swung round with a great oath, and would have flung me off, had I not gripped him pretty hard.

"Ay, is it thou?" said he, when he saw who held him, and I could swear there was some respect in his way of saying it.

"I come to tell you that your barber hath left his shop in Fetter Lane," said I.

He laughed aloud at that, high, and with a sort of scornful jollity, though his narrow eyes never left my face.

"You are right, lad," he said heartily, "and I have sought him everywhere since."

"Even upon London Bridge," said I, nodding.

"Even there," replied the dark man.

"I have myself some skill in that sort," I said, "so if the hour be not too late for shaving we will get to business straightway."

"As you will," said he, indifferently. "But now, to leave this schoolboy humour a little, and seeing I have no quarrel with you nor yet know (as I told you before) your name even, were it not better you should state your grievance against me if you have one, as I suppose you deem yourself to stand upon some right in thus constraining me?"

The while he was speaking thus and in such easy parlance as I had before noted was proper to him, my thoughts had returned to that girl's cry I had heard behind the grid, and looking about swiftly, I saw the gate itself now opened a small way, and the girl's form within the opening in a posture of infinite eagerness. So taken with this sight was I, that insensibly I slacked my hold of the man, who suddenly withdrew his arm and stood away jeering.

"The door is open," I said, in a low voice, and putting my hand on my sword; "wherefore do you not enter?"

"I will do so," said he, and before I could hinder him, he had swept me aside with a great buffet, and run forward to the gate. Cursing my lack of readiness to repel him, I drew at once and followed him, while the maid, who at his approach had fled backward, pushed to the door; yet not so quick—the hinges turning heavily—but he prevented her, thrusting in his arm betwixt the post and the door, and had gained his purpose easily, had not I sprung upon him from behind and so hindered him that his hand was caught and crushed, ere he could release himself.

"I owe you small thanks for that, Mr. Denis," said he, gravely, when he had flung the door open and got his hand free; and by his disdain of continuing the pretence not to know my name, I saw we were come into the lists as open foes.

"You owe somewhat elsewhere," said I, "and that is amends to this lady for your discourtesy," and as I spoke I looked across to where she stood in the hall, a distance off from us twain, by the foot of the great stair. A light from some lamp, hung aloft out of sight, diffused itself about her, so that she stood clear from the obscurity which wrapped all else; and by that light I knew her for

the maid I sought, and would thank, and did already supremely love. The light falling directly from above lay upon her hair and seemed to burn there, so splendid a shining did it make. Of her face and body, the most of which was dim in shadow, I could yet discern the exceeding grace and lithe bearing. Her hands were outspread in terror for our clamorous intrusion, and I thought by her swaying she was about to swoon. But small leisure had I to proffer service, or indeed to do aught but return to my guard, which I resumed none too soon, for the tall man had drawn his great sword already and now caught up a piece of sailcloth from the rummage about the hall, wrapping it about his injured arm.

"So it would seem you know her, too, Mr. Denis," he let slip in a voice of some wonder, and I thought paused upon the question how we were become acquainted.

"Have a care!" I cried, and so thrust at him without further parley.

He caught the blow easily enough on his blade, turning it aside. "Country play!" he muttered, and was content to let me recover myself ere he took me in hand. However, I had the good luck to drive him a pace or two backward, amidst the stuff that lay there about, bales and cordage and the like, which hampered him not a little, though for the rest I could not touch him; whereas he did me whenever he listed, but so far without great harm. Yet notwithstanding his disdainful clemency, or rather because of it, I lost all sense of the odds we matched at, and laid about me with increasing fury, so that, for all he was so expert and cool a swordsman, I kept him continually busy at the fence and sometimes put him to more art than he would have wished to use, in order to defend himself from my assaults.

Now the hall where we fought thus, was, as I have said, full of all sorts of impediments and ship's furniture, and was, besides, very low and lighted by nothing but the gleam of the stair-lamp at the far end, so that though we both lost advantage by these hindrances, yet his loss was the greater; for with due light and space he could have ended when he chose; but now was forced to expect until I should abate somewhat of my persistence ere he did so; which, seeing I bled more than at first, he no doubt looked for presently. And so indeed did I; but the expectation seconded my little art in such sort that I broke down his guard and, before I was aware, had caught him high up in the breast, by the shoulder, and I could have laughed for pleasure as I felt the steel sink in. Howbeit 'twas a flesh wound only, and thus no great matter, as I knew; but it served to put him quite from his coolness, and as well by his manner of fetching his breath, I could tell he was distressed, as by his level brow that he meant to be rid of me. But then—

"Oh, stay it here, gentlemen," cried the girl, who saw that we breathed a space, though we still kept our points up and ready to be at it anew. "If the watch pass now, you will be certainly apprehended as you go forth. Have pity of each other," she said, and came forward almost between us. "And you, sir" (to me), "if you do thus because he would have entered here, I thank you. But now let him go, I pray you, as he shall promise no further to offend."

You may imagine how this talk of my letting him go, who was a thousand times the better swordsman, angered my antagonist.

"Ay, Mistress Avenon," he said, in that wicked, scorning voice he had, "we shall stay it here surely to please you. But yet there be some slight formalities accustomed to be used which must first be done; and after I will go."

"What be those formalities you speak of?" she asked, with an apparent gladness that the worst was past.

"Just that I must kill him," said the dark man, very quietly between his teeth.

"Good mistress," I cried out, for I was persuaded he spake truth and dreaded lest she should see what in pity of her womanhood I would should be hid, "go aside now. Go to your chamber." But to the man I whispered, "Come without into the street."

"There spoke a coward," was his word, and drawing back upon his ground he swung up his sword arm to the height, and husbanding the weight of his whole body, stood poised to cut me down. I saw the blow coming, even in the dark, and despairing to avoid it, let drive right forward, at the same moment muffling up my eyes in the sleeve of my idle arm, for the terror of death was upon me then. Our swords sang.... But even as I struck I knew that a miracle had been wrought, for his sword never fell. Sick with amazement I opened my eyes, to see him go over amongst the bales, where he sank down with a great sobbing cry. His sword hung quivering from a rafter of the ceiling, which it had bitten into by the blade's breadth. His tallness of stature, and hardly I, had overthrown him and left me victor.

"God be praised!" I said very low, when I perceived and could believe how matters had gone; but "God have mercy!" whispered the maid.

I turned about.

"You had best go, Mistress Avenon," I said. "The rest must be my work."

"You will not surrender yourself?" she asked, very white.

"If he be dead..." I began, but could not finish for trembling.

"He is not dead, I think," she interrupted hastily, and went back to the stair, whence she soon returned with the lamp, which she set down upon a hogshead, and then bent over the wounded man.

"A kerchief," she said, briefly, "a scarf; something linen if you have it."

I tore off a strip from my sleeve and with that she staunched the worst. We made a compress of my band, drenching it in cold water, and for tightness buckled my belt upon it, which I gave her.

"There is burnt wine in yonder firkin," she said, and I fetched a draught in the cup of my two hands.

When he sighed we looked at each other, and I said—

"Who is he?"

"It is Master Guido Malpas," she whispered, and added, "I am glad you have not killed him."

But that speech went near spoiling all, seeing that I had gone into that tourney her champion.

"Ay, there would have been another tale to tell," I returned very bitterly, "had your rafters been set but a span higher."

"Oh, you mistake me, Mr. Denis (I think they call you so)," said she, and bent low over the wounded man again. "I mean I am glad your kindness to me hath not run so far as you must needs have wished to recall it."

It is a maid's voice more than her words that comforts a man, and so, scarce had she spoken but I saw I had misjudged her.

"Denis is my name," I said eagerly, "but tell me yours now."

"You have heard it, and used it too," she answered smiling. "'Tis Avenon."

"Ay, but the other?" I cried.

She paused before she told me "Idonia."

"He loves you?" I said very quick, and nodded toward Malpas.

"He saith so."

"Doth he often trouble you thus?"

"I fear him," she said so low I could scarce hear her.

"But your father?" said I, "or your brothers? Have you none to protect you?"

"My father was slain in a sea-battle long since," she told me, "when he went in the *Three Half Moons* with others that traded with the Seville merchants, but falling in with a fleet of Turkey, they were nearly all taken prisoners, but my father was killed."

"You were a child then?" I asked her, and she said she was but an infant; and that her mother was long since dead also, and that she had no brothers.

She seemed as though she were about to add more, but just then the sick man revived, opening his eyes and gazing upon us as one that seemed to consider how we twain should be together in such a place. I got up from where I had been kneeling beside him and stood to stretch myself; but was surprised to find how painful my own hurts were, which I had almost forgotten to have received. I suppose Idonia saw me flinch, for she suddenly cried out, "Mr. Denis, Mr. Denis, I will come to you," and leaving Malpas where he lay, rose and came over to me, when she took me very gently by the arm and made me sit, as indeed I needed little persuasion to do. Howbeit I was (as I have said) scarcely scratched, and should have felt foolish at the elaborate business she made of it, had not her hair been so near to my lips.

But presently, and while we were thus employed, she with dressing my hurts, and I with such and such affairs, Idonia whispered—

"Doth he know where you lodge?"

"Yes," said I, "he discovered the place to-night," and told her where it was, and of the kindness Master Gregory had shown me.

"I knew not his name," she interrupted me hurriedly, while making pretence to busy herself with the tightening a bandage, "nor of what authority he were that took you from me when you were hurt before; but he looked at me as at one that would not use you well, and in the end spoke

something roughly to me, so that I dared not follow you. Ah! these upright staid men!" she added with a world of bitterness; but then, "Now your lodging is known, you must leave it straightway, sir."

"I am not used to run away," said I, more coldly than I had meant to do, and she said no more. When we looked up Malpas had gone.

We looked at each other without speaking for admiration of the strength and secrecy he had shown in thus stealing off.

"I must go too," I said presently, and saw her eyes widen in dismay.

"Beware of him!" she whispered. "He doth not forget. And see! he hath not neglected to take his sword;" as indeed, most marvellously, he had done.

"Well, he serves an honest gentleman," quoth I carelessly, "so that if I have cause to think he plots against my life, I shall lay my complaint before my lord Pembroke."

But she shook her head as doubting the wisdom, or at least the efficacy, of that, though she said nought either way, but led me soon after to the great oaken door (which Malpas had left ajar when he went) and set it wide. The night was very dark, with the moon now gone down into the bank of cloud, and so still that we heard a sentinel challenge one at the Bulwark Gate of the Tower. I thought too I heard the rattle of an oar against the thole, as though a boat put off from the Galley Quay a little below, but of that I was not sure.

"God keep you," I said to the maid; but when she did not answer me I looked down and saw she was weeping.

When I went away, I heard the bolt shoot into its rusted socket, and asked myself: how would my case stand now, had Idonia shot it, as she essayed to do, at the first?

CHAPTER XII

HOW MR. JORDAN COULD NOT RUN COUNTER TO THE COURSE OF NATURE

I know not yet (and I thank Heaven for my ignorance) what may be the peculiar weakness of old age, though I suspect it to lie in an excessive regard for life; but of youth I have proved it to be a contempt of life; which, despite the philosophic ring of the phrase, I do affirm to be a fault, though I am willing to allow that I mean a contempt, not of our own, but of another man's life, and a surprise that he should hold dear so vulgar a commodity.

Thus, as I walked away from the house of Idonia, I pondered long and carefully the small account that Mr. Malpas was of, and could not conceive how he had the monstrous impudency to cling so tight as he did to the habit of living, which (as a soiled shirt) he might well enough have now been content to exchange. Indeed, the more I thought upon the matter, the greater increased my sense of the absurdity that such a man should claim his share of the world, or rather (to select the essential quality of my complaint) his share of that corner of Thames Street where Idonia lived, which goeth by the name of Petty Wales. From thence, at all hazards, I was determined to exclude him. For had not Idonia said: "I fear him"? and that was enough for me. Indeed it seemed to elevate my jealousy into an obligation of chivalry, merely to remember that sallow-faced swaggerer that said he loved her. Simon Powell should have fitted me with some knight's part, methought, amidst his Peredurs and Geraints, and I would have proved myself worthy as the best of them.

But that was all very well. It was past ten o'clock, and when I got to London Bridge I found it barred against me and the watch within the gate-house snoring. I knocked twice or thrice pretty hard and at length woke the watch; but so angered was he at thus losing of his sleep, besides that he thought perhaps to recover upon his late remissness, that he flew into an unnecessary zeal of watchfulness, swearing I was some vagabond rogue, and, bidding me begone, shut the wicket in my face. In vain did I endeavour to make myself known, bawling my name through the gate, and Mr. Nelson's too; the porter had returned to his interrupted repose, and nothing on earth would move him again, for that night at least.

So after having launched one or two such observations as I thought befitted the occasion, I made the best of it I could, and turned away to seek for some cleanly house of receipt where I might pass the remainder of the night. Some while I spent in ranging hither and thither, without happening on such an hostelry as did please me (for I confess to a niceness in these matters); but at length, coming into a place where two streets met, I found there a very decent quiet house that answered to my wishes so well that I immediately entered and bespoke a chamber for the night. Here I slept exceeding soundly, and in the morning awoke, though yet sore from my

scratches, yet otherwise refreshed and cheerful.

The better part of the travellers that had lain there were already up and away ere I arose, so that I had the room to myself almost, wherein I broke my fast, and, save for the lad that served me, held conversation with none other. Had I known in what fashion we were to meet later, I should no doubt have observed him with more closeness than I did, but I saw in a trice he was one that a groat would buy the soul of, and another groat the rest of him.

"'Twas late you came hither last night," he said as he set down my tankard beside me upon the table.

I smiled without replying, and nodded once or twice, to give him a supposition of my discretion; but he took it otherwise.

"Ay, you say truly," he ran on, "there is a liberty of inns that no private house hath. Come when you list and go when you have a mind to; there's no constraint nor question amongst us."

"Be pleased to fetch me the mustard," said I.

"You know what is convenient," he returned in a voice of keen approval, as he brought it. "Now, I was once a serving man in Berkeley Inn, called so of my lord Berkeley that lodgeth there. But whether he were at home or absent, I was ever there. And where I was, you understand, there must needs be necessaries bought, and such things as were, as I say, convenient."

He leered upon me very sly as he spoke these mysteries; by which I perceived I was already deep in his favour, as he was (like enough) deep in villainies.

"I marvel how from a lord's mansion you came to serve in a common tavern," said I, to check him.

"Oh, rest you easy, sir," he laughed, "for the difference is less than one might suppose. There be pickings and leavings there as in an hostelry, a nimble wit needed in both places indifferently, and for the rest, work to be scanted and lies to be told. Hey! and lives to be lived, master, and purses filled, and nought had, here nor there, but must be paid for or else stolen."

Such light-hearted roguery I owed it to my conscience to condemn, but for the life of me I could not, so that I fell into a great laughter that no shame might control. I hope it was weakness of my body, and not of virtue, pushed me to this length, but however come by, I could not help it, and think moreover it did me good.

"Come, that is the note I like," said my tapster, whose name I learnt was Jocelin; and, setting his lips close to my ear, he added, "London town is but a lump of fat dough, master, till you set the yeast of wit to work therein; but after, look you! there be fair risings, and a handsome great loaf to share." His eyes sparkled. "I have the wit, man, I am the yeast, and so..."

He had not finished his period, or if he did I marked him not, for just at that season the gate of a great house over the way opening, a party of horsemen rode forth into the street with a clatter of hoofs. They wheeled off at a smart pace to the right-hand, laughing and calling out to each other as they went, and sending the children a-skelter this way and that before them. Yet, notwithstanding they were gone by so speedily, I had yet espied the device upon their harness and cloaks, which was the green dragon and Pembroke cognizance. I flung back my chair.

"Is yon house Baynards Castle?" I cried.

"None other," he replied, nodding while he grinned. "I have certain good friends there, too."

"Is Mr. Malpas of the number?" I demanded.

"Oh, he!" he answered with a shrug. "A bitter secret man! If 'a has plots he keeps them close. He flies alone, though 'tis whispered he flies boldly. But we be honest men," quoth he, and held his chin 'twixt finger and thumb. "We live and let live, and meet fortune with a smile. But I hate them that squint upon the world sidelong, as he doth." From which I drew inference that they twain had formerly thieved together, and that Malpas had retained the spoil.

But I soon tossed these thoughts aside for another, which, as it came without premeditation, so did I put it into practice immediately. Having satisfied my charges at the inn, therefore, and without a word to Jocelin, I ran across the street and into the gate-house of the castle, before the porter had time to close the gate of it behind the horsemen.

"Is Mr. Malpas within?" I accosted him eagerly.

The porter regarded me awhile from beneath raised brows.

"Have you any business with him, young master?" said he.

"Grave business," I replied, "knowing, as I do, who it was gave him that hurt he lies sick withal."

The old man pushed the gate to with more dispatch than I had thought him capable of using. "Ay, you know that?" he muttered, looking upon me with extraordinary interest. "That should be comfortable news to Signor Guido; that should be honey and oil to his wound;" and I saw by that he understood his Malpas pretty well.

He led me aside into his lodge, and there, being set in his deep, leathern chair, spread himself to listen.

"Who is he, now?" he asked, in that rich, low voice a man drops into that anticipates the savour of scandal.

I looked him up and down as though to assure myself of his secrecy, and then—

"'Twas Master Cleeve," said I.

Heavy man as he was, he yet near leapt from his chair.

"Is't come to that?" he cried. "Master Botolph Cleeve! Now the saints bless us, young man, that it should be so, and they once so close to hold as wind and the weather-cock!"

I saw his error and meant to profit by it, but not yet. If, indeed, my uncle Botolph were hand-in-glove with Malpas, why, then, I was saved the pains to deal with them singly. Having smelled out the smoke, it should go hard but I would soon tread out the fire. Howbeit, I judged that to question the old man further at that season would be to spoil all; since by manifesting the least curiosity of my uncle, I should deny my news (as he understood it) that my uncle, and not I, had near robbed Malpas of his life. Noting the porter, then, for a man to be considered later, I returned to my politic resolution to get speech of Malpas himself, and to tell him, moreover, that Mistress Avenon abhorred his addresses, which I was therefore determined should cease.

Perhaps I counted upon his sick condition in this, and upon a correspondent meekness of behaviour, but regard it as you will, I was a mere fool and deserved my rival should rise from his bed and beat the folly out of me. Nevertheless, I take pride that my folly ran no further, so that when the porter inquired who I might be that desired to carry this message to the wounded man, I had sufficient wit to answer frankly that I was Mr. Cleeve's nephew; which reply seemed to set the seal of truth to that had preceded.

"Mass!" swore the porter, lying back in his chair, "then methinks your news will doubly astonish Mr. Malpas, seeing who you be that bring it."

"It should somewhat surprise him to learn 'twas my uncle wounded him," quoth I modestly.

The porter: "Surprise him! 'Twill make him run mad! I admire how you can venture into his chamber with such heady tidings."

"Oh, in the cause of truth, Master Porter," I returned stoutly, "one should not halt upon the sacrificing of an uncle or so."

"Why, that's religiously said," quoth the porter, who, I could see, having relieved his conscience in warning me, was glad I would not be put off, and, indeed (old cock-pit haunter that he was!), did love the prospect of battle with all his withered heart.

I asked him then what office about my lord's household Mr. Guido held, and he told me he was keeper of the armoury, and served out the pikes and new liveries; that, moreover, when my lord was absent he was advanced to a place of greater trust.

"The which I hope he justifies," said I gravely, but the porter blew out his cheeks and said nothing.

"Will you lead me to his chamber?" I asked him presently, and he bade me follow him, first taking up his ring of keys.

We crossed the court together, going towards the west corner of it, where he opened a door that led on to a winding stair, which we ascended. When we had climbed almost to the roof as I thought, he stayed before another door that I had not observed (so dark and confined was the place), through which he preceded me into the gallery beyond it, a low but very lightsome place, with a row of dormer windows along the outer side of it, from one of which, when I paused to look forth, I beheld the river Thames directly beneath us, and a fleet of light craft thereon, wherries and barges and the like, and across the Southwark flats, far distant, London Bridge, with Nonsuch House in the midst of it, that cut in twain the morning light with a bar of grey.

While I stood thus gazing idly the great bell of the gate rang out with a sudden clangour.

"Pox o' the knave that founded thee a brazen ass!" cried the porter. "Ay, kick thy clapperheels, ring on! Again! again! Shield us, master, what doomsday din is there! Well, get gone your ways, Master Nephew of Cleeve; that long, yellow man's chamber lieth beyond, upon the right hand, in a bastion of the wall.... List to the bell!" and with that he turned back in haste and clattered down the stair.

I followed his direction as well as I might, going forward down the gallery to Malpas' room, although, to speak truly, I had come into some distaste of that business already, and would have been glad enough to forego it altogether had not my pride forbidden me so to return upon my resolution. At the door I stooped down and listened for any sound of groaning, which, when I plainly heard, I could not but confess 'twas something less than merciful to trouble the poor man at such a time. But having conjured up the figure of Idonia, my pity of her aggressor fell away again, so that without more ado I knocked smartly upon the door.

I was answered by a groan deeper than before.

"Have I leave to enter?" I demanded, but was told very petulantly I had not.

"We are not unacquainted," said I, with my lips to the keyhole.

"The more reason you should stay without," said he, and I could hear him beat his pillow flat, and turn over heavily upon his side.

"Hast thou forgot my sword so soon?" cried I in a great resentment that the victor should be pleading thus at the chamber door of the vanquished.

"Go, hack with thy tongue, Thersites!" came the voice again; but at that I waited no further, but burst in. I had got scarce two paces over the threshold when—

"Why, Master Jordan!" I cried out, for there on the bed lay my ancient fat friend, his heavy Warham-face peering above the quilt, a tasselled nightcap bobbing over his nose, and all else of him (and of the furniture too) hid and o'erlaid by a very locust-swarm of folios.

At the first sight of me I thought he would have called upon the mountains to bury him, from mere shame of his discovery.

"Away!" he gasped, when he could get breath to say it; "away, graceless child! I am no foiner; I know you not. I am a man of peace, a reverend doctor. My trade is in books. *Impallesco chartis*; I grow pallid with conning upon the written word. What be your armies and your invasions and your marchings to and fro? that lives should be lived, and brains spent and lost therein. I tell you, one verse of Catullus shall outweigh the clatter of a battalion, and Tully is the only sergeant I salute." And so, having hurled his defiance, he sank back amongst the bed clothes and drew down his nightcap an inch lower upon his brow.

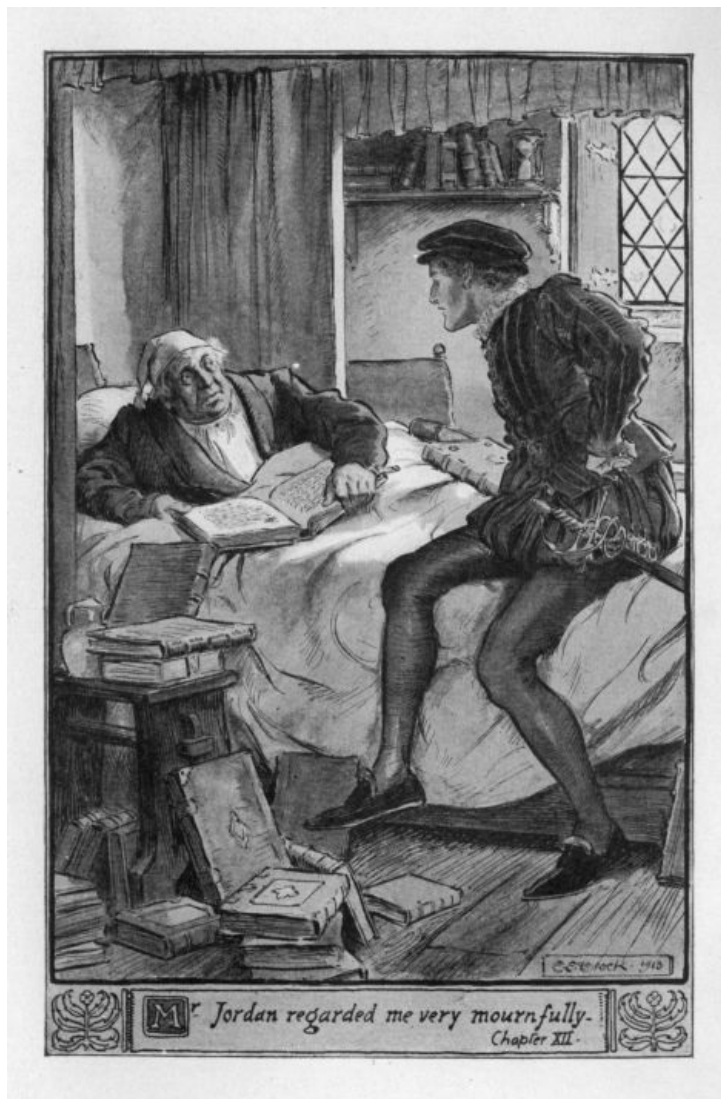
"You know me very well, good doctor," quoth I, and advanced to his bedside, which was fortified with an huge *vallum* of the Consolations. "I am Denis Cleeve."

"'Tis like enough," said the old man with an air of infinite resignation, and affecting still not to know me. "And I am my lord of Pembroke's poor librarian, and at this time somewhat deeply engaged upon the duties attaching to that service."

He drew forth a volume with a trembling hand as he spoke, and made as if to consult it.

"Being so accustomed as you are to the use of parchments," said I, "I had supposed you led a company of foot to tuck of drum."

He was so clearly abashed at my remembering his very words that he had formerly spoken, that I had not the heart to proceed further in my jesting, and so sitting down upon the couch beside him I told him that I applauded this his exchange of resolutions, and that there was enough of soldiers for any wars we were likely to have, but of scholars not so ample a supply as he could be spared therefrom, save upon unlooked for occasion. Mr. Jordan regarded me very mournfully while I spoke thus, and when I had done lay a great while silent, fingering his folios and shaking his tasselled head. At length he replied thus—



**Mr. Jordan regarded me very mournfully. Chapter
XII**

"You have a great heart, my son," said he with a sigh, "and think to comfort one that lacks not virtue (I hope), although the diligence to apply it manfully. Alas! much learning, Denis, hath made me marvellously to hate confusion and strife. My mind burroweth as a coney in the dark places of knowledge, but never my body endureth a posture of opposition. Thought is a coward, all said: and philosophy nought else but the harness we have forged to protect our hinder parts while we shuffle ingloriously from the fray. 'Tis no hero's person we assume, lad; and your old fool, your erudite scratchpole—*Graecis litteris eruditus*, hey?—is everywhere and rightly derided."

I told him very earnestly I thought otherwise, but he would not hear me out, affirming his contrary opinion, namely, that he was a coward and trembled at the very name of an enemy, excepting only of his principal enemy, to wit, his bed. "And with that," said he, "I have been forced into concluding an unconditional alliance."

Now I could not bear he should thus contemptuously belittle his valour, of which I had formerly seen sufficient proof in his dealing with the thieves about Glastonbury, and said so roundly.

"Well, lad," he replied, and puckering up his face into a grim smile, "be it as you will; and at bottom I confess I believe I have as much courage as another man: of which quality indeed it needed some modicum to encounter my conscience and return to the path I was set in by Nature. For there is but little bravery in running counter to our natures, Denis, and especially when applause and honour lie both that way. Ay, I think," quoth he, "I have some obstinacy below, though you must e'en stir in the sediment to raise it."

In reply to my asking how it had come about that he was installed keeper of my lord's books, he said it had been consequent upon his intention (while he yet held to it) of enrolling himself soldier; that the magistrate to whom he had applied him for that purpose, when he proposed the oath of allegiance had seen fit to eke it out and amplify his warrant with so offensive a comparison betwixt the arts of letters and war, to the utter disadvantage of letters, as he could not abide the conclusion of, but made off; nor could he ever be induced to return thither any more.

"And notwithstanding I cried out upon my defection daily," he proceeded, "I perceived that fate had put the term to my military service or ever 'twas begun, and so sought elsewhere for

employment. Indeed I had arrived at my last victual, and had scarce wherewithal to meet the charges of my lodging. But in a good hour I fell in with another of the like condition with mine, though for the rest, a poet, and therefore of a more disordered spirit. His name was, as I remember, Andrew Plat, but of where he dwelt I am ignorant. He was boldly for stealing what he could not come by honestly, and so far put his design into practice as, breaking into this very Castle, he furnished his belly with the best, both of meat and drink. In the morning he was found drunk, in which condition he confessed all, but with such craven and mendacious addition as involved me also, who was thereupon cited to appear.

"I excused myself, as you may suppose, very easily, but by an inadvertence I excused myself in Latin.

"'How!' cried my lord, 'you make your apology in Latin?'

"'Have I so done?' said I, 'then judge me as a Roman, for amongst these barbarians thou and I be the only two civilized.'

"He laughed very heartily at that, and having informed himself of my merits, soon after delivered up his books into my charge.

"And thus I am, as you see me, returned to my former occupation, which I shall never again pretermit upon any motion of magnanimity. If aught in the future shall offend me, if evil rumours shall penetrate to this quiet angle of the world, I take up no lance to combat the same, my son, having a better remedy: which is to rinse out my mouth with great draughts of Virgil and Cicero, and thereafter with a full voice to thank the gods that I was not begot of the seed of Achilles."

He invited me to remain to dinner with him, but I would not, and went away by the way I had come, my head so full of this strange case of Mr. Jordan (whom I had only chanced upon through the lucky accident of my having mistaken the porter's direction), that I remembered not so much as Malpas his name even, until I was safe in the warden's house upon the Bridge; where I found good Madam Nelson anxiously expecting my return, who moreover had a steaming hot platter for me that she served up with certain less palatable satires upon my night's absence. However, I thought it wise to let them pass for that season, and not justify myself therein; for a woman loveth not the man that answereth her again; and especially when he is in the right of it.

CHAPTER XIII

PETTY WALES

If a young man's heels be seldom slow to follow after his heart whither he hath left it for lost, he hath indeed so many classical examples to draw upon as he need stand in no fear of censure save of such as have neither loved at all, nor ever in their lives been young. And so it was with me, who had no sooner swallowed down my pudding and as much as I could stomach of the good wife's reproaches but I was off and away to Petty Wales to inquire after Idonia, how she did.

'Twas a quiet grey morning of the early year, and as I strode along very gladsome, methought there could be few places in the world so pleasant as Thames Street, nor any odour of spices comparable with the healthful smell about Billingsgate and Somers Quay; although I confess not to have remarked the fine qualities of either, the night before. A great body of soldiers was marching, a little way before me, toward the Tower, their drums beating, and their ensign raised in the midst; as heartening a sight and sound as a lad could wish for, and of good omen too. But for all my courage was high, and my steps directed towards the lass I loved, there was yet a fleck of trouble in my mind I would have wiped out willingly enough, and that was my father's expressed desire (which I knew, too, was very necessary) that I should set about earning my living at a trade. I suppose a boy's thoughts be naturally averse from buying and selling, and from all the vexatious and mediate delays which interpose between desires and their satisfaction; for youth looketh ever to the end itself, and never to the means, whether the means be money and matters of business, or patient toil, or increase of knowledge. Success and the golden moment are youth's affair, and all else of no account at all. Ah! of no account when we be young, seem preparation and discipline and slow acquirement and the gathering burden of years; but just to live, and to love, and to win.... Imperious fools that we are: pitiful, glorious spendthrifts!

I got to the great ruined house at length, as the troop swung out onto Tower Hill, and the roll of their drums died down. Without loss of time I drew my poniard and hammered with the haft upon the gate. To come to her thus, wearing the arms I had used to defend her from the man she feared and I had valorously overthrown, surely (said I) this will get me her admiration and a thousand thanks. I would dismiss my wounds with a shrug when she should say she hoped they were mended, and swear they were not painful, yet with such slight dragging of the words as she should not believe me but rather commend my fortitude in suffering (though for that matter they were easy enough and only one of them anyways deep). In short I savoured the sweet of our

coming colloquy as greedily as any feast-follower; and at the same time I continued to rattle my dagger-heel on the oaken door. After some minutes thus spent, the grid opened, and behind the bars was Idonia facing me and very pale.

"What would you, Mr. Denis?" said she.

I dropped my jaw and simply stared upon her.

"What would I?" I gasped out.

"How do your wounds?" she asked hurriedly. Our conversation seemed like to stay upon interrogatories.

"But am I not to enter, then?" cried I, as near sobbing as I had ever been in my life.

"Can we not speak thus?" said Idonia, and glanced backward into the hall.

"Oh, Mistress Avenon!" I said to that, "is it thus you use me?" and so turned away, smitten to the very heart. But I had not gone ten paces from the gate, ere she caught me, and laid a hand upon my arm.

"Ah, Mr. Denis," she whispered, "be not angry with me; say you are not wroth, and then go. I beseech you to go away, but first say you are not angry.... I must not talk with you; must not be seen to talk with you, I mean." She might have said more had I not stopped her.

"Not to be seen to talk with me? Am I a man to be scorned, then?"

She answered below her breath: "'Tis rather I am a maid to be scorned, methinks.... Oh, look not so!" she added swiftly, "I must go within.... If they should know you have come..."

"Who should know?" cried I, very big; "and what care I who knows? I am not accustomed to shun them that question my behaviour."

"No, no, you are brave," said she, "and 'tis there that my peril lies, if not your own. You may defend yourself, a man may do so having a sword. But we women have no weapon."

"Who would hurt you?" I asked, moving a step back to the gate. "Not Guido Malpas, I warrant, this many a day."

"I live amongst wicked men coming and going," she replied. I could feel her hand shake that I now held in mine. "But now go. I am not worth this coil we make; you can do nothing that you have not done already. I will remember you," said she in a strange pleading voice, "and I think you will not forget me awhile either." She paused a little, panting as though she had been weary. "And, Mr. Denis, my heart is big with pride of your coming hither."

These words she spoke in the deep full voice she used when moved, and then turning from me, went within and shut to the door.

"Now Heaven forbid me mercy," said I aloud, "if I probe not to the bottom of this pool."

I pulled down my jerkin in front, and set my ruff even. Then opening the purse that hung at my belt, I counted the coins that were in it. There were a dozen shillings and some few halfpence. "Certain 'tis time I got employment," I mused, "yet I allow myself one day more;" and with that I slid the coins back in my purse, and looked about me.

Now, this great building of Petty Wales before which I stood was once (or at least is reported to have been) an Inn of the Welsh Princes for their occasions in the City, but was, upon their long disuse of it, turned into tenements, as Northumberland House was where Mr. Jordan had formerly lodged, and was now let out to marine traders, victuallers, and such other as found it convenient to the quays. How it came about that Idonia had her dwelling here I knew not yet, nor indeed did I at that time know anything of all I am about to set down of this mansion, which, however, it is very necessary should be understood, seeing how large a space it occupies in my adventures.

Besides the tenants, then, that by right inhabited there, there had grown up another sort of secret tenants that lurked amid such odd nooks and forgotten chambers herein as were overlooked, or of no advantage for the stowage of merchandise. Between these mean unnoted folk, that had crept thither like rats for shelter, and lay as close, there was maintained a sort of fearful communion and grudging acquaintanceship. But the house being strongly parted in twain by a stone wall built throughout the middle of it, from back to front, it was as though there were two separate houses, of which Idonia used the one, but these the other. And since moreover there was but one gate upon the street side of the house, the men of whom I speak, both the honest ships' brokers and the lawless poor men, perforce used a certain low-pitched postern door at the bottom of a narrow alley which ran behind the house.

This door let on to a wide and decayed stair that (I was to learn) was the poor men's hall and common room; here they met and shared their stealthy mess together; here elected and deposed their captains, and celebrated their improvident espousals. Living on sufferance, stricken by

poverty and terror of the law, hardly allowed as men and women, but rather as abject orts of nature, they yet preserved amongst themselves a perfect order from the very necessity of silence; and upon the least motion of discontent the mutineer was instantly seized, his head covered, and the captain's knife deep in his heart. 'Twas the women's office, then, to lay the body out decently; and about midnight four men bore it secretly to the riverside, and straightway returned.

All this I was to learn from a strange accident that befell me when at length I left loitering before Idonia's door, and skirted about the place in search of any index to the riddle she had read me. For I was persuaded that to reach the heart of the mystery, I must at all adventures gain access to the house itself; I being then quite ignorant of the dividing of it in the manner I have told. It was with an extraordinary delight, therefore, that I discovered the lane to the rearward of the house, and the low door. Somewhat to my surprise I found the door not made fast, and so at once entering by it, I began cautiously to ascend the rotten stair. But scarce had I gone half-way to the first stage, when I stumbled over the body of a man that lay stretched there in the dark, and was, I thought, dead. Howbeit, he was not, and when I had him down into the air, and had loosened his clothing, he opened his eyes. He stared upon me wildly.

"How? You are not of the brotherhood?" he stammered.

I said nothing in reply, but leaving him where he was, ran to a tavern hard by upon Tower Hill, called *The Tiger*, whence I returned presently with a flask of strong wine. The drinking of it revived him marvellously, so that he was soon able to support himself on his feet, although without strength to walk yet. I got him some meat, too, and bread, both of which he ate like a wolf rather than a man; so far had he gone in starvation. When he had done, he would have thanked me, but I interrupted him, asking in my turn who he was, and what trade he was of. He straightened his back at that, and looking me very proudly in the face replied: "My name is Andrew Plat, and by the grace of Heaven I am a lyrical poet."

Upon the sudden I recalled Mr. Jordan. "So," I thought, "'tis the worthy that stole my lord Pembroke's buttery-beer." However, all I said was: "I think I have not read any of your writing, Mr. Plat."

"'Tis very possible," said he, "for I write less than I think: and indeed publish less than I write."

"And how standeth it with your fasting, Master Poet?" quoth I.

"I feed my thoughts that way," he replied simply, "as 'twas in a fast I conceived my famous lines upon the Spring."

I bade him drink another draught of the wine, having no interest to scrape acquaintance with his Muse; but he was not so easily to be put off.

"It begins thus," said he, and tossing back his long and tawny hair from his eyes, lifted his right hand aloft and beat the air with his fingers as he proceeded—

"Fresh Spring, the lovely herald of great Love,
On whose green tabard are the quarterings
Of many flowers below and trees above
In proper colours, as befits such things—
Go to my love——"

"Hold, hold!" I cried, "methinks I have read something very similar to these lines of yours in another man's verses."

He held his hand still suspended, though his eyes flashed in disdain of my commentary.

"An' you were not young and my benefactor," he said, with an extreme bitterness, "I would be tempted to clap you into a filthy ballad."

"Do you use to write your ballads, full?" I inquired, "seeing 'tis apparently your custom to steal your lyricks, empty."

He brought down his raised hand clenched upon the other.

"I steal nothing from any man," he cried in a great voice; but even as he spoke his face went white, and his eyes rolled in his head. I thought he had fallen into some fit of poetics, and offered him the wine again, but he cautioned me to be silent, at the same time cringing backward into the shadows.

"Why, what ails you?" I asked encouragingly.

He laid his forefinger to his lips, and then, laying his hand upon my arm, drew me to him.

"Spake I overloud?" he muttered, shivering, too, when I answered that he certainly had done.

"'Twould be my death were I heard," said the miserable fellow, and then told me, by starts and elliptic phrases all that I have set down about this mysterious fellowship of Petty Wales, and the cruel rigour in which its secrecy was maintained.

"'Tis no place for an honest man," he said, "for all here, but I, be notable thieves and outlaw villains, bawds, and blasphemers every one. And were't not for the common table we keep, each man bringing to it that he may, but all equally partaking, and that we lie sheltered from foul weather and terror of the watch, I had long since avoided hence. For I am a lyrical poet, sir, and have no commerce with such as steal."

I could have returned upon him there, with his unconscionable plagiarism and his assault upon Baynards Castle too, but judged it Christian to hold my peace. Furthermore, I had entered this unwholesome den for another purpose than to argue a point of authorship, and therefore said quietly enough, but in such a manner as he should perceive I meant it—

"Now listen to me, Master Poet," quoth I, "and answer me fair, else will I raise my voice to such pitch as your Captain shall take note of it for a contingent fault of thine to have loud-speaking friends.

"This great mansion, now," I went on, when I thought he could bear a part in the argument; "do all the parts of it join, and the dwellers herein have exchange of intercourse each with the other?"

"No," he said, "they do not."

"But once they had," said I.

"Long since they may have done," replied the poet, "but since the place hath been converted to its present use, it hath been divided by strong walls of partition, so as each man is now master of his own."

"How!" I cried, raising my voice of set purpose to frighten him. "In this nest of thieves what man is so absolute a master as another may not possess himself of his goods?"

"I know not, I know nothing," he wailed piteously.

"Are there no cracks in the wainscote even?" I persisted, for something in his denial led me to suspect he put me off. He shook his head, whispering that their new Captain reposed but a dozen paces distant and would hear, and kill us both.

"Enough," I said pretty stern, "for I see there be privy ways opened that you have at the least heard tell of (though you may not have dared investigate them), and communication hence through every party-wall."

"There is none," he repeated, near mad with apprehension.

"It is necessary I discover these passages," I continued, "or rather one of them, as I think there is one leads to the great hall."

"What know you of such a place?" he almost screamed.

"Rest you easy, sweet singer," said I, laughing at the slip he made, "for we will not go headlong to this work, nor disturb your Captain's sleep where he lieth snug till nightfall; but you shall lead me by quiet ways thither, and when you shall have put me through, I will suffer you to depart in peace. But so much I most positively require of you."

He wept and wrung his hands, protesting I was grievously in error, and he the most miserable of men; indeed 'twas not until I pulled out my sword and showed him the blood on it, that he professed himself willing to serve me, though he still continued to pretend his inability therein.

"That we shall see," said I. "But first finish your bottle, and then advance, man, in Master Spenser's name!"

He drank it down, and then cramming the broken morsels of bread and meat into his wallet (where I saw he kept his verses also with a parcel of goose quills) he cautioned me to be silent, and stole ahead of me up the wide and broken stair.

Small light there was to see by, for the few windows which should have served us were all shuttered or roughly boarded up, and the wind piped through them shrilly. Upon the great open gallery he paused as in doubt which way to proceed, and, to speak justly, 'twould have puzzled a wiser man in that dimness to pursue any right course between the huge bales and chests of sea-merchandise that pestered our passage. Nay, even the very roof and ceilings were become warehouses, so that once I espied so great a thing as a ship's cockboat slung from the rafters above our heads, and once rasped my cheek against the dried slough of a monstrous water-snake that some adventurer had doubtless brought home from the Indies. But I knew well enough that we should have made twice our progress but for the infinite dread in which the poor poet went of crossing the lair where the officers of this unholy brotherhood awaited their hour to steal forth.

At every rustle of wind he staggered so he could scarce stand, and had it not been for the invigorating coolness of my sword upon the nape of his neck, he would have fled thence an hundred times. Yet for all the dangers (to call them so) of our stolen march, the thought that stood in the front of my mind was: What lover, since the world began, hath gone in this fashion to his mistress? For insensibly my intention had narrowed down to the mere necessity of seeing Idonia again. Surely, never was a house of so many turnings and bewildered issues; so that we seemed to traverse half the ward in our quest, and for the most part in pitchy blackness, as I have said, until I almost could have believed the day had gone down into night while we shuffled tardily forward. But at last Mr. Andrew stopped. We had turned a coign of the wall, and come into an open space palely lighted from above; and looking up I saw we stood beneath the vent wherein the crane worked that I had note from without the night before.

"If it be not closed up, 'tis here," whispered the poet, and enjoining upon me to succeed him, he took the crane-rope in his hand and pulled himself up thereby until he had ascended some fifteen feet, when he swung himself a little to the right hand where was a sort of ledge in the masonry of the wall (I mean not the front wall of the building, but a wall that joined it on the square), and there he stood firm. I was not slow to join him aloft and there found, behind the ledge or sill, a low arch in the thick of the wall, and within it a little wicket door.

"You have guided me well," I said, clasping his hand hard, "and I shall not forget it. If there be any favour I can show you before we part, name it, Mr. Plat, and I will use my endeavour to please you."

He considered some while before he replied, and then looking at me very earnestly, said—

"Since you seem to have some acquaintance with the poets, and thought fit to remark upon a certain fancied resemblance (though indeed there is none) betwixt my lyric of the Spring and another's treatment of that subject, I would beg you, should you be in any company where my works are spoken of, as I make no pretence they shall be everywhere as soon as they be published, I say, I would beg you to refrain yourself from bringing in that ... from directing the attention of the company toward ... but I see you take me, sir, and so enough said."

However he would not let me go before he had begged my acceptance of a copy of his works, which he intended should be decently bound in calf leather, with a device of Britannia sitting upon Helicon, and his name of Andrew Plat entwined in a wreath of flowerets at her feet.

"And wherefore not upon her brow?" I asked him.

"Oh, sir," said the poet, flinging an arm about my shoulder, "you honour me too much."

I got him down the rope soon after, and saw him return along the passage, his head high and his gait light as though he trod a measure.

"We be both in the same plight," I sighed, "and support ourselves upon favours not yet received."

Then I set open the door. A stout ladder reached down from thence to the hall where I had fought with Guido Malpas, or rather to a part of it that was full double the height of that part, and had entrance into it by means of a sort of wide arch betwixt pillars. The hall was empty, and I descended to it immediately.

"Well," thought I, pretty grave now I had accomplished this much of my business, "I would I knew in what case I shall depart hence."

At that moment I heard a footstep on the stair beyond the arches, and Mistress Avenon entered the hall.

At first she saw me not, but when she did she stood perfectly still, the colour fading from her face, and one hand upon her bosom. I bowed low, having no words to speak, and then expected with an infinite weight at my heart, until she should declare her will.

At length she came slowly toward me.

"What is this you have dared to do?" she murmured, so low I could scarce hear her.

"I could not help it," I said, and would have told her there and then that I loved her, had not my courage all gone to wreck before her visible anger. She drew herself to her full height, and keeping her eyes on mine said in a louder voice—

"Ay, you could not help intruding upon a defenceless girl, and yet you went nigh enough to slaying Mr. Malpas, poor man! for that same fault. Have I not given you thanks enough, that you are come hither for more? Are you greedy of so much praise? Else indeed wherefore have you come?"

Her words so stung me, and her coldness after all I had suffered to get speech with her, that I felt the tears very close behind my eyes, and, as a schoolboy that has been detected in some misdemeanour casts about for any excuse however vain, so did I; for all in a hurry I stammered

out—

"I came hither to tell you I have twelve shillings."

Was ever any excuse so ill-considered?

"Twelve shillings!" cried Idonia; but my self-respect was all down by that time, and I could not stop; I spoke of my father's letter, mine own penury, and the detestation in which I held the necessity to enter into trade.

"I have but twelve shillings in the whole world," said I, but she not answering, I turned my head sharply to see how she had received it. To my utter astonishment Idonia was laughing at me through a blind of tears.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW IDONIA TAUGHT ME AND A CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD HOW TO KEEP BOOKS

"Now, cry you mercy, Mr. Denis!" said Idonia, "for indeed I guessed not that affairs of trade were to be in debate between us."

But so confused as I was by her laughter, I could neither deny nor confirm that saying, but stood before her very hot in the face and, I make no question, as sour to look upon as she was merry to see me so.

"I had thought you had forced your way hither," she continued, setting her head a little aside, "in order to rid me of such dangers as might beset me here, albeit I know of none."

"And knew you of any," said I, pretty desperate by this, "my sword should make it none, if you would."

Perhaps it was the bitter tone I used, or the knowledge that I spoke not in mere idle boastfulness; but upon the sudden her manner changed wholly and she was pleading with me in so tender and deep a voice as it thrilled me through to hear it.

"Ah, Mr. Denis," said she, coming close and laying her hand on my arm, "we be friends surely, or if we be not, I know not where I am to seek for a friend as true hearted, nor one that would venture as far to aid me. I meant no harm, indeed I did not, though my tongue played my meaning false, as it doth, alas! too often. If I laughed, 'twas to fend off weeping, for once I fall to that, I know not when I should be done."

"Yet you said you had no especial trouble," I returned.

"Nay, if I did, I lied," said Idonia, "for I am beset with troubles here."

"I thought no less," said I, "and 'twas for that very reason, and in despite of your refusal to admit me awhile since, that I sought out other ways to come to you."

She smiled when she heard this honest confession. "So much trade as that comes to, Mr. Denis, will hardly satisfy your father's debts, I think."

"I gave myself this one day more," I told her, "but to-morrow I must necessarily seek employment, though the doing of it I can scarce abide to think of."

"Having but an half-handful of shillings," said she, "poor lad! there seemeth nought else to do, unless indeed you steal."

"Steal!" cried I.

"And wherefore not?" said Idonia, with a little hard laugh, "seeing we all do worse than steal here, or if we do not all so, yet do we stand by permissively while others do. Oh, sir," she cried, "I warned you this very morning I was not worth your thought of me, and 'twas truth, or less than the truth, I told, who live amongst evil folk in this place and secret men that whisper as they come and go."

She hid her face in her hands so overcome was she by the horror she had waked, and how to comfort her I knew not.

"Of what quality be these men you speak of?" I demanded, thinking perhaps they were the thieves beyond the partition wall, who overran into this place too. "I will lay information against them, before the magistrate if you will."

Idonia looked at me with a sort of wonder.

"But you know them not," said she, "nor where they bide, when they leave us."

"Is it not yonder then?" I asked her, and pointed to the little door aloft in the wall.

"They—poor folk!" she cried. "A pitiful lean company; would they were no worse I ope the gate to! ... If you had known, when you would have had me admit you, Mr. Denis.... But they be gone for this while ... oh, I fear them!" said she, and fell again to weeping.

'Twas evident she dared not be open with me as touching the business nor estate of those she consorted with, nor, I found, dared give over this life she led amongst them, for all the fear and horror she had of it. So, notwithstanding I returned again and again to the question, she put me off with a manifest dismay.

"No, no," she would cry. "Even so much as I have already let fall is haply more than wise for me to speak and you to hear. But now," in conclusion she said, "let us return to your own affairs, in the which it may chance I may assist you."

She conceived from the first an infinite admiration of my father, bidding me tell over again the tale of his renouncing all his wealth in order to the ending his brother's supposed confinement, as well as to pay that added debt which I had so foolishly incurred. Idonia drew in her breath sharply when I had done, and then looking me full in the face, said—

"Whatever may befall you to do, Mr. Denis, 'twill be less than he hath the right to exact of you; although I believe that the least you will do he will give you thanks for it."

'Twas my father's nature just, and none could have bettered the character.

"What can you do?" she demanded briefly, and bade me sit (for we had both stood this while); she sitting too, on a bundle of folded sails that lay by the wall.

I hesitated to reply, for leaving the few scraps of Latin and logick that Master Jordan had been at such pains to drive into me and I had as easy let slip again, my studies had been woefully neglected, or rather I had profited by them so little, that there was nothing I knew anyways whole. I stammered out at last that what I could do, I doubted would scarce earn me a scavenger's wages, and looked (I suppose) so glum, that Idonia laughed outright.

"Come, there be books of account," said she, "can you not make shift to cast moneys in figure?"

I told her I thought I might compass that if I were given time enough; though for that matter I did not see how I was like greatly to profit the merchant that should employ me.

But without replying by so much as a word, Idonia went over to an oaken press by the stair, presently returning with a soiled leathern volume clasped with a deal of brass and so heavy as to be hardly portable. This she set open before me saying it was a record of trade done, and had belonged to one Mr. Enos Procter, whom she knew, and bade me read in it.

"Lord!" said I, very grave, for I had never seen so intricate and mysterious a labyrinth of words and cyphers as she then discovered. "If Dives the rich man got his wealth that way, I suppose his life to have been something less easy than our divines would have us believe."

"It is a ledger-book," said Idonia.

"Let it be what it will," said I, "it is more than I bargained for."

"Nay, but observe this superscription," she went on, eagerly, "where it commenceth as is customary: *Laus Deo* in London, and so following." She ran her finger along the line commenting with a facility that astonished me. "This is the accompt of one Mendoza, as you see, a wool-stapler of Antwerp, and as the Jews ever be, a punctual man of his money. Look you, now, how differently this other sets to work, Jacob Hornebolt of Amsterdam, and with what gross irregularity he transmitteth his bills of exchange ... nay, here, I mean, upon the Creditor side," cried she, for my eyes ran hither and thither, up and down the page, like any Jack-apparitor, in quest of her accursed Dutch Jacob and his pestilent bills.

"Oh, a truce to this," quoth I, "or else turn o'er to a page where a man's doings be set down in fair Queen's English, and not in such crabbed and alchemist terms as one must have gone to school to the Black Witch that should understand 'em. You point me here and you point me there, and there's Creditor this and Debitor that, with an whole history between them, good lack! mistress, but it makes my head reel to hear tell of."

"I had thought you understood me," said she very simply.

"Then 'tis time you understood I did not," said I, roundly, "and what's more I think you should not neither. It is not maidenly reading;" and indeed I was staggered that so much of a man's actions should lie open to any girl's eye that had the trick of cyphers, to peruse them.

Idonia lifted her eyebrows pretty high, hearing me speak so, but presently shut up the book, and putting it by, said a little wearily—

"I had meant to help you, Denis, but you are over-dull, I find; or if you be apt 'tis not in learning. Some lads there be think to get a living other ways, though other ways I know not to be so honest, though haply as easy."

'Twas on my tongue to retort upon her with a speech in the same kind, but I had to confess I could not frame one half so wittily, and therefore said very tragical—

"I stay not where I am not welcome," and taking up my cap, bowed very low to Idonia, who for her part, paid no heed to me, and although I halted once or twice on my way to the door, stood averse from me, as being careless whether I stayed or went.

"I am not reckoned over-dull at sword play," I muttered, when I had got as far as I could, without departing altogether.

"Oh, if you think to fence for a living, sir," said Idonia, over her shoulder, "I pity your father."

"He needs none of your pity, mistress," cried I.

"I know not where better to bestow it," she replied, "unless it be upon a boy with twelve shillings and no wit to add to them."

Now, how one I had so handsomely benefited could yet run into this excess of obstinacy as she did, I stood astonished to consider, and in my heart called her a thankless wench, and myself a preposterous ass to remain there any longer. Notwithstanding had I had the sense to read the account between us whole, I doubt Mistress Avenon owed not a whit more to me than I to her; although in my resentment she seemed then a very Jacob Hornebolt, and as gross a defaulter upon the balance as that dilatory Hollander.

"Then I leave you to better companionship," said I, having run my length, "and to such as have at the least the wit to please you, which I have not, all done."

What she would have said to that I cannot guess, for before she could speak there came a thundering rattle at the door and a voice calling upon her to open in the Queen's name.

"Dear God!" whispered the girl. "'Tis the soldiers come," and stood facing me, distraught and quaking.

"Is it you they seek?" I asked, quick, but could not hear what she answered me, for the knocking drowned all.

"Up the ladder," I bade her. "Go, and draw it after. I will abide the event."

'Twas this advice steadied her, although she refused it. Instead, she shook off my hand that would have led her, and going to the ladder by which I had descended, drew it away from the trap in the wall and laid it along the floor.

"They would but use the same means to follow me," she said, and so without more ado went to the door and opened it. A score of halberdiers burst into the hall.

"What is your will, masters?" demanded Idonia; and her pride I had before denounced I found commendable enough, now she directed it against these intruders.

One that seemed to be their Captain stepped forth, and having slightly saluted her with a hand to his morion, turned leisurely to his following, and bade them shut the gate; which done, he posted them, some before the ways accessible to the hall, and the rest under a sergeant, in the rooms above it, that he commanded them strictly to scrutinize. The soldiers had no sooner obeyed him than he drew forth a paper largely sealed, which he told us, with a great air, was Her Grace's commission and gave warrant to search this message of Petty Wales for any such as might seem to be obnoxious to the Queen's peace, there harbouring.

The Captain was a tall, ill-favoured youth, of a behaviour quite lacking of courtesy, yet well enough matched to the task he had in hand; for he spoke in a slow and overbearing voice that betokened as much doubt of another's honesty, as satisfaction for the power given him to apprehend all that should withstand him. Idonia and I stood some distance apart, and after a swift glance at me, the Captain addressed himself to the girl solely, and with so evident a mistrust of her, as it maddened me to hear him.

"Your name, mistress?" said the Captain.

"Idonia Avenon," she replied carelessly, though I could not but grieve to note how pale she continued.

"And your father, he lives here with you?"

"He is dead," said she.

"Who inhabits here, then, besides yourself?"

"A many," replied Idonia, "though I have not their names."

The Captain turned aside to his lieutenant with some whispered word of offence that made the fellow smile broadly; and at that I could no further refrain myself.

"Stay within the limits of your commission, sir," said I hotly, "and keep your jests for other seasons."

He troubled not so much as to turn his head my way, but took up his examination of Idonia again.

"Nor you know not their trades either, I suppose?" said he with a sneer.

"Saving this man's here present," replied the girl, "who keeps the books of accompt in a great merchant's counting-house."

You may judge whether I gasped at that, or no; and perhaps the Captain noted my alarm, for he inquired at once who the merchant might be I served.

"'Tis Mr. Edward Osborne," said Idonia, "unless I mistake."

"It is," said I, and remembering Mr. Nelson's words, added boldly that he was Governor of the Turkey Company; but inwardly I said, "Whither doth this lying tend?"

"And what purposeth he in this house?" demanded the soldier, somewhat taken aback by our credible answers.

"What, but to learn me in the keeping of accompts?" replied she.

"Ah, an apt scholar, I doubt not," cried the other, raising his chin insolently.

"I think I am not so backward for a maid," said Idonia modestly, and reached forth her hand to the great ledger-book I had so maligned; the which I now saw turned to an engine of our salvation; for opening it at the former place she continued:

"He instructs me that herein is set down the merchant's commerce with one Mendoza, a wool-stapler of Antwerp, and a Jew, who despite the scandal of his unbelief, is, as appeareth plainly, an honest man. I pray you, sir, follow me," said she, and directed him to the page, "to the end you may correct me if I be in error."

I never saw a man's countenance fall so as the Captain's did then; who having formerly stood so stiff upon his right, was now ready to compound upon almost any terms; only Idonia would not, but interrupted his pish's, and his well-well's, and go-to's, with a clear exposition of the whole matter of wool, the while I, her supposed tutor, stood by with open mouth and a heart charged with admiration of her wit.

"Enough," shouted the Captain, at last. "I came not hither for this, as you know, mistress, who are either the completest accountant or else the prettiest wanton this side Bridewell Dock. Halberdiers, have a care!" cried he, and so returning to them with a curse, marshalled them into a body and would have withdrawn them forthwith, when a cry from one of the chambers aloft suddenly sounding out, he ordered them again to stand to their arms and ran forward to the foot of the stairs. I chanced to look at Idonia then, and blessed Heaven that her examination was done, and all eyes save mine averted from her, for she shook like one in a palsy and staggered backward to the wall. I had bare leisure to follow her thither and support her, before the whole troop of those that had gone above returned down, bearing along with them in their midst a man whom they held, or rather dragged along with them, so without strength was he, and all aghast.

"A good capture," said the Captain in his slow, cruel voice, and bade the guard stand back from the abject fellow, but be ready to prevent his escape. "I thought not to have had so fair a fortune," said he, "although our information was exact enough that you lay here, Master Jesuit, whom I believe to be (and require you to answer to it) that notorious Jacques de Courcy, by some called Father Jacques, a Frenchman and plotting Jesuit."

"I am a poor schoolmaster of Norfolk," said the man, very humbly.

"Do you deny you are this Courcy, and a devilish Papist?" asked the Captain again.

The prisoner looked around wildly, as if he hoped even now to get free, but the ring about him was too close for that, and the pikes all levelled at his breast. Something of the dignity which despair will throw over a man that hath come into the extreme of peril, sustained him mercifully then, so that he who was before but a pitiful shrinking coward, became (and so remained to the end) a figure not all unmeet to the part he played.

"Were I to recite my creed," said he very low, "you would but make mock of it; while for yourself, I see you be already minded to work your will upon me."

"We go no further than our Prince commands us," said the other loftily.

"And I, no further than my Prince hath enjoined long since," said the Jesuit.

"Pish! words!" replied the Captain. "Do you still persist in denying that you are Jacques de Courcy?"

But the prisoner stood silent. Then one of the soldiers that stood behind him went forward and took him something roughly by the collar, bidding him answer; but the Jesuit turning about to see who it was detained him thus, his coat burst open, and we saw he wore a little leaden crucifix about his neck. A shout of laughter greeted the discovery. "To the Tower with him, march!" cried the Captain. But ere they could seize the man he had leapt forward upon the pikes, and by main force taking one of the pike-heads into his two hands he thrust it deep under his shoulder.

After that I thank Heaven that I saw no more, for Idonia swooned away, and I almost, in horror of that poor hunted man's death. The halberdiers bore the body off with them, nor paid the least regard to us twain, but left us where we were, Idonia prone upon the cold flags of the hall, and me above her, tending her.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH I BEGIN TO EARN MY LIVING

Take a town for all in all, in its sadness and pleasure, the shows that pass through it, the proclamations of kings, the tolling of the great bell, marshallings of men-at-arms and sermons of clerks; whatever it be distracts or engages it, I say you will find, take all in all, full the ten twelfths of a town's business to lie in the mere getting of wealth.

And in the exercise of this its proper office, I think that government, whether good or bad, interfereth less than is supposed; for at the best, that is, when the merchants and retailers be let alone (as would to Heaven some great Councillors I could name did understand the matter so), 'tis then that the interchange of goods and money is most readily and happily effected; but at the worst, that is, when some untoward imposition or restriction is laid upon the trade of a city, it results not that men labour any the less at their buying and selling, but that their lawful and expected profits be diverted, in part, into other men's pockets. Which for all it is wrong enough, yet it makes not, I am bold to say, one single vessel to go lacking her cargo, nor one merchant to break upon Change. So a fig for Westminster! this way or that, trade holds; and men bend their thoughts thereto, howe'er the wind blow.

Now, I am no philosopher (my father having exhausted the philosophy of our family), yet no man may live in London (as I had now done, for above three months) but certain considerations must needs thrust themselves upon him, and though he be no great thinker I suppose that everybody knows when he is hungry; and being so, goes the best way he can to remedy that daily disease.

And so it came to pass that, greatly as I detested to confine myself to the weary commerce of trade, I nevertheless did so, and for the plain reason that I could not help myself, having no money left, and not being willing to remain any longer with the good folk on the Bridge, at their charges. How I was received by Mr. Edward Osborne into his counting-house I will tell later, but received I was, and there strove to acquit myself honestly, so that within about a month (I think) I could cast up the moneys of his great Day Book with but a two-three errors to each sum total; the which, considering my inexperience, I held to be not amiss.

It was while I was thus employed in the narrow wainscoted business room where Mr. Osborne did the most of his business, in Chequer Lane off Dowgate, it was then, I say, that I came to perceive the magnitude and staggering quality of the City's negotiation and traffick; so that I came near to rehearsing the Bridge warden's eulogy upon the London merchants, as also his expressed contempt for all such dignities as did not issue from the fount of trade. Nay, I went further, for neglecting the current rumours and plain news even, that all stood not well with the State, I applied myself to my accompts and disbursements, deriding Mr. Secretary Cecil and the Queen's Council for a parcel of busybodies, and reducing the policy of England to the compass of a balance sheet.

And yet, had I had the wit to know it, we were at that season come into a crisis where bills of lading availed little, and the petty laws of invection and navigation seemed like to be rudely set aside for the sterner laws of conquest and foreign tyranny. Already, even, and before I had left the Combe, there had been that business of the signing of the National Bond and the imprisoning of many that favoured the overthrow of Her Majesty; the which had been followed and confirmed by such other acts and precautions as imported no easy continuance in our old way, but rather

the sure entering into that narrow passage and race of fortune, whence the outlet is to so infinite and clouded a sea, as a people's help therein lieth solely in God and their own clear courage. Queen Mary of Scotland was yet alive, poor scheming desperate woman! and lay a guarded danger in the land. The Dutch States, moreover, that ought to have been our firm ally, we had done our best to alienate and set at variance against us, who should have helped them at all adventures; we being of one Faith together, and hating alike the encroaching cruelties of Spain. To these considerations there was added the fear of treason in our midst, and the increasing evidence of the Jesuits' part therein, which the Queen's advisers sought upon all occasions to discover and trample out; as indeed I had myself been witness to, in that unhappy self-murder of Jacques de Courcy in the secret dark mansion of Petty Wales.

It had been a little subsequent upon that dreadful affair, and when the soldiers had left us, that I said to Idonia—

"In Heaven's name, mistress, what is this house used for then?" For I was all wan and trembling with that sight of sudden death, else I should not have spoken so harshly to the girl, who was in like case with myself, and clung to me piteously for comfort. But at my words she seemed to recover herself, and loosing her arms from my neck, she cried—

"And what have I to do with other men's takings, that you question me thus? If aught displease you, so! I cannot better it. And ... and ... oh, Mr. Denis, what a face of pity did he show!"—she covered her eyes as she spoke—"and when he fell ... Oh, these things are not rightly done; they stifle me. They wrench my faith. They leave out God."

I did what I could, but it was with her own strength she must fight down the terror, I knew, and so after awhile desisted. When she had her full reason again she thanked me that I had not confused her with many words.

"For I know not to what excess I should have run otherwise," she said. "You have a quiet spirit, and are no talker, Master Denis. But there be some things I cannot bear to see, and one is the sight of a single man, even a malefactor, so overcome and brought to his death.... But now," assuming a resolute cheerfulness she added, "now we must converse awhile upon your own affairs, before you go. For look you, sir, I have named you already of Mr. Osborne's service, and must make it good. Else that stark-limbed Captain may hear of it, and discovering we lied, make us smart for it."

"But how shall I prevail with Mr. Osborne to take me into his service," said I, "who know not an invoice from a State paper?"

"Everything hath a beginning," replied Idonia, "and if Rome was not builded in a day, it is not likely we shall make an accountant of you presently."

"No, nor in less time than it took to build Rome in, I doubt," quoth I, pretty rueful. "But tell me how came yourself to be so proficient in that study of cyphering?" For indeed the thought had puzzled me not a little.

"By the good offices of one I purpose shall now assist you," said Idonia; and told me that it was a certain scrivener named Enos Procter that had lived a great while in Genoa, where they greatly affect the putting of their negotiations into ledger-books and have well-nigh perfected that invention.

"This Procter returning home after many years," she proceeded, "suffered shipwreck, and was cast away upon the coast of Spain, whence he was fortunate to escape half dead, and with the loss of all his goods, saving only that monstrous ledger-book, which he would by no means relinquish. He then coming to land here, at the Galley Quay, besought us to harbour him and give him food and dry clothing, for which he offered to pay us out of his wages when he was able. This we did, and he, being a man of his word, repaid all that he owed, and more, for he taught me something of his reckoning in cypher, and of the distributing of every item of receipt or payment, this side and that of an accompt, according to the practice of the great merchants of Genoa."

And thus it came about that the day following Idonia did as she had promised, and wrought so with Mr. Enos Procter that I was immediately taken into his employment upon my faithful promise to serve the lawful occasions of the Governor and Merchants of the Turkey Company, and (implicitly) those of Mr. Enos Procter, their principal clerk and accountant.

With this worthy gentleman I spent, as was natural, the greatest part of my time, and under his dark sidelong eye I managed my untrained quill. He was a spare small man of an indomitable quick-silver nature, that by long sojourning in the South, had become half Italian. When he worked (which was always) he had a habit of warping his face into the most diabolical grin, while he rolled upon his stool, back and forward, with the motion of one rowing in a boat, muttering of a thousand foreign curses with which was oddly mingled the recital of the particular matter he had in hand. Thus, "Corpo di Baccho," would he cry, "these bills mature not until the fifteenth day of June, and there is scarce ... a million devils! Master Cleeve, had I formed my sevens that gait in Genoa I had been sent to the galleys for a felon.... Of Cartagena, say you? There be none but knaves there, and none but fools to trust them. 'Tis an overdue reckoning, with thirty-five, forty, forty-five thousand ducats, eh! forty-six thousand, Signor, Don Cherubin of Cartagena, whom the

Devil disport!"

But whatever the frailties of Mr. Procter, he was a kind and forbearing tutor, and even succeeded in imparting to me also some portion of his own extravagant affection for his great leather-bound books of account; for he loved them so, as no man ever perceived more delicate beauties in his mistress than this fever-hot scrivener did in the nice adjustment of Debit to Credit; with all the entries, cross entries, postings and balancings (to use his own crabbed language) that went to it. He was, in sooth, a very Clerk-Errant, that ran up and down a paper world, detecting errors, righting wrongs, spitting some miscreant discount on his lance of goose-quill, or tearing the cloak from some dubious monster of exchange. I could not but admire him, and the way in which he regarded all things as mere matter for bookkeeping.

"They talk of their philosophies," he would say, "but what do they come to more than this, and what ethick goes beyond this: that every right hath a duty corresponding, and every fault its due reward? Ay, is it so? and what do we poor scribes, but set down each accident of our trading first on the left side and after on the right side, the one to countervail the other, and all at the end to appear justly suspended in the balance? We have no preferences, we accountants, we neither applaud nor condemn, but evenly, and with a cold impartiality, set down our good and bad, our profits and losses, our receipts and disbursements, first as they affect ourselves and our honourable Company, and after as they affect our neighbour. For consider," he would proceed, leaping about on his stool, with the excitement that a defence of his art always engendered, "consider this very item of the silk bales, upon which my pen chances at this moment to rest—you have it here to the credit of Mr. Andrea of Naples, seventy-nine pounds in his tale of goods sold to this house. But is the matter so disposed of? I trow not. For turn me to the account of goods purchased during this year of our Redemption, and what have you? Seventy-nine pounds upon the debtor. Philosophy, boy! There is nought beyond that, I say, nor, for conciseness of statement, ought to equal it. Mr. Andrea's rights become, transposed, our duties; and for the silk bales you wot of, they be a load of debt to us, to account for to our masters, and likewise a strengthening of the credit of this honest Neapolitan as any man may read.

"Notwithstanding, there be some," said he in conclusion, with a sigh, "and they divines of the Church, that call in question the avarice and hard-dealing of us that live by barter and the negotiation of merchandize! Yet where will you find (to ask but this one question, Mr. Denis), where do you find written more clearly than in these ledger-books of ours, that oft-disguised truth that what we own we do also and necessarily owe?"

In such mingling of high discourse and plain work, then, I continued with Mr. Procter a great while, in the dusty and ill-lighted counting-house in Chequer Lane; earning my small wages, and upon the whole not ill content with the changed life I now led, for all 'twas so far removed from the course I had planned, now many months past, but had already half forgotten. Sometimes my duties would take me to the wharves where a great barque or brigantine would be lying, about to leave upon our Company's business for Turkey or Barbary; or else some other vessel would be returning thence to London Pool, whither I repaired to the captain and supercargo to receive their schedules and sealed papers. It was this last employment I especially delighted in, and indeed I can scarce conceive any pleasure greater than I found going very early in the morning to one of the quays upon the River or as far as to Wapping Stairs, where I would watch the great ship slowly coming up upon the tide, between the misted grey banks and dim roofs of Limehouse and Rotherhithe; and could hear the rattle of the chains, and the joyful cries of the mariners that were now, after their perilous and long voyage, safely arrived at home. Then would I take boat and row out into the stream, hailing the master in the Company's name, who presently would let down a ladder by which I climbed aloft upon the deck, where the crew would gather round to hear news and to tell it; which telling of theirs I chiefly delighted in: the thousand adventures they had had, and the accounts of strange lands and mysterious rich cities beyond the seas. Thereafter, when the ship was berthed and our business settled, I would bear off the master and the other officers to Mr. Osborne, to be made welcome, when all was told o'er again, though with more observance paid to such matters as affected profit and loss than formerly I had heard the tale. The black little accountant was had in too, at such times, into Mr. Osborne's privy room, where we all sat round a great table, with Mr. Osborne at one end of it, very handsome and stately in his starched ruff and suit of guarded velvet; and the other principal persons of the Company about him on either side, to listen to what the shipmen related, as I have said.

Then, if the adventure had been profitably concluded (as sometimes it had not, though generally there was a fair sum cleared), oftentimes would the Governor invite us to supper with him, and me with the rest, I know not wherefore, save it were that Master Procter had praised me to him for my diligence in his service. And so we passed many a merry evening.

Yet this so brief summary of that time doth not cover all, nor perhaps the greater part, since it leaves out my thoughts and hopes, which, all said, is more of a man's life than all the other; and by so much the more is noteworthy. And these thoughts of mine, particularly when I lay quiet in bed in my little chamber on the Bridge, were concerned about an infinite number of matters I had no opportunity to consider in the hurry and press of the day. So, I would think of my father, his evil estate, and the increasing pain he suffered, for I had lately received news of him by the hand of Simon Powell, who, honest lad, had bound himself to a smith of Tolland in order to be near his old master and comfort him. Of Idonia, too, you will guess I thought much, and the more that my business hindered our often meeting, though sometimes I saw her when I went early in the morning to meet my ships; for later in the day she begged me not to come to the house, and

greatly though this condition misliked me, I accepted it to please her. But, to be open, it was this consideration of all I dwelt upon which most held me in suspense, so that many a night I have slept scarce a wink, admiring what the secret were that compassed Idonia about, and the strangeness that clouded all her affairs.

"What is it goes on in that great still house?" I cried an hundred times, and would con over with myself the half hints I had already received; as of that swaggering Malpas, his attempted entrance; of the concealed Jesuit; of the way of communication between the part of the house Idonia lived in and the den of thieves where I had encountered with Andrew Plat. Then I would fall into a muse, only to be awakened on the sudden by the recollection of Guido Malpas, with his lean and crafty face pressed close against the window of the room I had sat in with Nelson and the Queen's yeoman, or by that older memory of my uncle Botolph who, I was assured, was also Skene the attorney. Why, by how great a rout of shadows was I compassed! and what a deal of infamy lay ready to be discovered upon the lightest hazard or unconsidered word!

Nay, had not my love for Mistress Avenon so wholly possessed me, I doubt I should have found in any the least strict review of her behaviour something covert, and diffident; as indeed she had already imparted from time to time much that a man more suspicious than I might have seized upon to her disadvantage. But such notes as those troubled me not, or rather troubled not the passion of love I cherished for her; though, for the rest, I infinitely desired her removal from circumstances that I could not but fear to be every way perilous.

Now it befell one day, in the early summer, that all London was awakened with the news that the *Primrose*, Captain Foster, was coming up the Thames with the Governor of Biscay aboard, a prisoner. So admirable tidings had not often of late been ours to receive, and to pother one's head with business upon such a day was not to be thought on, at least not by the younger men; and thus I was soon running down to the Port to learn the whole history of that memorable adventure, wherein the *Primrose*, of all our shipping that lay upon the Spanish Coast, and that were suddenly seized upon by those Papist dogs without warning or possibility of escape—the *Primrose*, I say, not only got off free, but in a most bloody fight destroyed the soldiers that had privily got aboard her, and took prisoner their great Viceregent, or (as they call him) Corregidor.

A host of men and women pressed upon Master Foster about the hithe, applauding his so notable courage and triumph, and deriding the poor Corregidor, who nevertheless remained steadfast, nor seemed not to regard their taunts and menaces, but stood very quiet, and, I vow, was as gallant a gentleman to see as any man could be. Now, all this taking place about the Tower steps, whither for convenience the prisoner had been brought, it followed I was but a stone's cast from Idonia's dwelling, which no sooner had I remembered than I utterly forgot her admonition not to see her except early, whereas it was now high noon; but leaving the throng of idle cheering folk, I crept away at once to the desolate house in Thames Street, where I made sure of finding her.

As I went along, the bells were ringing from every steeple, which so filled the air with victory, as I was intoxicated with the sound of them, and on the sudden resolved that, come what would, I would tell Idonia I tired of this sleek clerk's life I led, and would be done with it straightway. Alas! for all such schemes of youth and stirrings of liberty! and yet not altogether alas! perhaps, since 'tis the adverse event of the most of such schemes that prepares and hardens us for bitterer battles to come, when the ranks are thinning and the drums are silent, and the powder is wasted to the last keg....

To my satisfaction I perceived the gate to be open, and as I came up I saw a flutter of white in the dark of the hall, and a moment later the mist of gold which was Idonia's hair.

"Good-morrow!" I bade her laughingly, as I entered and closed the door behind me, "you did not look to have me visit you now, I warrant, when the bells be all pealing without, and a right success of our arms to acclaim!"

Idonia stood, one foot set upon the lowest stair, quite still. Not one word of greeting did she give me, nor was any light of welcome in her eyes, which were wide open and her lips parted as if to speak, though no word said she.

I hung back astonished, not knowing what to think, when I heard a rustle among the stuff beside me, and a man's voice that said very quiet: "How now, master, methinks that is overmuch familiarity to use with one that is under my ward."

I faced about instantly, laying my hand upon my sword, for this untoward interference startled me not a little. Even in the half dark I knew him; for 'twas none other than the attorney, John Skene.

THE SIEGE OF PETTY WALES

We had stood awhile fronting each other thus, when "By the Mass!" cried Mr. Skene, clapping his open palm upon my shoulder, "'tis Mr. Denis Cleeve or the devil is in it," and so led me forward to the light.

"Are you two acquainted, then?" asked I donia, her whole countenance of gravity exchanged for a bewildered expectancy. "Oh, why knew I not of this sooner? Oh, I am glad," she said, as she advanced to us, her bosom heaving, and such a light of pleasure in her eyes, as it seemed to lighten the very room itself, that had formerly showed so darksome and sinister.

"But tell me," she went on eagerly, and came so close that I could feel the warmth of her breath on my cheek, "is it a long while you have been friends?"

Now so struck with amazement was I, no less by the suddenness of this recognition than by the satire that I donia's innocent speech implied, as I could answer nothing; but leaving the handling my sword, I stood resigned to what should follow.

"I think we be hardly friends yet," said Skene, with a laugh of great good nature, "and 'twould be a bolder coroner than I, who should pronounce all enmity dead between us. Am I not in the right, Master Cleeve?" he ended, on a note of some sharpness.

I looked up at that, first at I donia to see how she took the matter, and then at Skene.

"You are right," said I, "seeing you stole my money."

"I knew your answer before you spoke it," replied Skene, nodding; "but yet I am glad 'tis out, for all that. A hidden grievance is like a dagger worn without a scabbard, that often hurts him that carries it more than him he means to use it against. Nay, I am not angry," he said with a motion of his hand. "Your case seemed to you perfect; I do not blame you. Nor will you me neither, when you shall hear all that hath befallen me 'twixt that and this. As for your money, it is safe enough; and had it passed your mind to inform me of where you lodged after you left Mr. Malt's in Fetter Lane, why, Mr. Cleeve, you could have had it any time for the asking." His tone had changed while he continued to speak, from a certain eagerness to slow reproach.

"But, sir," I began, when he stopped me peremptorily.

"It is ill bickering thus before a girl," he said, and going to the great press whence I donia had before fetched forth her ledger-book he opened it, and without more ado restored to me my parcels of gold. I could have cried for very shame.

"Count them o'er," he said, with some contempt, but that was the word that sent my blood back into my head again. For I was assured the man was a villain and had meant to rob me, though by his cunning he had put a complexion of honesty upon his dealings, and forced me into the wrong.

"I will do so later," said I, coolly, "but now I would ask of you one further question. What name shall I call you by?" Meaning, should I name him my uncle Botolph or no, and so waited for the effect of that, being sure that by how little soever he should falter upon his reply, I should detect it. What measure of astonishment was mine, then, when he turned to I donia with a smile.

"You shall reply for me," said he, "since you know me pretty well."

"When my father was killed," said I donia, looking at me with her eyes all brimmed with tears, "in that affray under John Fox that I have already related to you, my mother dying soon after of grief, she left me a babe and quite friendless save for Mr. Skene, whom if you have anything against, I beseech you put it by for my sake, and because he had pity on me."

Then going a pace or two nearer to Skene she laid a hand on his arm and said—

"Sir, Mr. Cleeve has been kind to me, and protected me once from a man's insolence when you were absent. I had thought you had been friends before, but it seems you were enemies. We have enough of them, God wot! and a plenty of suspicions and hatreds to contend with. Then if it please you, sir, be friends now, you and he, else I know not what shall be done."

Whatever anger I still held, it died down (for that time) at her entreaties, and 'twas with no further thought than to have done with all strife that I offered my hand on the instant to Skene. And although later I did somewhat censure myself for such precipitancy of forgiveness in a case that more concerned my father than myself, yet I silenced my misgivings with the thought that I might take the occasion Skene had himself offered (when he said that I should learn what had befallen to prevent his meeting me on the day appointed in Serjeants Inn), and, if he should then fail to satisfy me, I would take up my quarrel anew.

The attorney took my hand with an apparent and equal openness.

"I thank you," he said, quietly, "and so enough. Much there may be to tell of that hath passed; but 'twill not lose by the keeping."

A burst of ringing from All Hallow's Church, close at hand, seemed to greet our new compact, or truce rather, with a shower of music.

"Why, how merry the world goes!" exclaimed Idonia. "Is it the Queen's birthday, or some proclaimed holiday? For I remember not the like of it."

I told her it was for the victory of the *Primrose* that had returned with the Governor of Biscay a prisoner.

"And would to God we had more captures in that kind to show," quoth I, "for they be a curse to the land, these Spaniards and black lurking Jesuits."

But no sooner were the words spoken, than I remembered the Jesuit Courcy that had been discovered here in hiding in this house, and so breaking short off I gazed full at Skene. He met my glance without winking.

"You speak very truly," he said, slowly, "and I swear by all I hold most sacred, that had I the ability, I would so deal with that tribe as the Israelites wrought with them beyond Jordan, and utterly destroy them." Now, whether in this sentence the man spoke his true mind, or damnably forswore himself, it remained with the sequel to be made clear.

Idonia gave a little movement the while he was speaking, but whether by way of assent or of a natural shrinking I could not tell. For myself I said nought, but regarded Skene steadfastly, who soon added—

"I have business above, Idonia, which cannot be stayed. It is past dinner time, and if Mr. Cleeve will so honour our poor house, I would have him remain to dinner. I am engaged abroad, an hour hence, and will take my meal then." He smiled. "Mr. Denis I leave to your care, child, and believe you will use him well." He turned on his heel and went upstairs, leaving us alone together in the hall.

To relate all that ensued I think not necessary to the understanding of this history, and also I should find it difficult to set down in writing or by any understood rule of grammar the things that were said, or elliptically expressed, between us. For Syntax helpeth no man at such seasons, nor Accidence any maid; 'tis an ineffable intercourse they use, from which slip away both mood and tense and reason, and the world too ... all which apparatus and tophammer overboard I found it surprisingly easy to convey my meaning; to which Idonia replied very modestly that 'twas her meaning no less, and with that I withdrew my arm and blessed High Heaven for my fortune.

Idonia was a radiant spirit that day. Her hitherto coldness and the backwardness with which she had been constrained to receive me I perceived had been due to no other cause than a fear how her guardian would regard my visits to the house; for despite his kindness to her (which she acknowledged) I saw she stood in awe of the man, and hardly ventured to cross him in the lightest matter.

"Neither doth the company he maintains about him like me overmuch," said she. "But now I care less than a little for such things, who shall soon leave this place for ever; ah! dear heart, but I shall be glad of such leaving, and no man shall ever have had so faithful and loving a wife, nor one," she added swiftly, "so apt at the book-keeping."

I was thinking of her hair, and said so.

"And I was thinking of a long-limbed boy with but three hairs to his beard," quoth Idonia, "and for wits to his skull, not so much as would varnish the back of a beetle. Why, how much doth your worship earn by the week?"

I told her, seven shillings, besides a new suit twice in the year.

"It must be bettered, master," said Idonia, grave at once.

"It shall be better spent," said I.

"But 'tis not enough by the half," quoth she.

"Well, we will eke out the rest by other ways, of which I have a store in my head, that, being happily vacant of wits, hath the more room to accommodate them."

Idonia's answer to this, I, having considered the matter, pass over as foreign to the argument.

'Twas a little after, that starting up, she cried: "Why, bless my dull appetite, we have not dined! And I with a fat hen upon the spit, fresh from the Cheape this morning."

"'Tis not enough by the half," said I, mocking her; but she would not stay longer, saying I must eat, for I had a big body to fill; though for my head, that was another song and a sad one; and ere I could let her, she was gone from me into the great kitchen beyond the stair.

I sat awhile where I was, marvellous happy and free from cares; and saw my love of this maid, like a new Creation arising from the waters, to make a whole world for me where before

was nothing; for all seemed to me as nothing in comparison with her, so that I forgot my troubles and losses, my wounds and sickness, my father, my home, my uncle...

"What was that?" said I, sitting up straight, for I had, I think, fallen into a sort of trance, and imagined some noise had disturbed me.

"Hist!" came a whisper from aloft, and I leapt to my feet.

"Who is it speaks?" cried I, searching every corner of the dark hall with narrowed eyes.

"Hist!" said the voice again. "There is danger threatening to the folk of this house."

"What danger is there?" said I, who had now discovered who it was spoke; for there, lurking in the aperture of the wall to which the ladder reached up, I saw Andrew Plat, the lyric poet, his tawny hair wild about his pale face, and his neck craned forward like a heron's. Yet for all the comick figure that he made I could not neglect the apparent seriousness of his warning, and especially when he added in a hoarse voice—

"Where is Mistress Avenon? O, fair Idonia, hasten hither, if you be within this fated mansion!"

"She is in the kitchen cooking a fowl," said I, pretty short, for this adjuration of his mightily displeased me.

"Cooking!—she!" returned the poet, with a despairing gesture. "Her lily hands! O monstrous indignity, and cruel office of a cook!"

I had thought he would fall headlong down the ladder, so distractedly did he behave himself, and called upon him sharply to tell me wherein lay this danger to Idonia he affected to fear.

"I stand alone against a host," said he with a flourish, "but Love maketh a man sufficient, and will fortify these arms."

"Enough," I shouted, "or I will assuredly call in question the authorship of a certain rascal poem you wot of."

"It is mine own," he screamed, and danced upon the sill for very rage. "There is no resemblance betwixt my verses and that preposterous fellow's—whose name even I know not. I vow there hath been nought, since Catullus, writ with so infinite and original an invention as my Hymn to the Spring," and off he went with his "Fresh Spring, the lovely herald of Great Love," with so great an eagerness of delight in the poor cuckoo-chick words, as I could not but pity him.

By this time our loud and contrary arguments had been overheard, and ere he had done Idonia came running forth from the kitchen, her sleeves above the elbow, and her dress all tucked up; while a little after, Skene called over the stair-rail to inquire out the cause of this disturbance.

"'Tis Mr. Plat, the celebrated poet," I replied, "that says there is a danger threatening this house, though of what nature I cannot learn."

Suddenly recalled by my protest, the poet clapped his hand to his forehead and cried out:

"O, whither hath my Muse rapt me? Return, my soul, and of this tumult tell..."

"Out with it, man!" quoth Mr. Skene, in his usual calm manner of command, that did more than all my attempts to come by the truth.

"They are returning from the Tower," said the poet, "whither they have carried off the Spaniard. They are coming hither, an incredible company with staves and all manner of weapons."

"And wherefore?" demanded Skene.

"Because 'tis constantly affirmed that you have here concealed a sort of plotting Jesuits and base men that would spy out the land, and enslave us. Nay, they go so far as to say that one such was caught here not so long ago in the open light of day, for which they swear to beat the house about your ears and slay you every one.

"Be silent," said the attorney briefly, and we all stood awhile attentive to any sound of menace from without. We had not long to wait, for almost on the instant there came a shuffle and rush of many feet, and that deep unforgettable roll, as of drums, that means the anger of confused and masterless multitudes.

Skene addressed me: "You alone have a sword, sir. You will cover our retreat."

I bowed without speaking, and unsheathing my sword, went to the door, where I clapped to the bolts and made all fast.

"Oh, Denis, Denis!" cried Idonia, who saw it was intended I should remain behind. "Sir," she

pleaded with her guardian, "he must come with me where'er you lead me."

"He will follow," said he; and then to Plat—

"Do they compass the whole house, or is there a way of escape beyond?"

"There is yet," he answered, having made espial; "for the attack goes but upon the street side, leaving the lane free. But lose no time, for they be already scattering—ah! 'tis for fuel to lay to the door," cried he, all aghast now and scarce articulate. "Come away after me," and so was gone.

Skene said no more, but cast a quiet glance at me, that I knew meant he trusted me, and for which, more than all I had yet had from him, I thanked him. But hard work had I to refrain myself, when Idonia besought me with tears not to leave her and, when presently her guardian bore her half fainting up the ladder, to appear smiling and confident.

"I will follow you by and by," said I, and then sat down, suddenly sick at heart, upon a wooden grate of ship's goods; for the tumult at the gate was now grown intolerably affrighting.

"You must try another way than this," said Skene, who had now gained the sill, and I comprehended that he was about to draw up the ladder after, in order to mask their way of escape when the door should be forced in or burnt. I nodded, remembering that Idonia had been moved by the same consideration formerly, when the soldiers came with their warrant of search; and so the ladder was drawn up and I left.

It is not fit that I should describe all that followed, for no man can exactly report all, when all is in turmoil and an unchained madness hurrieth through every mind; madness of defiance and that hideous madness of fear. For if ever man gazed into the very eyes of the spectre of fear, it was I then, whom nameless horror possessed, so that more than once, when the hammering upon the gate shook even the flags with which the hall was paven, I shrunk back to the farthest corner in the dark, biting my knuckles till they bled; and even when the door was half down, and I at the breach making play with my sword to fend off the foremost that would enter, I felt my heart turn to water at the sight of that grinning circle of desperate and blood-hungry faces, and at the roar as of starved forest beasts ravening after their prey.

My defence came to an end suddenly; for although I might have made shift awhile longer to avert the danger from the gate (but indeed I was nigh spent with my labours there), I chanced just then to gaze sidelong at the shuttered window upon the left of it, and saw the shutter all splintered, and a fellow with a great swart beard, already astraddle on the ledge. Without a moment's parley I ran my sword half to the hilts into his side, and as he sank down in a huddle, I left the sword sticking where it was, and ran for my life.

How I got free of the house I know not, but it was by a window of the kitchen, I think, or else a hole I burst for myself; but by some venture of frenzy I gained the street, or rather an enclosed court, arched under at the further end by a sort of conduit or channel in the wall; and so, half on my belly shuffling through this filthy bow, I came by good hap into the open street, that I found was Tower Street, where at length I thought it safe to take leisure to breathe, and look about me.

But even here I was deceived of my security; for my passage having been, I suppose, easily discovered, there wanted not a full minute ere I heard an halloo! and a scraping of feet beneath the arched way, by which I perceived I was hotly followed. I stumbled to my feet straightway and fled westward up the street, while in my ears rang the alarm: "Stop thief! Jesuit! Hold, in the Queen's Name!" which, the passengers taking it up, and themselves incontinently joining in the pursuit, made my hopes of safety and my little remnant of strength to shrink together utterly, like a scroll of parchment in the fire.

I knew not how far I had gone, nor whither I had come, for all was strange to my disordered vision, but I know now that I had won nigh to the standard upon Cornhill (having turned to my right hand up Gracechurch Street); and holding my pursuers a little in check by repeated doublings, I found myself free to take refuge within a certain yard giving upon the public way and close against a tavern that is called the Leaden Porch. But fearing to remain openly in this place for any man to apprehend me, I cast about for some means of concealment, for I could go no further; and there being by good hap a cart standing under the arch in the entry (the carter having doubtless betaken himself to the tavern, as is the custom of such men), I got me up into it, painfully crawling beneath the load it carried, which was, methought, something oddly protected by a frame of timber hung about with linen-stuff or such-like, that I skilled not to discover the use of; and here I lay close, until very soon, as well from mere exhaustion as from a despairing indifference to the event, I fell asleep.

No thought of the money I had been so near to recovering disturbed my repose, nor indeed for three full days after did I so much as remember to have left the treasure bags behind me in the hurry of my flight.

CHAPTER XVII

HOW I FOUND AN OLD FRIEND IN A STRANGE PLACE, AND HOW PTOLEMY RENEWED HIS STUDY OF THE LATIN TONGUE

I was in the midst of a most excellent and comforting dream of Idonia, to whom I was again happily united, and we (if I rightly call it to mind), Duke and Duchess of Salamanca or of some place like-sounding, when I was roughly awakened by the jogging forward of the cart, to which succeeded that a head was thrust in betwixt the curtains of my extemporary great bed, and a voice cried: "Woe worth the day! what gallows'-food is here?"

Making no question but that I was arrested, yet being still bedrowsed by sleep, I felt for my sword to deliver it up, but finding it not, said very stately: "Master Corregidor of Biscay, I yield myself prisoner," and so lay quiet, expecting what he should do further.

But that he did, squared so ill with all I had ever heard tell of the manners and behaviour of Corregidors or persons anyway notable, that I sat up and stared upon him gaping; for he gave but one look at me, and after, with such a squealing of laughter as one might, suppose coney to utter when they catch a weasel sleeping, he parted the curtains wider and leapt into the place where I lay, when he seized me by both my hands and wrung them up and down as they were flails.

I was wide awake enough now, but yet for my life could not comprehend the carter's apparent joy of seeing me, though as to that, 'twas a better welcome than I had looked for, either from the Corregidor of my dreams, or from the rabble I was so vehemently pursued by.

Now when this mad fellow had something slackened the excess of his complacency, I took occasion to demand whether my remaining within that frame of timber (that was none too big for us twain) were irksome to him. "For," said I, "if it be not, I have my reasons why I should wish not to leave it."

At this he ceased his exercise altogether and, withdrawing both his hands from mine, regarded me reproachfully.

"Hast so soon forgot Cayphas his mitre, and the ark of Noah?" said he.

"Now of all the saints," I cried out, "'tis Ptolemy Philpot, the pageant master!" and saw that the sanctuary into which I had entered was within the pageant itself, I having my elbow even then resting on the wooden box of his puppets, while about the narrow chamber were hung the tabards, hats, pencils, fringed gowns of damask and other necessary imagery of the interludes he showed. As to Master Ptolemy himself, he had altered not a jot, so that I marvelled I had not sooner known him, except that I was then heavy with sleep; for he spoke still in the same small child's voice that issued from the middle of his bearded fierce countenance, as a bird may twitter in the jaws of a pard that hath caught her. Methought indeed that the agate colour was somewhat more richly veined upon his nose, and that his body was more comfortably overlaid than I had formerly remembered it, and supposed therefore that his bargain with Skegs had gone happily against my fears and to his advantage; the which he presently certified.

"But it was not by any of the miracles or moralities he sold me, that I have prospered," said he, "for wheresoever I played it none would stay out the Deluge, no, not even in so goodly and well-considered a town as is Devizes, whither I went first of all, and where I enacted the same by the special desire of one Sir Matthew Juke, a principal person there and a famous traveller, as he said; who took upon him to condemn my navigation of the Ark ere I had half concluded: affirming that if ever I should use the sea as he had done, and so handled my ship in the manner of that voyage to Ararat, he would not answer for it, but I should be utterly cast away and my venture lost. Howbeit he gave me, in parting, a tester, which was all I had from that place, and yet more by a sixpence than I got at Winchester whither I proceeded, and where I was fain to exchange the Deluge for the Miracle of Cayphas; but 'twould not serve, and I was suddenly put forth of that town of the beadle. Thereafter I essayed the Pageant of Melchisedec as they have it at Chester, and though some part of it liked the people pretty well, yet I lost as much as I gained by reason of a tempest that broke while the piece was a playing, whereby the motion was all drenched by the rain and the hangings torn by the wind and Father Abraham his beard came ungummed from his jowl, so that it cost me five shillings to repair all that damage. Then did I make shift to patch my patriarch figures with such modern habits and familiar countenances as should betoken our famous captains (as I told you I meant to do), and to that end paid to a clerk of Wallingford fifteen shillings for the writing of a history-comedy, wherein were such assaults and batterings and victories as suited to our late accomplishments at sea; but the illiterate and filthy vulgar would have none of it, swearing I had turned Noah into Captain Drake, and Mount Ararat into Vigo, with so slight addition upon their originals as 'twas scandal to behold; all which was true enough, doubtless, but the outcome mighty unprofitable to me, who thereby beheld my fortune to be slid from under me and myself fallen into absolute beggary."

"How then came you to repair your fortune, Ptolemy?" said I, who had listened with an

infinite, though secret, struggling against laughter, the while he had related his tale; "since it seemeth you no longer play your pieces to an unkind audience."

Mr. Philpot plunged his hand into his great beard, holding his chin thoughtfully, and after, withdrawing it, rubbed his forefinger slowly along his nose, as though to assure himself that he had come unchanged, and with all his attributes, through the storm and multitude of accidents that had assailed him.

"'Tis an old saw and a true one, which saith, the miracles that happen daily we suffer to go by us unregarded; as the sunrise, and the return of consciousness after sleep, and so following," said the pageant master, in his small reed voice, "and the same holds as with the rest, with plays also; namely, that what is too well known is still neglected, and where no itch of expectancy is, there will no wits be scratching. 'Twas a reproach of the Athenians of old, master, that they went continually in hopes to see or hear some new thing, and your stage-audiences differ in nothing from your Athenians, save only in the tongue they use, and the clothes they wear. I know not how the truth came to be revealed to me," he proceeded pensively, "but come it did and in a good hour; I mean the truth that every man loveth secrecy and concealment, as a child his coral. What did I then, but clap all my stock together, my mysteries, miracles, pageants, interludes and all, pell mell, Herod and Pilate their proper speeches and cues to boot: the diverting jests of Noah's wife with the admonitions of Abraham and the sentences of the Angel; and from this medley so made I fished forth such chanceable and ill-matched dialogues as a man must needs be Solomon or a very ass that would read sense into them, or confess to discovering a propriety between speaker and spoken word. Why, list but a moment, and I will show you the whole matter," and with that he drew forth a torn quire of unstitched papers that was marked at the head, "The Masque of the Noble Shepherds," which word *Masque*, said Ptolemy, served to cover all such impertinent matter as he should choose to bring in, and acquainted me plainly with the way he had gone about his authorship; in which, nevertheless, I perceived so great an ingenuity, and such apparent gravity and fantastick leading up to nothing in the world as, although I could comprehend no meaning in the piece (there being none to comprehend) yet I could well enough imagine the curious and close attention with which it would be heard and seen.

"I tell you I have had all sorts of men come away pleased with it," said Ptolemy in conclusion; "and each for a different reason, and because he saw in it something that seemed to him to mean this, which another said was that, and a third, the other." He looked upon me triumphantly, and then added: "Why, I mind me how at Lambeth once, where I played, a Bishop and two Canons of the Church thanked me handsomely for my holding up the new sect to ridicule; and contrariwise, a little after, a Puritanical grocer demanded of me in a whisper how in this play I dared to rail as I did upon Church Government."

"But do you represent your persons still as prophets and peasants as they used to appear?"

"I do not," said Ptolemy, winking upon me very shrewdly, "but rather I have ennobled them all, and call this one a King, and that an Earl, and the other the Knight Alderman of Tavistock—in which place I was born; for it behoveth us to honour the place of our birth; besides that, for the rest, your Englishman loves nothing better than to see great persons on the stage, and aye to follow the fashions that he sees there."

We were interrupted at that time by the drawing aside of the curtain, and a shock-head boy, appearing, said—

"We be arrived at the place, master. Shall I sound the tabor and speak the prologue now?"

"Whither are we come?" I asked, for I thought I might safely leave my city of refuge and depart.

"This is Tower Hill," said Ptolemy, "and I see we shall not lack of a sufficient audience to-day," he added, looking forth through a chink upon the throng that was already assembled.

Now when I heard that we were returned to the very place whence I had fled in fear of my life, I shrank back into a corner of the frame and begged Mr. Ptolemy to let me remain with him until the place should be clear of folk and I able to go home without molestation. He seemed, I thought, somewhat astonished, but at once agreed to keep me by him, and indeed to do anything in return for the kindness I had shown him at Dunster, only requiring me to give him as much room as I could for the better management of his puppets, which he was now busy fitting to their wires, while conning o'er the several parts they were due to speak.

Surely, no hunted man hath ever been so fantastically sheltered as I, above whose head kicked and dangled Mr. Ptolemy's wooden kings, and Aldermen of Tavistock; and ranted their unintelligible speeches to the delight of them that would have torn down the show in a fury had they known how near to them I lay concealed.

In some such sort as follows the Masque commenced; the boy with the tabor speaking:

"My worthy master Ptolemy
Hath writ this prologue painfully
To th' intent that by it ye may see
What otherwise were dim.

The scene though pastorally laid
Is traversed by an Earl, arrayed
In shepherd-guise to win a maid
That loathes the sight of him."

and so retired amidst a buzz of excitement.

We had got through about half the piece in this manner, and without mishap, when Mr. Ptolemy, that was then in the midst of a complaint of the wooden Earl for the unkindness of his shepherdess; Mr. Ptolemy (I say) turned to me suddenly, quite neglecting his book, and very eagerly—

"How now," quoth he, "here is the very opportunity come I have sought long since, and yet had nigh forgot it. What, I prythee, is the meaning of that little word *Quemadmodum*?"

But ere I could reply, there arose such a shrill murmur of resentment from the auditors as no seeker after truth might withstand, and Mr. Philpot, abruptly recalled to the necessary affairs of his love-sick Earl, had much ado to get him to his feet again, he being by this time all entangled by the wires of the motion. However, he did so, and the play proceeded again.

When all was done and the boy sent round amongst the people to solicit their gratuities, Mr. Ptolemy breathed a deep sigh, and having put up his puppets into the box, closed the lid and returned upon me with a courteous request that I should now deal with him at large upon the subject of *Quemadmodum*, which word, as he told me, he had oftentimes met with in the books he continued to collect in the Latin tongue, and to which, when he should have acquired a competency, he intended to devote his leisure.

"For there is nothing comparable with your Latin," said he, "to give a cast of magnificence to that a man may say. My father had some words of it that he used chiefly when he was wroth, and they did more, I warrant you, than all else to bring him off happily in his disputations. The principal saying he used was ... nay, I have forgot it, but 'tis no great matter, for it was not of so catholick an application as the *Quemadmodum*, nor so well sounding."

I was about to comply with his simple demand, when the lad again thrust in his head betwixt the hangings, crying out: "Come forth, master, instantly; for here is my Lord Lumley come from his great house above, that requires you to answer certain reflections made upon him, as he thinks, in that character of the rejected Earl; which will lead us the devil's gait an' you satisfy him not of your simplicity."

"What told I you?" exclaimed the poor baulked Latinist, regarding me with so tragick a countenance that I lost all inclination to laugh, "there's none sees aught in all this but he hath brought it himself hither in the thick o' the head, with a pest! and what is a poor player to do!"

He went away very sorrowfully to my Lord Lumley's house, and I, that saw my way open (being unwilling to attend his return), slipped from my cover and was soon enough safe at home. This adventure ended, and the night come and gone, I went the next day to my work again, and there continued for above a week, casting accompts under the strict eye of Mr. Enos Procter, and never venturing nearer to Petty Wales than sufficed to show me there was a pretty strong guard of yeomen kept about the broken gate, who suffered no man to approach closely, nor none (if indeed there were any left within) to depart thence. I guessed by this, and by their leaving unprotected that lane behind the other half of the great house, that they knew not of the connection and passage between the two parts; and so tried to comfort myself that Idonia was got safely away, or if she yet remained, that she did so without any extraordinary peril; though for all that I was very miserable to be kept ignorant of her present lodging, but resolved that, before many days were passed, I would forcibly undertake her discovery and rescue, or at the least come by such certain information as should lead to our meeting, and the renewal of our pledged troth.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN WHICH I RECEIVE A COMMISSION AND SUFFER A CHECK

The execution of my design was precipitated by a certain accident which at that time befell me, and was by me regarded as happy or untoward, according as I dwelt upon the recognition of merit it implied, or upon the delayed return which it necessitated, to my intercourse with Idonia Avenon.

It happened then, that about eight or nine days after that riotous siege of Petty Wales, I was at work upon my high stool in Chequer Lane, where I was deeply engaged in computing the value of the several shares the merchants of our Company were willing to take, upon charter party with

the owners of a certain ship called *The Saracen's Head*, Captain Spurrier, that was about to set forth upon a voyage into Argiers, and thereafter, unless otherwise ordered, yet further to the eastward. Being so occupied as I say, there entered the counting-house a servant of Sir Edward Osborne's that desired of Mr. Procter to tell him whether one Denis Cleeve were there in that place; to which he answering that he was, and that I was the man he inquired after, the servant saluted me very properly and bade me go with him to the Governor's, that is, to Sir Edward Osborne's, who expected me at his house.

Marvelling what this should intend, I nevertheless made haste to follow the servant, and was soon after ushered into a great chamber, wainscoted very high up with walnut-wood, and with a table at one end of it, whereon was a woollen cloth spread, very rich, and having the coat and crest of the knight's family woven into the midst of it. About the walls were hung many fair pictures, all of men save one, which was of a maid of about ten years, that had a very winsome smiling face and clustered curls about it. In this chamber I was left alone to wait for some small space, when after there came in to me Sir Edward, very gravely, together with his secretary, who straight sat him down at the table and mended his pen.

Upon their entering I did my courtesy, which the merchant quietly received, and then, motioning me to a chair, immediately commenced:

"I have sent for you, Mr. Cleeve," said he, sitting down also, "because I have had a good report of you from him in whose charge you work, Mr. Procter, who moreover hath made the addition that you are of a spirit somewhat higher than seemeth necessary a scrivener should have, they being for the most part a mild and inoffensive sort of men—what say you, Mr. Secretary?"

The man of the pen seemed greatly taken aback at this direct challenge to his manhood, and could but stammer out that secretaries were doubtless more faithful than arrogant, stealing at the same time such a spleenful look upon me as I thought he would have sent his quill and ink-horn after it.

"Faithful—ay," said Master Osborne, with a little smile about the eyes, "but nowise arrogant. I hope you be not arrogant either, Mr. Cleeve," he added, fixing his gaze upon me.

"I hope not, sir," said I, "nor think I am not either, for, as Mr. Procter hath often told me, there is nothing checks a man's pride like the book-keeping, that makes him put down a thing on both sides an accompt in a just balance; which pride forbids a man to do."

"It is as you say," cried the Governor, mighty pleased, "and you answer well. But now tell me—and it is necessary you should deal with me openly—do you truly love your ledger?"

I thought upon this question a few moments ere I replied that I could not say I loved it, but that I thought it a necessary book; that I sometimes found a singular delight in the pursuing of the intricacies of some great reckoning, but that I hated the casting of page upon page of moneys, which seemed to make a miser of my head though I was none by my pocket. In fine, that I honoured accountancy as a servant but could not live with it as a friend.

The merchant listened with no small amusement until I had done, and then sat still, dallying with a packet of papers he had on the table before him, from which at length he took one, and, running his eyes over it carelessly, said—

"Upon what task were you engaged when I sent for you hither?"

I said, upon the business of the apportioning the affreightment of the *Saracen's Head*.

"Know you aught of the Captain of that barque?" said he.

"It is one Master Spurrier," I said, "a Harwich man, that was one time Captain of the *Crane*, a ship of the Queen's."

He nodded the while I spoke, as having knowledge of these particulars already; and then demanded whether I were advised of how he came to leave Her Majesty's service, which I had not, and said so.

"Give him the Testament, Mr. Secretary," said the Governor, and made him propose the oath to me that whatsoever I now heard I should be secret in and faithful to all just commands laid upon me to fulfil them. Which done, he leaned back in his deep chair and said—

"Mr. Cleeve, I am about to put into your hands a commission that may carry with it some difficulty and more danger, from neither of which have I any fear that you will anyways shrink. But there needeth more yet than either courage or a common promptness to this affair, wherein must be used an aptitude to see without seeming to do so, and to assume such a negligence of behaviour as none that watches you (for you shall be watched) may perceive you be attentive to aught beyond your proper and understood duties." He paused awhile, and I was glad of this respite, for my heart was beating so high that I could scarce conceal my agitation. Nevertheless I had commanded myself before he renewed his discourse.

"I have received intelligence but two days since, from Her Majesty's principal Secretary, that there be in this realm a sort of dissatisfied men that, taking advantage of our present dissensions with Spain, and hoping to secure to themselves an infamous benefit by the same, have privily made offer of their services to our enemy, as to discover the nature of our defences and extent of our preparedness to war. So much is certainly known, and many names of such spies are set down. But, as is always found in these devil's hucksterings, there is as it were a frayed edge and doubtful margin of disloyalty, upon which a man may stand in question how to appraise it; and of this quality is our Master for this voyage, I mean Captain Spurrier. Something that the Governor of Biscay hath let fall (that lies now in the Tower) inclines their lordships of the Council to attach this Spurrier instantly for a traitor; but yet they would not altogether so, hoping as well for absolute proof of his villainy as that, by our apparent slackness, he may be led to betray to one supposed his ordinary companion, the full scope and ambit of his dealings; which being (to use the figure) noted in our chart as shoals, we may circumvent them and come safe to harbour.

"I design, therefore, that you go supercargo of the goods of this vessel, that is to sail from the Pool in a week's time, and mark each particular accident of the voyage, as what ships spoken, and what course taken, together with the customary behaviour of the Captain, and with whom of the officers he chiefly consorts. If he have any books or papers you may overlook their general tenour but not handle them, for sometimes they be traps set for that very purpose. At Argiers, if you get so far and be not, as I suspect you will be, waylaid by some Spanish ship of war, you may send me word; but yet either way, observe your man closely; to whom, so far as may be possible, you shall make yourself necessary. I say no more. It may happen that my advice shall receive supplement from Her Majesty's Council, to whom I have already given in your name as the agent I think likeliest to their occasions; who on their part received it very well, knowing your father for an honourable man and a loyal gentleman."

The Governor rose from his place, and, bowing slightly, went from the chamber, leaving me alone with his secretary, who, with less courtesy than I thought he might have showed, instructed me in the customary duties of a supercargo, and further bade me apply to him for whatever money would be necessary for clothing and the rest, as well as arms, with which I was now wholly unprovided.

In conclusion he warned me to be discreet, wagging his head three or four times as he said it, I suppose for my better apprehension of his meaning.

"Oh, I warrant you, Mr. Secretary," said I, "I will not write my suspicions, nor speak them in soliloquy, nor yet clap my ear to the keyhole, unless I see cause."

"I have a mind to clap my cane to your worship's jolthead," quoth the secretary, "until you see a thousand stars."

No sooner were we parted (friends enough) and I in the street, than the desire to see Itonia and bid her bless me to my sea-faring, came so hot upon me as I made off directly to the thieves' lane of Petty Wales, and neglecting all discretion, scrupled not to enter it publicly. But the door by which I had formerly gained ready admittance was now closed, and so strongly barred that I knew at the first glance 'twas impossible of access; while the one small window beside it was likewise shuttered up and made firm. I rapped twice or thrice as loud as I dared, but none answering, I went away at length, exceeding downcast. On the day following I came again; and the day after that too; but was still repulsed by the defences that I supposed the thieves, and perhaps Skene too, had raised against any attacks of the soldiery, or of the populace, that were full as formidable as any army, and more cruel because without discipline. Meanwhile the day nearly approached when our barque was to set sail, and I with my secret strange commission to go with her. I had writ a large letter to my father at Tolland, in which I made mention of this voyage, begging him to remember me in his prayers, and promising him withal, that I would not run into unnecessary dangers, nor yet (as some have done) be so busy in my office as to smell out treasons where none was meant. As to the nature of my trust I could not deal explicitly with him, because of the oath I was bound by, but I gave him to understand that our cargo of woollen stuffs was the least part of my care, and whether safe in the hold, or at the first occasion to be made jettison of, my owners would (I thought) require no particular account of it at my hands. With the writing of this, and one visit I was called upon to pay to my lords of the Council, in which I met with more great men and ran into a thicker mist of wisdom than hath been my fortune either before or since; with these matters (I say) I eked out my waiting time heavily enough, for I was necessarily released from my daily attendance at the counting-house, having besides much to see to in the getting of such clothing and arms as the crabbed secretary thought necessary to my equipment.

Well, walking thus very disconsolate one evening upon the Bridge, where I had been concerned with a certain armourer there to buy my new sword and hangers, whom should I light upon but, Master Andrew Plat, the lyrick poet? At least by the back I judged it to be him, for he looked another way, and was, I soon perceived, about the game he had so decried to me as a nefarious pursuit and never by him followed, namely stealing; for he stole silk goods from one of the open stalls that are here set up; the which he so skilfully accomplished as I saw he was no freshman, but rather an exhibitioner and graduated master.

"Your Spring hath issued into a passing fruitful Summer," I said very low in his ear, "and I think you did well to leave your lyricks for this art, and the thankless Apollo for thieving

Mercury."

He leapt about with a white face, gasping.

"I have stolen nothing in the world," said he.

"No? Then come with me, Master Poet, for I must learn this way of getting stuff that is neither paid for nor yet stolen," and taking him under the arm I carried him with me at a great pace along the Bridge, pausing not till we were come near to the end of Thames Street, and in full view of the watch set about the battered door of Skene's house.

"I go no further this way," cried Plat, struggling to get free.

"We have nothing to fear, friend, being honest men."

"Loose me, I say."

"On conditions I will."

"Ah—conditions?"

"That you admit me to your house."

"Never! Besides I have no house. I am homeless and destitute, master; indeed I am in bitter want."

"I will mend that," said I, and drew forth a gold piece from the pouch at my belt. "But now, ponder the alternatives well, and as you choose, so shall it be yours to have. Either you grant me presently the liberty of that part of Petty Wales which you were used to inhabit, and take this noble for your pains, or else I will hale you to yonder watch, and denounce your theft of those silks you have about you."

He shivered throughout at my proposals, and after hung as limp upon my arm as a drenched clout.

"If I should do as you desire, good master," said he, in a voice I could scarce hear for its thinness, "our Captain would kill you out of hand."

"Forewarned is forearmed," said I. "Your next reason?"

"That the place is locked."

"Otherwise I should have had no need of you. The next?"

"Oh," he wailed pitifully, "do not drive me thus, master. I dare not obey you."

"Forward then with a good heart," said I cheerfully, and bore him a further ten paces down the street.

"Stay, stay," cried the poet, "I yield, I capitulate, I open the gates ... and now give me my gold."

I did so, and released him, when, cautioning me to be silent, he left the street by a certain byway, and threading such devious passages as in the growing darkness I could scarce distinguish to follow him by, he led me on, up and down, through courts and alleys, beneath penthouse roofs and neglected arches, until I came near to doubting his good faith and was about to use my old device of retaining his allegiance at the sword's point, when he came out suddenly into the lane, at the opposite end to that I had before entered it from Tower Hill; and so stood still before the secret low door. In the little light there was (for the lane was lit by no lantern nor lamp of any sort) I could not see whether the door was still barricaded, but judged it to be so by Mr. Plat's climbing up about a fathom's height of the naked wall, setting his feet within some shallow crevices he knew of, but I could not perceive, until he made his standing sure, when, he giving a little strange cry like a bird's, immediately a stone of the wall seemed to be removed, some three spans' breadth, and into the opening thus made Plat incontinently disappeared. I was mad to be fooled thus, for I questioned not but he would now leave me to shift for myself: when with an equal suddenness his head was thrust forth again, and he said—

"If you list you may mount up hither, though I warn you a second time, that all here within, me only excepted, be ungodly thieves, pilferers, cut-throat knaves, railers against the State, having no honesty nor purpose to do well, illiterate, owning no government, lawless, base men that acknowledge no merit of authors nor rules of prosody, ignorant beasts, amongst whom I, a singular sweet singer, remain until a better fate calls me hence to crown me with never-fading bay and myrtle," and so, without more ado, he went away from the aperture, which nevertheless he left open, as he had promised; but whither he went I know not, for I did not see him after, nor have I come by his published poems that were to render him immortal.

I gazed after him a great while, as in doubt whether he would return, but then shifting my new sword behind me, I addressed myself to the ascent of the wall, which, after much scraping of

my flesh, and one or two falls headlong, I surmounted, and had my hands fast upon the nether edge of the vent. It was but a brief while ere I had drawn myself up and scrambled through; when I found I stood in a narrow and void chamber, very foul and ill-smelling, from which I was glad enough to be gone.

But scarce had I gone forth into the passage beyond, when I heard such a tumult and angry debate of voices as remembering Plat's assertion of the Trappist silence that was in this house enjoined upon pain of death I could not but suppose some very especial cause to have hurried the thieves into so presumptuous an offence. It was now altogether night within the building, and with these stifled cries sounding in my ears, and execrations of men I knew to be desperate villains, I confess my heart quailed within me and my strength all leaked away, so that I could not even fly by the way I had come, but stood with my back to the wall, sweating and staring, with never a thought but to remain unperceived. Of the fashion and plan of the house I was perfectly ignorant, having but once before been within it, and then trusting to another to guide me through its secret recesses; yet I remembered that there was somewhere that great wide staircase which Plat had said was the common room and meeting-place of the thieves, where they transacted their affairs and shared their food and treasure. 'Twas, then, with a clutch of horrid surprise that I now saw, low down before me, a sort of men bearing lanterns that issued from the shadows, and began to scale the stairs; for by the uncertain light I could both distinguish them and that I myself was standing in one of the open galleries that surrounded the stairhead and overlooked the body of the hall. But no sooner had I understood this, than any further discovery was thwarted by a man's brushing past me in the dark, so close I could hear him fetch his breath, and instantly upon that there followed the click of a snaphance.

"Stay there, you creeping lice!" he said, speaking in a cool middle voice, "or I will shoot you down, man by man, where you stand."

At this unlooked-for interruption, the men upon the stair came to a sudden stand, while some that had advanced higher than the rest, fell back, so that all hung crowded together, their lanterns raised and their eyes seeking upward for the man that held them at bay. I have never seen so dastardly and scarce human visages as they showed, some with bleared eyes and matted hair, others dark and vengeful, their brows and cheeks scarred with wounds or open sores. Here a man went half-naked like a savage Indian; there one wore a ragged coat guarded with silver; all were armed, though with such a hazardous sort of weapons, that but for the assured skill and practice with which they wielded them, one might have dared oppose the whole rout single-handed. But in their hands these weapons seemed proper as claws to beasts, or tushes to a wild boar, and instinctively, as the man raised his pistol, I drew my sword from the sheath. The noise I made attracted the man's attention to me, and he would perhaps have spoken, had not the bloodthirsty rout, recking no further opposition, sprung forward again.

"Hold, I say," cried the man, and this time with a dreadful menacing vehemence. "I am your Captain, and you know me well. Another step, and there's a soul writhing in hell. Back, go, you and your eggers-on! I understand this business, as I understand too who 'twas inflamed you to mutiny."

"You took my wife, you scum!" shouted a great fellow clad in a shipman's garb, that held a rust-bitten cutlass in his hand, and struggled forward through the press.

"Ay, did I, Jack?" quoth the Captain satirically, "but 'twas to provide you with another bride, a bonny lass that the Churchmen say we shall all embrace by turns. 'Tis that world-old witch I mean, named Death," and at the word, he discharged his piece full in the other's blotched face, and laid him bleeding on the topmost stair.

A great hush came over the mutineers when they saw this deed, that moreover so sickened me that I had already raised my sword to stab the murderer in the back and have done with him, when the thieves suddenly broke with a yell of defiance and charged upward in the mass. What I would have done had I had longer to deliberate I know not, but in default of any counsel to direct me, I sprang into action on the side of the very man I had intended to slay, and shoulder to shoulder with him, fought down those ghastly cruel faces and reaching hands.

It was soon enough over. They were no match against the arms we used, and the Captain calmly loading and discharging his piece, the while I kept the stairhead clear with my sword, we made them give back foot by foot, until at length each was scrambling to be the hindmost, and even used his knife upon his companion in the urgency of his retreat. All the lanterns were out now, save one that a dead man held in his stark and upraised hand; and by that light the Captain wiped his smoking barrel clean.

"It is well concluded," said he, "and I thank you for your help, young sir."

I said nothing, so deeply did I loathe him.

"We must be gone," he said, "and that quickly. The watch is up, and the whole place will be searched before dawn. They will be caught like rats in a drain," he added softly, drawing in his breath. "Follow me."

He led me to the room I had left, and helped me to get through the hole in the masonry, after

which he followed me.

"This way," said he, and took me through the lane until he came onto Tower Hill, when, skirting the precincts of the Tower, we crept unchallenged through the postern in the wall and turned down a narrow cart-way to the eastward, I beside him, but neither speaking one word, until after an hour or more, with waiting and going forward, we got to Wapping a little ere daybreak, to a desolate mean tavern of shipmen close beside the river, which we entered without question, for none seemed to be stirring; and here, in the filthy guestroom, the Captain flung himself down.

"A good night's work, master," said he, grinning, "in which you did your part so well that it grieves me much to name you my prisoner."

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH I COME TO GRIPS WITH MR. MALPAS

In the wan light, with which the room was now gradually filling, I looked at the man I had been so strangely moved to succour, and knew him for my old antagonist, Guido Malpas. However, I said no more at that time, but that, prisoner or no, I sufficiently loathed him; and so, crouching myself together upon a settle by the hearth (for I was exceeding weary), I fell asleep.

It was bright day when I awoke, stiff and uneasy, and sat up on my bench. The room was empty, and 'twas some while ere I could collect the passages incident to my being there, which, when they had skulked back like tired truants to my brain, yet so monstrous did they seem as I could scarce believe them to be acted events, but rather fantasies left caught in the web of my waking; while as to that boast of the thieves' Captain, that I was detained prisoner in an open hostelry, I laughed aloud at the recollection.

I got off my plank bed, and going to the door called for the host to fetch me something to breakfast on, but he not immediately answering to my demand, I thought fit to show him something of my quality, as befitting an agent of the Queen's, and was for jangling down my accoutrements on the table (which never fails of bringing your tapsters running to attend on a man) when, to my astonishment, I found sword and belt both wanting, and my purse gone with the rest.

I stood horror-stricken at this catastrophe, for I perceived that while I slept that malignant thief had shorn me, and so clapped my hand to the bosom of my jerkin, where I had put up a letter I had received from the Lord Treasurer, or rather from his secretary, touching my late appearance before the Council; but almost before I had my hand in, I knew certainly that it had been stolen, as indeed it was. Now, here I saw instantly was matter enough to ruin me either way; with them that employed me, whose secret I had so slovenly betrayed; with them I was to spy upon, if (as I could nowise doubt) Malpas was of their company and privy to their designs. Nevertheless, come what would, I must report my delinquency to Sir Edward Osborne, and abide by his censure, and for the rest hope that 'twas not yet too late to supersede me by some other agent upon that voyage wherein I had promised myself no small success and glory.

Very heavy, then, but otherwise determined to do my plain duty in this affair, I went out by the door with a firm step, pondering all the cross accidents that had befallen me within so short a space, and very wishful that all were at an end.

"Not so fast, Mr. Agent," said that sneering voice of Malpas, whom I near stumbled over as he sat on an upturned cask by the door. "I have been expecting you this two hours, but would not disturb you; for it is unprofitable discoursing with a man of your capacity to slumber. Well, do you walk in your sleep now, little Denis, and dream upon treasons? or have you your waking sense yet? I trow you seem reasonable glad to see me, by which I suppose you to be in your right mind, and so bid you good-morrow."

For answer I drew off my glove, and struck him a stinging blow across the mouth with it; upon which he leapt up, and, being extraordinarily powerful, flung me from him into the tavern, where I lay prone upon the flags. He did not shut the door, but stood in the doorway, of which his head brushed the lintel, and, folding his arms, proceeded quietly—

"That was unwisely done, Denis. This house is well respected, and not known for brawling. Besides, I mean we should be friends; that is, should understand each other, as friends do—and traders. For in the way of trade all goes by mutual understanding and a common trust; as I to sell certain commodities and you to remit certain moneys; or contrariwise, you to part with such merchandise as I am willing to lay up in store and to render a good account of, little Denis—as you shall confess, at the proper season. 'Tis a settlement somewhat deferred doubtless, having had its beginning, if I mistake not, in a street before a barber's I used formerly; whereafter was

added to the bill a shrewd item or two, whereby I come near to losing all credit: a grave chance for such a merchant-adventurer as I; but I am since restored. I allow a handsome rebate, Denis, that you put into the reckoning yesterday. But the balance, upon the whole, going against me, it remains that I must pay."

"Had I known you last night," I said bitterly, "I would have cut off my right hand rather than second you in that pass."

He laughed long and low at that.

"Do you regret the issue so much?" said he, "Then it was your ignorance more than your sword I have to thank, it seems. Well, 'tis no more than the world's way, that generally sees good deeds done at random, but calculated villainies."

"As stealing that poor devil's wife," said I.

"Ay, or the lying-in-wait for Captain Spurrier upon commission," said he. "So all's one for that."

"You have read my packet, then?"

"Even as you were licensed to read his."

"And may do so yet," said I, galled beyond restraint by his gibing.

"I think you something misapprehend the matter," said Malpas, with a malignant affectation of patience, "or have forgot that I said you were to be detained here. In what fashion you shall go forth, I have not yet decided, but be assured it will not be to do a mischief, Mr. Denis. There be other interests must be first consulted thereabout, and order taken."

I went over to the hearth, and sitting down upon the settle, strove to get my position clear in my mind. That I was to be kept here until the rest of the conspirators should be assembled to try me, I understood well enough from Malpas his words; though of whom this council of treason should consist, I could not guess, except that Spurrier himself were one, and probably Skene. To escape I judged was impossible every way; partly because I was entered into the very home and chosen fortress of these plotters, of which the retiredness and neglected condition sufficiently secured it from the vigilance of the watch, and partly because I was a prize too valuable to be let slip. I considered that, besides Malpas, there were certainly others in that house, pledged to my ward, and answerable for me to him. Of Malpas I knew enough, as well from that the poet had told me of the thieves' Captain, how he killed out of hand any that dared disobey him, as also from my own observance of his behaviour, to stand in little doubt of the upshot of my business, how it would go. Nevertheless, I do not remember to have had any extraordinary fear; none, I know, comparable with that palsied terror I suffered when the mutineers came first upon the stairs in the night. Perhaps it was the knowledge that formerly when we were matched together I had come off happily, and left Malpas with so deep a thrust as even now he went limping withal.

Immersed in such reflections, I did not note the passage of time, and was surprised when a little neat fellow, dressed like an ordinary tavern-server, entered, bearing a tray with cheese on and a loaf and a pot of good foaming ale.

"Is it poisoned?" said I.

"Poisoned? Sir—in this house!" cried he, starting back from the table. "Your worship must be ignorant whither you have come—to the *Fair Haven* of Wapping, where all is sound provend and of the best come to port."

"Is it so, indeed, Master Jocelin?" I returned, for I had immediately recognized, in this meek servitor, my old acquaintance of the hostelry over against Baynards Castle. "And how goes it with that fat lump of dough you were to set the yeast of your wit to work in?"

But without the flicker of an eyelid, he answered me: "Jocelin is my name, sir; but as to your dough and your yeast, I understand nothing of your meaning."

I could not withhold my laughter at his recovered innocence any better than I did before at the manifest lapse of it; and laughing still, I watched him put down my breakfast and depart. I fell to with a will after that, and having a wholesome fondness for food, had soon made an end of that meal, which, as Master Jocelin had said, was as good as needs be. The whiles I was eating, my mind wandered oddly away to old Peter Sprot, at home, whose sober admonition to me of the dietary I should follow in London, I had until now (I fear) given no thought to, but judged that I must even yet awhile delay the exact observance of it.

Now it chanced that, looking up when I had about done, I saw Malpas regarding me very earnestly, and with a manner as though he would have asked me something, but apart from the tenour of our late conversation. Marvelling what this should be, I kept silence: which 'twas not long ere he broke, by saying—

"If you confess yourself vanquished and overborne in this business, Master Cleeve, as I

suppose you can scarce otherwise, I upon my part am willing enough to allow that you came off victorious otherwhiles; so that thus far we may cry quits. If there be no love lost between us, there need be no petty rancours nor jealousies, and I am honest enough to say that, now I have lost her, I wish you well of your suit to Mistress Avenon."

"Where is she now?" cried I, starting up.

"Nay, if you know not," said Malpas, "how should I?"

I sat down quite out of heart, for I saw, whether he had news or no, he was still for fencing. Malpas came nearer, and bending low over the table where I sat, laid his two hands upon it, and said—

"You cannot be ignorant that this affair is like to end badly for you, Mr. Denis, and I am partly glad of it, but partly sorry too. Now, I pray you to be open with me; for if I choose I may help you, seeing I have some direction in this place, and of the occasions it is used for. Judging from such things as you have seen doing, upon whose part do you suppose Mr. Skene to stand in these negotiations with Spain? Oh, keep your admiration!" said he, with a sudden sneer. "The reading of your packet makes away all scruples to be longer secret. That there be such negotiations you know as well as I; though of how far they stretch, or who be deep in, I say nothing. All I require at your hands, is that you say frankly whether Skene is on the Queen's part, or upon ours?"



"You cannot be ignorant that this affair is like to end badly for you, Mr. Denis." Chapter XIX

"You acknowledge your part to be contrary to Her Majesty's, then?"

"I said so. Now as you answer me, I swear I will deal with you. I will fling the door wide and let you go forth freely to Mistress Idonia, whose present hiding-place I know; or else I will deliver you over to those who shall choke your discretion in your fool's throat."

"Your treason hath not commenced so well," said I, leaning back from the table, "that hath begun in distrust of each other."

"Be not over long about it," said Malpas darkly; "I am not used to repeat my offers, that, moreover, you see are abundantly generous."

"So generous," I replied, "that I doubt their worth."

"They be surely worth more," said my captor, upon whose brow the blue veins stood out, so sharp a curb did he put upon his mood; "they be of more worth to you, a thousandfold, than the favour or disfavour of that damned, cogging, glib-spoken traitor, your uncle."

He had let it slip at last! My uncle Botolph and Skene were one. And here, beyond belief, I held 'twixt my naked finger and thumb the steelyard by which my uncle's fate should be weighed, who had crossed me at every turn. A word of mine, and he that had first ruined my father's life, and after had robbed him of his fortune, might be contemptuously blotted out, as a man blots out some gross error in a letter he has writ; for that was how Malpas would serve him, could I bring myself to say he stood for the Queen. A little word spoken, and he was condemned, but I was free ... I and Idonia!

Indeed, it was clear justice, both to myself and to my uncle. For I was not to name the man a traitor to his Sovereign; rather, to speak well of him, as I expected a man should do of me. It was (now I was come to think on't) mere decency that I should not be dumb in my uncle's praise whom I had never had any, or at the least overt, cause to mistrust. Put the case the other way; that I thought my uncle's conduct treasonable. Should I denounce him to the Lord Treasurer and the Council? I knew I should not. Should I then denounce him to Malpas for the contrary cause, and upon the slight grounds I had, as of the confession he made to me when the Jesuit was found in hiding in his house? No, certainly.

Why, all that was required of me was that I should confess I thought my uncle honest, as likely enough he was. What should follow upon so fair a declaration imported me nothing. I was concerned with no grudges nor disputes of these men, to bethink me how a plain answer should work with them. Nay, I stood for the Queen's Majesty, upon oath to serve her, and would so stand, God willing, come what might; as Malpas was well assured, who yet had passed his word I was within an hand's breadth of going free; it only stayed upon my word. Then why should I not deal with another so, allowing the honour due to a like steadfastness with my own? My uncle would doubtless be let go free too; or perhaps he was not even so much as come into jeopardy. I had no suspicion but that he was still at large.... Indeed it was very probable.

All this while I sat still, musing upon that I should say, and Malpas stood above me, expecting it. More than once I tried to speak, and Heaven forgive me as I believe, had I spoken then, I should have sent my uncle to his death; but somehow the words would not come. The sophistry was too palpable; the truth too black a lie. I met my captor's eyes.

"If I tell you where my uncle is at this moment concealed," said I, "will you let me go free?"

Snatching at the apparent advantage: "I add it to the conditions of your safety that you do so," he replied swiftly.

"Then you have lost your game," said I, and getting up, I kicked the chair aside and watched his baffled face of rage. "For if you know not that, neither do you know where Idonia is, as you made pretence to do."

"You cursed trickster!" he swore, his voice shaking with an uncontrolled passion; "petty cheat and viper! So, that is it to be! Ay, white face, laugh that you have run me these lengths; I should have known you. 'Sdeath, ye be true Cleeves, uncle and nephew, unprofitable knaves both! Well, I have done my part, but there's more to follow yet and soon enough, uncle and nephew! Ah! and who shall be Idonia's guardian then, when you lie stark? ... Never a word of truth he gave me, that old fox, but kept me still dangling. 'He could not promise me her hand, forsooth, but yet he liked me. She would come to like me too, in time, no doubt; but I must have patience.' Patience—had he such patience to wait when her mother lived, or did he fob off Miles Avenon her father upon that fool's adventure wherein he was presently slain, as Uriah was slain, Bathsheba's man? Ho! a prosperous sleek lover, I warrant you, and a laughter too, until his Margaret died.... I knew that Miles, and though I was but a child when he went away, I remember the pride he had in his pretty frail wife and his joy of Idonia, for she was his proper child, though Cleeve named himself her guardian, for her mother's sake.

"It was that made him terrible, that death of Margaret, and few men dared go near him. But the fit passed. There have been Margarets enow since, in good sooth! though he still held by the child. Perdition! but there needs money to that game, a store, and he was glad of our help at first, and for many a long day after. It was to be fair sharing in all, and whiles I think he parted to the hair. Even to your coming I trusted him, and spied upon you as he bade me, being content to take the brunt, while he lay close. 'Twas then I claimed the maid as a right, but he shook his grey sleek head and paltered. *Patience!* that was the word, then. But it's another word now, Master Denis, for you and for him. Ay, and another word for Idonia Avenon...."

I was amazed hearing him talk so wild, whom I had thought tutored to a perfect secrecy; but his blood was up at my catching him in that baseness of lying, besides that he was disappointed of the hope I had extended and withdrawn, of setting him upon my uncle, whose treachery in their plot he so evidently feared. Why he did not spring upon me there and then with his knife I did not understand, though it was likely he reserved me a morsel to fling amongst his foul co-partners in this business, and a grateful sacrifice.

"Enough of this chat," said I, at length, "for I well perceive your purpose both toward me and

my uncle. But I warn you for the last time I shall that 'tis safest you suffer me, Her Majesty's servant, to go hence free."

"It is refused," he replied curtly, and turning upon his heel, strode out of the room and into the street.

Seeing him gone thus, without mounting any especial guard upon me, I bethought me to examine the defences with my own eyes, and therefore followed him leisurely to the door. A stout sea-faring man was there already, his arms crossed, blocking it. I saw the gleam of a cutlass end beneath his rough jacket.

"Be thou the host of this tavern?" he inquired, with a grin.

Being unconcerned in his needs, I made no answer, and returned to my room. The windows, which were all unglazed, were strongly barred, and I at once saw useless to be attempted. Passing then to the hind part of the house I noted a little postern door that seemed to give onto a sort of jetty or wharf, the inn standing upon the riverside as I have already said; but when I approached it, there was the neat tapster that had brought my meal whistling some catch of a sea song, and polishing of a great arquebus.

"Ho! come not too nearly, master," he sang out, when he saw me, "for these pieces be tickle things, a murrain of 'em! And I not comprehending the least of the machine, it may chance shoot off unawares."

Perceiving that he had his finger pressed to the snaphance, and the barrel turned my way, I judged it expedient to leave Mr. Jocelin to his polishing and retire. Every avenue then was guarded, as I had looked it should be, and so, without any particular design, I walked slowly up the narrow, rotten stair into the chambers aloft. I went into three or four, all vacant and ungarnished by any piece of furniture or hanging, which meant sorry enough entertainment in a place purporting to be an inn, thought I, though proper enough to a prison.

But scarce had I gone forth into the gallery again, when I thought I heard a sound that proceeded from a chamber I had not till then observed, in a retired and somewhat darksome corner beyond the stairs. I held my breath to listen, and the little rustling noise beginning again after a space, I went directly to the door and opened it.

Mistress Avenon sat within, in a nook by the window, tearing a paper she had in her hands.

"Idonia!" I cried, and running forward had her in my arms and her hot face close against mine. "My bird," said I—for so she seemed as a dainty bird caught in an iron trap—"my bird, who hath brought you into this infamous place?"

She leant back a little from my shoulder, yet without loosing me, and looked up into my eyes with such a deal of honest, sweet pleasure to see me there, that I had to pretermit my anxiety some while, and indeed had near lost it by the time I renewed my question.

"Why infamous?" inquired Idonia in her turn, "save that I knew not you were here too. But now it is certainly not infamous, though something lacking of luxuries, and a thought slack in the attendance they bestow upon guests!"

"You must not misconstrue my insistence," I said, "and you will not, when you shall have heard all I have to tell you. But for the first, where is Mr. Skene?"

"He brought me here early last night," said she, but with a little of reproach in her voice that I knew meant I wasted good time idly.

"And whither is he gone?"

"Do you desire he should be present, then?" asked Idonia, very innocently.

"No, but I would warn him if I could," I replied gravely, and so told her everything as it had befallen me.

"Always that Malpas!" whispered the maid, and trembled so I had to clasp her tight to me.

"He does not know you are here, that is clear," I said, as indeed it was manifest to both of us.

"My guardian hath used this place often ere this," said Idonia, "and I suppose none thought to prate of what happened ordinarily."

"Perhaps he has left you to seek out Malpas," I conjectured, and at this she nodded.

"They have had some design in hand together this great while, of which I know nothing."

I did not tell her that I knew it well enough, and was even commissioned to prevent it, but said—

"Wherever he hath gone, Malpas hath certainly gone to seek him; but he must not be found."

"You owe him small thanks," whispered Idonia, her head low down, "and if this intends a danger to you..."

I did not suffer her to finish, but asked whether she were well enough acquainted with the house to know of any means of egress from it, besides the doors that were so straitly watched. She thought a great while before she replied how, once, it might be eight years since, she being lodged there, she had gone upon some occasion into the cellars, and remembered to have noted that the window which lighted it was a sort of grate within the river wall and was even then decayed and corrupted by the salt water, so that by this time it should, she thought, be easily broken through.

"The tide is out," said I, "so that if I may but get through, there is the dry bank above the pirates' gallows to go by; and after, the rest should be plain enough." Which gallows I spoke of (now all rotten) yet stood in the ooze to be flooded at high tide, it having been formerly used against such pirates and river thieves as were caught and there hanged, until, the tide rising, they were drowned.

In reply to my further questionings, she said that Skene was to be sought amidst the streets about the Tower Royal, which was where I had gone that day I lost my way in the fog, when Idonia found me, and, indeed, was no great distance from Chequer Lane.

"When you shall have found him, or however it fall out, you will return to me, dear heart?" said Idonia, who was now weeping so bitterly that I could scarce keep hold of my resolution to be gone. But I did so at length, and, going downstairs to the room I had left, found it to my delight still free. Nigh choked with the beating of my heart, I soon discovered the stone steps that led down to the cellars, which were a narrow passage-room lit with a swinging lantern, and having three or four locked doors of other vaults (used, I supposed, for storage of wines and such-like) to the right and left of it. But in the river-wall, when I looked, I could perceive no grid nor aperture of such sort as Idonia had spoken, and for some moments remained as one lost, for mere disappointment. However, recovering myself a little, I felt along the whole, length of the wall, high and low, until to my infinite pleasure my hand struck upon a new oaken door, bolted with a great bolt that I slid back without the least noise. For the door itself, I clearly perceived, it had been found necessary to put it in place of the old, decayed grid, and 'twas sure as provident a repairing as any it hath been my fortune to light on!

Well, I think it stands not upon me to relate the several stages of my prison-breaking, nor of my lurking along the river-bank under the very eyes of my warders into safety; though I confess that more than once my back burnt hot with the thought of the little peering tapster and of that great arquebus he so diligently polished.

CHAPTER XX

THE ADVENTURE OF THE CHINESE JAR

The events which succeeded upon my escape from the *Fair Haven* of Wapping have come to assume in my mind a significance and singular quality of completeness that hath, therefore, moved me to bestow upon them the name of the "Adventure of the Chinese Jar;" for, detached from every circumstance, there yet stands out, clear and hard against my background of memory, that odd, fantastic shape of a blue-painted jar, with its dragon-guarded lid, its flowered panels, and a haunting remnant scent of the spices it had once enclosed.

I left the ooze and filthy slime of the river-bank when I had gone some furlong or so, and, turning inland up a row of squalid cabins, got at length into the Minories, and entered through the wall by Aldgate. Methought that some of the guard I encountered about the gatehouse regarded me with looks of surprise and ill-will, which, indeed, the disorderliness of my clothing necessarily invited, as well, perhaps, as a no very restrained gait and behaviour, for I was in a fever to be forward upon my errand, and dreaded the least hindrance therein. However, none accosting me, I passed by into the City, and was already proceeding at a great rate towards Tower Royal, when I came upon a group of persons that were talking eagerly and in loud voices, so that I could not but hear a part of their discourse.

"He will certainly be apprehended before nightfall," said one, a merchant by his habit; "so close a watch do they keep in these days upon all suspected malefactors."

"I know not the man by either the names he goeth by; neither Skene nor Cleeve," said another.

"It is not likely you should," said the first, with a twinkle of his grey eyes, "that are inquest-man of this wardmote, and brother to a canon."

I stepped close to the man had spoken last, and, doffing my cap, said: "Sir, I am but just arrived in this town, but overhearing something of that hath been made mention of betwixt you, I imagined that I heard the name of one Cleeve in question."

"You did," said the merchant; "Cleeve or Skene, for 'tis all one. But, why? Do you know the fellow?"

"It is my own name," I replied modestly; "at least, Cleeve is, and so if you were inquiring after me, I am here to serve you."

A great laughter moved the whole party at my seeming ingenuousness, and the merchant replied—

"No, no, honest Mr. Cleeve; go your ways and keep your innocence. But this other Cleeve is one grown old in treachery; a harbourer of Jesuits and Spanish spies, against whom a writ runs for his immediate attachment, and upon whose crafty head there is a price set."

"Is he escaped away then?" said I.

"He hath no settled habitation," replied one that held a paper in his hands, upon which he continually looked, "but was last seen at a certain great ruined house over against the Galley Quay, from which he is now fled, no man knows whither. But from manifest evidence it appeareth he is engaged in deep and secret designs against the State, in which moreover he works not singly."

"Now, I marvel how, if his abode were so positively known and his conduct anyways dubious, he came to be allowed such freedom to go in and out, as the sequel shows was done," I returned with some study of resentment.

"Why, as to that, it is but since he is gone that the case is proved against him; for upon a search which was then made of all the chambers of that house, there was discovered a very nest of those he was in treaty with, whose names be here set down, and themselves are brought to-day before the Council to be examined." He handed me the paper as he spoke, wherein I read the list of them. There were three Spanish men of high-sounding titles, and two or three alleged to be malignant Papists. Here was answer enough to Master Malpas, I thought, and with a vengeance! I returned the paper, and presently saluting, took my leave.

Very full of thought, I went forward until I had come into that web of mean streets I spoke of, below Tower Royal, which was where Idonia had said her guardian should probably be found. But although I spent the greater part of the afternoon in that quarter, I saw him not, nor any I dared trust, to inquire after him. Indeed, the longer I stayed, the more ill-considered and absurd did my precipitancy to this business appear, so that at last I gave it over altogether, and being by then got as far as to the Three Cranes Wharf, I stood idly there a great while, watching the wharfingers at their task of ordering the heavy goods that were there piled up and stored. Against the wharf lay a barge or lighter moored, which I perceived had but lately discharged the cargo of some great galley that rested below bridge in the fairway.

There is ever something that fascinates a man in this his own careless regarding of other men at work; and I had already stayed upon the quay no small while, before I bethought myself to return; though, when I had so determined, it came upon me that 'twas one thing to get out of prison (I mean mine Inn), but altogether a different matter to get in again, and so fell to considering whether I should make my entrance boldly by the ordinary door, or whether creep in after nightfall, by the vent in the cellar-wall I had escaped by.

Now I had not altogether decided this matter, when I found myself in that steep little lane I had inadvertently descended so many months since in the fog, of which the houses upon both sides stood almost all of them closed up and shuttered as though (to repeat what I then said) the place had been visited by the plague; which deathlike and stealthy character it yet maintained. There was nobody, man nor child, in the street as I slowly mounted it, a strange sense of abhorrence and foreboding gathering about my heart: while to this distress of my mind was now added the annoyance of a smart squall of rain and wind, that, suddenly breaking, had soon wetted me through, but for my crouching close beneath the shallow porch of a door upon the right hand, where I availed myself of such shelter as it afforded.

I had stood so about a quarter of an hour, as I suppose, and was listening to a long roll of thunder that seemed to shake the very foundations of these palsied buildings when, as if answering to the call of the storm, there arose within the house behind me a cry so agonized, so hopeless, and withal so horribly inhuman, as even now my hair stirs to remember it. To avoid this cursed spot and begone was my involuntary and half-acted purpose, checked, however, on the instant by a blinding flash of lightning that seared my very eyes, while my brain seemed all shattered in by the accompanying peal. Painfully wrought upon as I have ever been by any loudness of sound, it was some moments before I could recover myself, and indeed I was still reeling from the shock, when the door was flung wide and the figure of a man outlandishly clothed, and of a yellowness of skin such as I had never before seen, hurried by me into the midst of the road, where it fell quash in the kennel. The man was dead. It was evident from the mere sight of him, and from the formless clutter of gaudy rags he was; I turned about, and within the

gap of the door ere it was shut-to, I saw the delicate, handsome features of my uncle, Botolph Cleeve.

How the storm went thereafter I know not, but I know that for a full half-hour I stood wrenching at the door that callous fiend had locked in my face, but could nowise move it. Then, with a thrill of disgust, I went to the dead outcast, where he lay all wet and smirched, and drew from between his shoulders the long thin knife that was stuck there to the haft. This I cleaned and put up in my jerkin. It was my only weapon. The body was of a man stout and of great strength, though not tall, and as well by the cast of his features as by his clothing I knew him for one of them they name Cataians, or Chinese, that perhaps had been led to this inhospitable asylum by rascally allurements of adventurers upon some Eastward voyage; as I had once seen two Indians, that sat huddled on the ground in the Exchange, with a ring of laughing apprentices about them, and of whom I heard it said that they were princes in their own land. But by what marches of fate this poor Chinese had been defeated, and sent down from his home in the East to death in our inexorable London, I could by no means conjecture; nor yet could I determine (which imported me more) what course it were fittest I should herein follow. Howbeit, a certain strange faintness then assailing me, partly from sheer hunger, but more by reason of the horror of this murder, I saw my dilemma settled for that while; and so, staggering forth of the lane into Royal Street, where is a good tavern, I there made shift to eat, but principally drank, until I had rid myself at least of the extremity of distress into which I had fallen.

In that place I stayed a good hour, there being a merry company come together of players and other (for which I was indeed glad, and it cheered me more than all else), when the day beginning to fail, the guests departed their several ways, and I also, upon my own.

"The watch will certainly have been notified by this time," I said to myself, "for 'tis impossible that a dead body should lie so long in the streets unperceived. Well, my uncle will have got hence scot-free, as he is accustomed to do in despite of all justice, and of writs of attachment, or of black Malpas either; which saveth my conscience a toll, and so I hope there's an end of my dealings with him."

Nevertheless I could not refrain from going part way down the hill again, to see whether the body were indeed removed. And so it was, as I had looked that it should be; though it occasioned me some surprise to note that the door of the house now stood wide, while a little within the threshold two other Chinese hung wailing and wringing their hands in the most abject misery.

Excited at this opportunity to learn the cause of the outrage I had been so close a witness to, I went over to the men, and accosting them, demanded whether the dead man were their friend; but to my question they replied by never a word, at least not in English, but continued to lament as before. I then made signs that I knew all that had befallen, and at that they ceased, and soon nodded, making eager signs that I should tell them more; whereupon I drew forth the knife from my bosom and handed it to the man I stood closest to, who received it with an exclamation of fury, passing it to the other with the one significant word—*Skene!* The other Chinese now came forward, and in the intense hatred that twisted his yellow face, I read the recompense that should be meted out to the murderer if ever they two should meet. "Skene," he repeated twice or thrice, tapping his long fingers upon the blade; and then with a gesture, pointing inward to the house, whispered, "Here—house;" by which I understood that this was a favourite lurking-place of my uncle's, who no doubt hoped, upon any domiciliary inquisition, to divert the vigilance of the officers by making parade of these uncouth strangers as alone inhabiting there; or in the last event, perhaps, intended to disguise himself in their clothing, and so steal off. I could not but admire the ingenuity of the man, for all my disgust of his countless villainies.

Meanwhile, the two Chinese were engaged upon a ceremony that at first I could not come by the meaning of, though I soon perceived it to be a solemn vow they made upon the dagger, to avenge their dead comrade. Which concluded, they gave me back my knife, and seemed to wait my further direction. All passion had left their faces, that now appeared serene and patient, as I think the features of those of that nation do generally, so that it quite overtasks an observer to guess their mood, whether it be bloody or peaceable.

"Have you any English?" I asked after a pause, at which one shrunk up his shoulders as meaning he had not; but the other replied with such childlike boastfulness, "English—much—yes, yes—English," that I could not forbear laughing.

"Do you propose to return home by ship?" I asked slowly, and made a motion with my hands as of a ship sailing. But this neither seemed at all to comprehend.

"China—Cathay," said I, somewhat at a loss how to suggest my meaning, but immediately the one who had so much English, replied vehemently—

"Skene—yes, yes—kill!"

There could be no question then that it was to be revenge at all costs, for the other Chinese, taking up the word, cried out too: "Skene—kill," which he followed up with a peck of his own Romany cant that I made no pretence to attend. However, the upshot was that they stood upon the fulfilment of their vow, and fully expected I should direct them therein. Now, that I was equally determined I would not; for little as I cared how it should go with my uncle Botolph, I had

no stomach to set two bloodthirsty strangers at his throat, to dispatch him in cold blood. So, turning to my interpreter, I bade him in the simplest terms I might find, to have a care what he did, for that we lived under a just and peace-loving Queen, whose constables and guards were sworn to prevent such private revenges as they planned; in the which if they proceeded, they would themselves certainly be brought into confinement. But in truth I might have spared my breath, for I saw that no intelligence of my warning reached them, though they had evidently strained their apprehensions to the limit to receive it.

"Skene—kill," they said, when I had done, and without more ado went into one of the rooms where they kept their stuff, and took each of them a small curved sword with a marvellous long haft, which, though they made no pretence to conceal them from me, they carefully hid within the folds of their loose silken coats.

"This must be thwarted," I said to myself, and debated how it should best be done. At length I hit on a plan that promised, I thought, fairly, which was that I should contrive to divide their forces; sending forth him that had no word of our language by himself, one way, to search (and lose himself amidst) the streets thereabout; but as to the other that was perhaps the more dangerous by reason of his capacity to put such sloven-mumbled questions as might nevertheless lead to his discovering Botolph Cleeve (though it was indeed hardly possible): that I should take him with me as far as to Wapping, where I might easily fob him off with any tidings of Skene I should profess then to gather; and so be rid of him.

It needed no small skill of mine to put the case before them in such sort as they should not guess the motive, but rather should approve the advantage, of my design; and in the result I brought them to my view. By this time it was perfectly dark without, though the room where we remained was faintly illumined by a little bronze lamp fashioned like a beast with a fish's tail, that one of the men had already lit. By the uncertain light it afforded, I gazed in admiration of the scene, so dim and vague, yet so deeply charged with purpose. We had left conversing together, for the two men had things to do that needed no speech to forward them. It was manifest that they would not return to the house, and therefore they applied themselves silently to the selection of such articles as seemed at once necessary and portable. So engaged, they moved about the shadowed chamber, their silken dresses slightly rustling, and their yellow, peering faces now and again bent towards the lamp, as they examined some piece of worth that they would carry away: caskets of sweet-smelling wood, or trinkets of silver, or else some mere idle toy they had bought in an English shop, not of a groat's worth but by them infinitely prized. What a satire was in this their so contemptible a fardel, who would lightly toss away another man's dear life! Amongst the many treasures they thus overlooked, and either kept or rejected, was a jar of about fifteen or eighteen inches height, six-sided, and very gay with painted devices of flowers and leaves; and upon this jar one of the Chinese dwelt long in doubt, as it seemed, whether it should be saved, for it was something cumbersome, although not of any groat burden. However he took it up at last with the rest, or rather exchanged it for some other trifles that might be of less value, and so ended his preparation.

"Let us begone," said I, and holding open the door, signed to the one of them to leave the house, which he did; and after, we, that is the man with the jar and I, left it likewise, directing our course towards Wapping and the *Fair Haven* Inn.

For a considerable time we trudged along together in this way through the deserted streets; I already more than a little weary of an enterprise in which I had, as it were, enlisted under force and without reason. The tumult of the storm, the murder, the strangeness of the habits and Eastern features of the two men, the disability to converse in a common tongue, by which one seemed to be pleading with the masked presences of some horrid dream, all these circumstances combined to deject my mind to a degree I have never since experienced; and I deplored this new plan for my uncle's safety more even than I did the one upon which I had set forth. I stole a glance or two at my companion, but wrapped in his placid reserve he never so much as raised his dull eyes to mine, nor showed himself scarce aware of my presence, save by the precision with which he paced by my side. Once and again he would shift the weight of the Chinese jar he carried in the slack of his coat, or finger the hilt of his sword.

As we approached near to the gate in the City wall, I became suddenly apprehensive of the danger we ran into, and cast about in my mind how to avoid the guard that, howsoever in ordinary times one might look to be passed through without much question, yet now in these times of suspicion would be sure to detain so irregular a pair as we that were thus about to present ourselves. Accordingly I turned off suddenly upon the right hand towards the river, and coming to one of the quays (I think Smart's Quay), was lucky enough to find a skiff there moored, which I loosed, and motioning the Chinese to get in, followed him and pushed off. The tide was again on the ebb, having passed its height about an hour since, and so without use of oars we drifted easily down stream, until in a pretty short while we got to Wapping, where I ran the boat ashore and leapt out. I could see the *Fair Haven* about a hundred paces ahead, and, although there was no light in Idonia's chamber, as in precaution she had doubtless left it dark, yet could I see the dim square of the window frame, and pleased myself with the hope that she was yet waking, and thought upon me.

A little path of turfs laid upon the piles that here restrain the river-course led right forward to the Inn, and trusting to the security which had so far attended us, I perhaps diminished something of the wariness I should have used; but at all events, we had gone a bare score of

paces when I stumbled upon a man that lay crouched in the rank grass of the turfs. Recovering myself speedily, for I had not quite fallen, I accosted him angrily, who, without replying, but yet obstructing the narrow path so that I could not get past him, drew forth a lantern he held concealed in his cloak, and lifting it high, regarded the pair of us, but me especially, closely.

"One at a time is better than neither," he said coolly, and I heard his blade grate in the scabbard.

But even as he fetched it forth, the Chinese had his crooked short sword out, and leaping past me with the swiftness of a cat, brought our opponent down. Against the starry sky I could see his arm work forward and back, as he plunged in and withdrew the steel. The lantern rolled from the dead man's hand, but, not immediately extinguished, threw exaggerated shadows of the grass-bents along the path.

Horrified at the fury of his onslaught, I flung myself upon the grovelling heathen, crying out—

"This is not your man, you fool! This is not Skene."

"No, my nephew," he replied quietly enough and in perfect English, "but it is that black thief, Malpas, that would have done the same for me." And without awaiting my reply, he took up the Chinese jar, which in the assault he had necessarily relinquished, and having carefully wiped it, went whistling softly down the causeway to the silent Inn.

CHAPTER XXI

THE "FAIR HAVEN" OF WAPPING

My father once, reading in a favourite philosopher, paused with his finger on a certain passage to ask me what I made of the sense of that he should read; and so continuing his lecture aloud, rehearsed some score of good reasons there set down, why a man should do virtuously; but that, either way, the gods ruled the event. When he had done I asked him in my turn whether the whole book were in that kind, to which he answered that such was indeed the tenour of it, though there were yet other reasons given besides those he had read. But while I was yet considering of my answer, he intercepted it, himself replying for me.

"You think there are too many reasons," said he smiling, "and that if these the author calls gods take occasion to correct our errors we may do as we please; but that if they do not so, then must we do as we can."

Then stroking down his beard with his hand, he bade me do virtuously, at least so long as I was in any doubt about the gods; "which," said he, "is a question only to be settled in that manner."

How many times since then I had recalled my father's grave and tolerant irony, I know not, but it was not often; nor certainly had it ever returned upon me with so compelling an insistency as now, while I still stared after his evil-hearted brother, that murderer of the man at my feet.

"If the gods rule the event out of this business," I thought, "how will it go with thee, my uncle?" So easy is it to apply to another the precepts were meant for ourselves! And truly, when I contrasted my own qualities with Mr. Botolph Cleeve's, I came near to forgiving him, so eminently did he make my own uprightness to appear.

Now, very greatly though I desired I donia should know of my safe return, I yet could not bring myself to leave Malpas thus exposed and subject to every chance indignity by the wayside, nor was I willing to carry him openly to the Inn or any house at hand; so that, after some while's reflection, I decided to lay him in the boat I had come down by, covering his face with the sailcloth, and after, to launch him out into the ebbing stream. The night was clear above, the thunder having wholly passed; but from a mounting wrack of cloud that peered above the edges of the sky and a chill light wind athwart the river, I judged we should have rain before morning, and so hastened to be done with my task (which unspeakably revolted me) and get into shelter against the oncoming tempest. Notwithstanding 'twas the better part of an hour ere I had completed these hasty and suspicious rites, and had shoved away the skiff with its gaunt recumbent passenger outward (or was it homeward?) bound.

These pious offices done, I turned with a sigh from the black hurrying water, and approached near to the Inn. I was surprised to see that a light now shone in I donia's chamber, and from the shadows that now and then traversed it, I understood that she was not yet retired to rest. How then I might direct her attention to me without at the same time attracting such attention of others as I might well enough spare, I very earnestly debated; but at length, minding myself of the knife I had got from the dead Chinese, I drew it forth; and having torn off a great burdock

leaf where it grew by the bank, pricked with the knife's point the one word Denis (sufficient for my purpose, I thought), and running the blade through the midst of the leaf, poised, and let fly with it at the window. It struck the sill fairly, and hung quivering. My heart stood still during the interval that succeeded, but when presently that sweet small head appeared, all dark against the glory of her hair, it leapt to my very throat for excess of joy.

"Idonia," I whispered hoarsely, and came right beneath her window as I spoke her name; "Idonia, I have come back."

"Hush, dear," she besought me, and leaned forth from the sill, so that a strand or two of her hair hung down and touched the letters of my name in the leaf. "Do not speak again.... Oh, I have been waiting for you, Denis! But you are come; I can see your face. I can see your eyes..."

"You speak as if you feared something," I replied, in disregard of her warning. "Are you threatened with any danger?"

"No," she said; "at least I do not comprehend what may be dangers here. For it is a house of mystery. My guardian has but now left me. He is disguised: I cried out when I saw him.... Oh, Denis, I am horribly afraid here.... It is all so silent, and yet I know the place is full of men."

I hesitated no longer.

"Is there anything by which you can make a rope?" I asked, "any sheet from your bed, or clothing?"

She caught at my intention.

"Yes, yes," she murmured, nodding. "There is my cloak. I will tear it."

"They may hear the sound of the tearing," I said. "Do not move from the window." And so, returning to the little slip or inlet whence I had sent down the boat, I found the oars which I had removed from it, and carried them with me to the house. Idonia could just touch the blade of one with extended fingers when I held it out at arm's length.

"It is too short," said Idonia, with a pitiful catch in her voice.

I bade her keep her heart up, and, unclasping my belt, laced the two oars tightly together where they were frayed hollow by the thole. The joined staff they made reached high enough now, and without awaiting my instruction Idonia caught it to her (I holding it upright) and swung herself lightly to the ground.

"Free, oh free!" came her cry of exultation, and a moment after we held each other closely in a long embrace. Her lips were fire.

"Oh, Denis, Denis, do not let me go, nor never leave you," she said, and I (witless braggart) swore that nought upon earth should sever us.

I led her up the turf path, sheltering her from the rain that had already begun to fall thickly. My thoughts were all astray and I had no plan of any sort, but still to have my arm about her, and feel her yielding to my touch, as spent with love and weary with the pride of so much given.

A man must feel humbled by the magnitude of that he asks of a maid, but all I could say was, brokenly: "I will try to be worthy, sweetheart." Poor words, but she thanked me for them joyfully. She besought me to let her rest soon, and we sat down by a weather-twisted pile at the water's edge, for I could not run into the jeopardy that might lurk amid the inhospitable dark houses of this place, where everything oppressed with a sense of evil. My cloak kept off the worst of the rain, but, as the rising wind swept across the river, Idonia shivered with the cold. Nevertheless she lost not a whit of her gaiety, which indeed seemed to increase with her distress, and she would laugh more loudly than I thought was altogether safe at some odd construction put upon my remonstrance in her wayward speech. I could not long disguise from myself her condition of fever, which at the same time I knew not how to alleviate; but more than once I caught myself wishing I had left her that night at the Inn, where, for all her fears, she had not been any way molested, nor, I now thought, would likely have been, her guardian having returned, and Malpas beyond the power to annoy her further.

A little later, and quite suddenly, she relaxed her extravagant hilarity, and fell into a moodiness equally to be pitied. She wept a deal then, and seemed to have got a strange perception of the malignant influences that surrounded us. The sound of the wind terrified her, and she would shrink down whispering that something tugged at her cloak. I did what I could to soothe and comfort her, but she only shook her head, or pressed my fingers with her hot hand.

But the worst was when, by some trick of the brain, she thought herself back in the Inn-room again, when Cleeve had entered in his horrid uncouth dress, and with his yellow face and hands.

"He said he was my guardian," she ran on, in a dull low voice, "but I knew he was no one of this world. He said it was a foreign habit he had filched from a dead man he had been enforced to kill, and that he used it to escape detection of the watch. Ah! it is all escaping with us—escaping

and killing! I knew he had some secret lurking-place near the river; he has often said so, and that he went disguised when any great danger threatened. The watch ... and yet he used to laugh at it; but lately he has come to fear arrest: why is it? and so he killed an innocent man and took his coat to save himself.... His eyes, when he told me he had been waylaid at last, and almost at the Inn door! but he killed that man too, he said: he hindering him. Christ! how his eyes do sift you....

"These jewels in the jar, now, I know they have all been worn by men he has killed. I remember them perfectly well. There is the great cross the Spaniard wore; and these rings. I wonder when it was you murdered him. He was a fair-spoken gentleman, and I thought you were friends...

"I forgot. This is you, Denis, not he I call my guardian. I do not think he altogether trusts me any longer, although he gave me the jar to keep ... and I have left it behind in the Inn. It was worth a king's ransom, he said, and ordered me to keep it by me until he should have finished a certain work he had below, that would not take him long. I have left it, and he will be angry ... I fear him, Denis. He is calm as death when he is angry....

"And yet he can laugh too. He laughed when he told me of the Chinese he killed, and how he dared his fellow to betray him. Oh, he made a merry tale of it, and of his forcing the poor wretch to simulate a desire to take vengeance upon a man that had fled—when it was he, the murderer himself, remained behind! Yes, and he laughed at you, Denis, until my blood burnt me ... I shall never forget his wrinkled heathen face as he laughed."

It may appear an incredible motion of my mind, but I could have cried out for joy at a diversion which, then befalling, served to turn I donia from these crazed memories; albeit the cause was one properly, and at another time wholly, to be feared. For chancing to lift my eyes to one of the houses that be here builded by the water's edge, and serve doubtless for the storage of marine stores and tackle, I saw a man, and after, another, and then a whole posse of men armed with cuirass and halberd, that advanced directly towards us. I donia saw them almost at the same moment, and seeming to recover her wits in the suddenness of the danger, she broke off, and turned to me with a swift glance of inquiry.

"Quick," I whispered; "down by the piles to the beach," and helped by the darkness of the night we scrambled off the path on to the ribbon of wet bank beneath it, where we crouched, perfectly concealed from the soldiers.

"Halt!" cried a voice above our heads, and the trampling footsteps ceased. "We be thirty men strong, and none too many for this business. Anthony, take you twelve and post them before the door. Six men go with Will Huet; see that none escape by the windows. There is a light burns at one yet. I will take the complement and go within. Now mark me well: our warrant is principally to the capture of Skene, alias Cleeve, and one Guido Malpas, that was of the Earl of Pembroke's household, but since discharged. He is a tall black man and a dangerous. It standeth upon us to apprehend the whole sort that here congregate together. They will make resistance and you will defend yourselves, but for the rest I have it in my authority that no blood be wasted needlessly. A live captive may prove useful; a dead villain is nothing worth. The password is *At last*. Set on."

I donia had half risen from her place; she watched the retreating men as they filed along towards the Inn.

"I must warn him," she cried impetuously, and had clambered on to the turf path ere I could let her.

"What madness is this?" I urged, aghast. "You would yourself be arrested or ever you could get sight of that devil."

"Devil or no," she panted, while she struggled to unclasp my restraining arms, "devil or no, he is my guardian. Denis, I cannot stand by idle and see him taken."

"Sweetheart," I entreated her, "you can do nought, indeed. They be all armed men..."

"Hinder me no more!"

"I donia!"

"Oh, it is cowardly, cowardly!"

"Listen," I said, appealing.

"Ah, Denis, let me not thus, or you will kill me.... See! they are close to the house already. A little while and..." Her voice rose to a scream of absolute terror that I vainly sought to stifle against my heart. She flung her head back; her hair, shaken from the filet and caught by the wind, streamed betwixt us like a cloud. We stood long thus.

"Loose my wrists," she whispered, "or I shall grow to hate you, Denis!" and methought there went a sort of awe with the words. I let her go, when suddenly, with a sob, she dropped down unresisting into my arms.

I knew she had spoken under the stress of her disorder, but none the less her words hurt me like a lash. It had revolted me to use my strength upon her, although in love, and to hold her so straitly against her will, who but a moment before had been leaning in free confidence beside me. The wind and rain were now increased to such a pitch as I have scarce known: the dim bulk of the Inn hung in a mist of swinging vapour, through which the glimmer of the one light aloft, shining, touched the edges of the slanted pikes.

Idonia was plucking weakly at my sleeve. Her eyes were pitifully big. "You look distressed, Denis," she said, in a crazed dull voice. "Why do you look so stern and sad? We are together.... I forget how I got away, but that does not matter now, does it? Some one was holding me by the wrist and hurting me. I cried out, and you came. You always come when they would be hurting me.... It is very cold," she shivered, and drew down more closely within my arms; all wet as her cheek was, its fever heat burnt through to my bosom.

"You cannot walk," I said: "I will carry you." But all the while I was thinking: "Is her reason gone?"

"Whither, Denis? To the Inn? It would be warm there, out of the wind."

"God forbid!" I answered her.

"Ah! no ... I remember now. He is there.... His yellow face, and his eyes when he gave me the jar to keep! ... Denis, Denis, Denis..."

And so, without any further effort to beat off the oppression in her brain and blood, she fell away into a long swoon: so long, indeed, that I had almost despaired of reviving her, when I bethought me of the Inn, to which she had hoped I was about to bear her. There would be strong cordial wine in the vault, I knew; and a cordial she needed instantly. I might quickly go and return again with the wine—if the vent were but open.

The Inn was scarce ten score paces distant. There was some risk, perhaps, but not great: less, surely, than I took, kneeling helpless beside her in the bitter storm. I bent over her and kissed her passionately on her eyes and lips and brow; and then I hastened away.

Had I known the upshot then, I would rather have lost my right hand than leave her; but that was in God's mercy hid....

To speak my bottom thought, I had hardly dared to hope that the shutter were still unhasped: but yet it was, and yielded easily to my touch. I felt a strange tightening of the throat as I pushed it back and leapt astride the sill. The vault below me was wholly dark. Without more ado I swung myself in. I missed my footing, fell, and lay stunned.

How long a while elapsed ere I recovered consciousness I know not, nor yet how long I remained in that intermediate state where things outward be still denied for real. A confusion of sounds assailed my aching brain, from which I recked not to gather any purpose or tendency. But at length, my head having somewhat cleared, I recalled my situation, where I was in the narrow passage-vault; and soon perceived that the sounds I had heard were those of men in earnest conference within one of the vaults adjacent, that had formerly been barred. The lamp which had lighted the passage had been removed, and from the pale ray that issued from the chink of the door, I saw it was now used for their purposes who spoke together beyond.

Without, the storm raged very furiously, so that there were times when I could hear nought else; but otherwhiles, whatever snatches of debate I overheard they went always to the continuous deep second of the wind. Some instinct of security held me silent, and after a little I dragged myself painfully along the stone floor, until I had my ear at the chink. The halberdiers were certainly not of the party; they had either not yet entered, or else had come and, failing to discover these men's place of concealment, had gone. A man was speaking; a jovial rough voice it was, interrupted now and again by careless laughter.

"You mind me of that tale of the two robbers," said the fellow, and I heard the clink of a cup set down, "that were engaged to set upon a certain Canon who should pass through the wood they lurked within. Now a passenger approaching, the one was for killing him out of hand, but his companion, being something scrupulous, would not, but bade him stay his hand until the man should sing.

"I care not a jot how he sing,' says the Captain-robber.

"Nay, by his singing I can tell in a trice whether he be a canon or no,' says the robber-squire.

"By this the passenger was got free of their ambush and into a place where two sheriff's men met him, at which he swore for mere joy.

"I would he had sung,' says the squire.

"Go to, baffle-head!' cries the other in a great rage, 'for by his swearing I know him for the Father Abbot himself, and better your squealing Canon, by how much noon-sun surpasses candle-light.'"

A round of hoarse merriment went to this shrewd apologue, of which I was yet to learn the application; but waited not long for it.

"So then, Cutts, 'hold to that you have,' is your advice, trow?"

"Ay, abbot or traitor, or barndoor fowl," replied Cutts (who was none other, I found, than he that had fled away from Dunster so long since); "'truss and lay by,' says the housewife."

"Well, you have me trussed already," said a mild voice, that for all its stillness overbore the murmurs which greeted Cutts his policy; and at the sound of it I caught in my breath, for 'twas my uncle that spoke, and by his words I knew they had him bound.

"I am not in case to do you harm, as a traitor, nor yet to benefit you as an abbot," my uncle proceeded very coolly. "But if it seem good to your worships to restore me my freedom, I have my proofs of innocence at hand to show to any that professes to doubt my faith."

"Too late for that, Master Skene," said another.

"Ay, Captain Spurrier, say you so?" returned my uncle, with a little menacing thrill in the sweet of his voice. "I had thought you that use the sea knew that one must luff and tack upon occasion. Delay is sometimes necessary, when haste would mean sudden shipwreck. Wherefore then do you say I speak too late?"

"Where is Malpas?" cried Captain Spurrier, and by the grating of a chair I perceived he had started to his feet.

"I had thought to meet him here," said my uncle. "Our design stays for him."

There was a dead pause at that, and I could not but admire the fortitude with which the baited man met and countered his opposites.

"He denounced you to this council, ere he went forth," said that subtle voice of the tavern-server, "and upon such positive testimony as we could not but allow it. If any lead this enterprise it is Malpas, and not thou, old fox."

"So thou use better terms, friend Jocelin," said Cleeve, "it shall not be amiss, nor yet if thou answer me why it was I returned freely hither amongst you all? Had I ought to gain from you? But rather had I not all to lose? There is a warrant out against me on the Queen's part; had I not done wisely, being so disguised as no man might know me, to avoid this suspected house? Yet I returned. Our ship is to sail to-morrow. Captain Spurrier is here in his place. What lacks of our engagement? What hath gone untowardly? Is it Malpas his failure? I ask of you in my turn, where is Malpas? Is it not strange that upon such a night he should not be here to bear his part, as I do, and Lucas Spurrier and Jocelin, and the rest? I say there is something I like not in this defection; but yet it fears me not. Let them that be faint-hearted stay away; this enterprise is not for cowards. Do you lack a leader? You trusted me once. Malpas trusted me, for all he cozened you into a belief that he did not so; but he is gone." He paused, and then with so strangely intense a malignancy as, despite my knowledge, I could scarce credit that 'twas assumed, he added: "Would that I knew whither Guido Malpas hath gone, and what to do!"

There was such clamour of contrary opinions, oaths and hot argument, when he had done, that I could not tell how it went, but gradually conceived the opinion that they believed him and were about to set him free, when, to my utter dismay, I heard the door at the stairhead open and heavy steps descend to the passage where I lay concealed. I crouched down on the instant, but dared not move from the place, nor indeed had the opportunity to retreat by one step, when the men were already in the room; but so dark it was I could not see their arms (for I doubted nothing of their being the halberdiers) nor their numbers that entered. They set the door open of the inner vault and trooped in upon the conspirators.

I saw them now. They were men that bore a body. The tide had set in again. The boat with its burden had returned upon the flood.

CHAPTER XXII

HOW MY UNCLE BOTOLPH LOST HIS LUCK

The tide had turned. The river had given up its dead. There was no appeal from this distorted corpse, smirched with yellow so about the throat and breast, where my uncle's painted hands had gripped him. Wedged deep in the dead man's heart (I heard it said) a certain significant shred of blue silk was found that had been drawn in by the swinging blade, and torn from the murderer's sleeve.... After that there needed nothing more, and my uncle's luck, which a moment since had trembled to its apogee, shot downward like a portent star.

My pretence to write calmly of the sequel, to use the ordinary speech of every day, I support not as purposing to deceive, for it would deceive none, but rather as impelled thereto, lest writing as I feel (even yet after so long an interval) I should seem to set down frenzy itself in character, and illegible wild words.

But I may at least report my uncle's apology, as above the clamour I caught the most of it; and here affirm that, lying infamous villain as he was, yet so consummate a dignity did mark his every motion, and as it were attended upon all the situations in which he stood, as enforced respect of those even who knew him altogether base.

His judges had found against him to a man.

"Well, then, you have it," said he in his cold clear voice, "and are content enough this Malpas should have died, so you bring me in his slayer. You little men! I found a scorpion in my path and trampled on him; that's the sum of my offending. Or is it not? Nay, I had forgot the chief; that I would not betray my country, as you petty thieves would have done, and thought I did. What will you get of the Spaniards, prythee? Money, honours or what? Will those creeping Jesuits bestead you? Oh, you have their pledged words! I had as much. More; for I had their secret plans of conquest; their Enterprise of England forsooth! as they sat gnawing their crusts in my hall. There was to be an universal uprising of Papists, they told me; mutinies of the Queen's troops, and such; baubles of a fool!

"I have had my laugh, you scum, and I have lost. Well, then, what you shall hear may hearten you belike, and move you to laughter. If I have not been a traitor all this while, how have I been employed? Not having abetted their designs, why did I entertain these strangers? Let this example stand: there was the envoy Spurrier brought in, Don Florida of Seville, a fine bold gentleman and apt to lead a squadron of such orts as ye. He laid his plans before me openly. So, I took him by the throat and strangled him."

I make no attempt to describe the tumult of their rage who heard him; sufficient, that it passed.

"He was not singular in this business," the prisoner continued, "though he was perhaps the properest man. But what a nasty sort of spies I had in charge! I swear I think no starved lazar of Spain but was judged fit enough to come ambassador among us, and parcel out our land; and all the while you stood by grinning: When we be altogether conquered, ran your thoughts, we shall each get his share! Eh, you jolthead hucksters, was it to be so?"

"But I was your leader, and that was where I had my laugh. For no single one of those you gave me into my keeping did I fail to slay save only that poor crazed Courcy whom the soldiers robbed me of, and some that the Council took alive. The residue you may reckon at your leisure; they lie rotting in two fathom of Thames water, 'twixt the Customers Quay and the Galley, ay, rotten as their cause....

"It were a pretty thought now that I should crave a favour at the Queen's hands for stout work done in her cause, though secretly; ay, and I would do it, but for two or three considerations that something hinder me; namely, that my life otherwise hath not been altogether law-worthy. And, moreover, there is these bonds, that, being I confess very workmanlike bound upon me, render my present access to Her Majesty less easy than I could wish; so that I doubt my defence of her realm shall go unrewarded....

"In such a company as this there is sure one clergyman. Let him shrive me, for I am not at all points ready to die.... Well, level your pieces and be done with it. I care not how soon. Foh! but you handle your weapons awkwardly; I should be ashamed, were I still your leader.... How—what is that?"

I had heard it too. "It is the soldiers come," I said to myself, and strained my ears to listen for a renewal of the sound. Within the room all expected in a sudden silence what should ensue. It came again; a dull noise as of men that rammed at the door with a heavy beam.

"I had thought they had gone," said one, in a thick voice.

"'Twas a fetch of theirs."

"The cellar door is strong," said the tapster Jocelin, but without confidence. "It will last."

"Until what time?" asked my uncle, mocking them. "And then, whence will you escape, you rats?"

One had blown out the light at the first alarm, and they conferred in the absolute dark.

"Ha!" cried Jocelin at that taunt of the prisoner's, and with a squealing note of triumph, "there is the new door in the sea-wall to escape by," and scrambling through their midst to the cellar door, he bade his comrades follow him forth. But at the door he stayed, as of necessity he must; for 'twas locked, and I that had locked it was within the room now, in the dark, with the key in my pocket. I had scarce time to slip aside, ere the next man had flung Jocelin by for a bungler, and the third trampled him down. Over his prostrate body the rest passed surging. Knives were

out, for all had run distraught at this unlooked-for prevention. Treachery by each suspected was by every hand revenged. I heard the sobbing of stricken men, as I felt my way along the wall to the place where my uncle sat yet pinioned to his chair. And all this while the daunting clangour continued, as of a giant's mallet beating on the door; nay, even upon the stones of the wall, for the whole room shivered and rocked to the hideous repeated sound.

I unloosed my uncle, cutting his thongs with a cutlass I had kicked against and groped after on the floor; a hand still held it, but I got it free.

"Who is that?" asked my uncle composedly.

"Hist!" I whispered. "I am your nephew, Denis Cleeve."

"You add to my obligations, Mr. Denis," he replied, and stretched himself. "But how does my good brother the magistrate?"

"Enough of that," I said curtly; "how be we to get forth?"

"Why, I supposed you had provided for that," he said in some surprise, "else I were as well bound as free."

I asked whether he could lay hand on his sword, but he answered, scoffing, that his enemies had saved him the trouble of using it; and indeed that bloody unseen strife about the door saved us both for that while. Presently he drew me a little apart into a corner where, he said, we might discourse together reasonably and without molestation. He cleared his voice once or twice ere he made known his mind to me thus—

"When the soldiers shall break in, as nothing can long withstand such engines as they have brought to bear, slip you forth, Mr. Denis, and ascend immediately to a small retired chamber above the stair where my ward lies, Mistress Avenon. Lay your modesty aside for this once, and enter. If she wake not, so much the better; as 'tis better she should know nothing. But I am a fool! for who may sleep on such a night of hell? Anywise enter, and I will answer for it, she will not repulse you as she did yon Malpas, the brave lass!

"She hath in keeping a certain jar of mine, Denis, a toy, that nevertheless I set some value on; this I would have you privily convey to the house where the Chinese inhabited—I make no question but you know where it stands. Do this, my dear nephew, and I shall confess myself every way bound to serve you when I shall come to be enfranchised of this place; for I myself may not undertake the bearing off of this jar (it stands in a little cupboard by the bed, Denis, now I think on't), my dress being not such, as wearing it, I might hope to escape challenge of the guard, but with you, Denis, 'twill be a mere frolick adventure." He laid his mouth close to my ear. "Besides, there is the lass I donia..."

What more he might have added, I know not, for his beastly greed in so safeguarding his wealth, and that at my risk, who had delivered him, sickened me in such sort as I could no longer abide to hear it, but left him, and going straightway forward into the screaming press about the door, struck out a path for myself through the midst of them. At the same moment the hammering without in one peal ended; the half of a wall fell in, and through the breach thus made came a wavering and intermittent light.

Unspeakably astonished, I gazed about me, upon the dead and writhing bodies that lay at my feet thus uncertainly illumined, and upon my uncle, huddled up in his torn silken robe. But when I had averted my eyes with a shudder to the breach in the wall, I saw a sight I may neither forget nor endure the remembrance of; for it seemed to me that there entered in by that way a figure—inhuman tall, black visaged, and of a most cruel aspect. Perhaps for the space of a man's counting ten, he leaned forward through the aperture, regarding us all in that ghostly dimness, and then, with an equal suddenness, was gone, and the light with him....

No one word passed our trembling lips, for all felt the horror of impending destruction. Only the dying yet moved a little, stirring in their blood, but even they soon lay still. Meanwhile, through the great rent in the wall, the wind blew exceeding strong, so that although at the first we had postponed all thoughts to that one vision of the giant presence, we now perceived by the direction of the wind and the saltness of it that it was the river-wall was down, and not (as in our confusion we had supposed) the inner wall, by which the soldiers must necessarily have assaulted us.

I am not altogether sure who it was by this means solved the mystery, but I think it was Captain Spurrier; howbeit we had not endured that sweeping gale above an half-minute, before some one cried out that the apparition was nothing else than the carven prow of the *Saracen's Head*, that dragging at her moorings by the wharf had run against the Inn wall and destroyed it; which was presently confirmed by the ship's again battering us, but broadside, and not head-on as before. For as I have (I think) already said, the Inn was jugged out to the extreme edge of the *Fair Haven* wharf, so that at the high tide there was a deepness of water sufficient for any ordinary ship to lie alongside and discharge her cargo upon the quay; the tide mark running a little below the vault where we were, that else would have been suddenly flooded by the inflow of water through the broken wall. Beyond measure relieved that we were besieged by neither soldier nor devil, we could not restrain our joy, and so by a common impulse moved to be gone,

the whole company of us that yet remained alive and able, ran forward to the breach, and to the ship's side, having her starboard light to further us that had formerly so stricken us into dismay. And thus by this way and that, grasping at whatever projection of blocks and shrouds lay to our hands, some helping and other hindering our escape, we had at length all clambered up into the ship, save only that traitor Cutts, who, upon a sudden lurch of the ship, was crushed betwixt the bulwark and the wall, and so died.

I looked about for my uncle, and soon found him, leaning over the rail.

"Ha, Denis," said he coolly, "so thou art escaped. I had a notion 'twas thou wert crushed against the wall."

"You mistook then," said I, and might have said more, had not Captain Spurrier laid a hand upon my collar, the whiles he clapped his pistol to my uncle's ear, and called out—

"Lay me these men in irons, Attwood. I am master on my own good ship, if not in that fiends' compter."

We were seized upon instantly and hurried down to the hold, where, heavily shackled, we were thrown among such stuff as there lay stored. The vessel rolled horribly, and often drove against the impediments upon the bank with a dreadful grinding noise, but about morning, as I supposed, they got her about, and into the stream, where, the tempest somewhat abating, she rode pretty free, though what course she kept I could not be certain in, and indeed soon gave over the attempt to follow their purposes that had us so utterly in their power.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE VOYAGE OF THE *SARACEN'S HEAD*

Whatever the doubts I may at first have entertained, it was soon enough abundantly clear that the *Saracen's Head* was under way toward the open sea; for from my place in the hold I could hear the shipmen calling to one another as such and such a landmark or hamlet came into sight; as the green heights of Greenwich; and Tilbury, where there was a troop of horse at exercise, the which sight was occasion of a good deal of rough wit amongst the crew. At the mouth of the Medway we spoke a great merchant galley that was returned from Venice, and put in to Rochester for repairs, she having come by some damage in the late storm. Of the passage of time I soon lost count lying in the dark bottom of the ship, where was nought to denote those petty accidents by which we customarily reckon it. So I knew not positively whether 'twere day or night I waked and slept in nor whether we made good progress or slow. For awhile I tried to keep measure of the hours by our meals, as it might be three meals to an whole day; but this would not hold neither, for there was no regularity in the serving of them, they being brought us quite by haphazard and as they were thought on: which was seldom enough, and the food so stale and nauseating, as led me suppose we only received it by afterthought, or in such grudging contempt as is sometimes termed charity. To do him right, I must allow that my uncle took this reversal of his fortunes with a perfect indifference; as no doubt in the like situation my father would have done, though upon a loftier consideration; but however come by, his patience shamed me, who could by no means attain thereto, nor I think did seriously attempt it. My sufferings were indeed very great, and in that voyage I conceived such a passionate disgust of the sea as hath caused me to regard it as being (what in fact it is) the element the nearest to chaos, and therefore the least to be accounted for perfect—and yet perhaps not altogether the least, for I soon found myself doubting if a man's stomach were every way a sound device; it being very certain that mine often fell away into the original incoherence that all things had before the Creation, or ever I had gone three leagues from the shore.

No loathing can compare with that a man experienceth at such a time, when dinner is a greater insult than a blow. And I am ashamed even now to remember the hate I cherished for the honest mariner that stumbled down the companion bearing my platter of salt beef; which feeling found its vent in my imagining a world of tortures for the bearer of the beef and for all jovial ruddy mariners, and for every shipwright since the days of Noah.

Nevertheless, since into what state soever we come, we be so framed as by degrees to acquire a sort of habit, if not a content, therein, so it befell that I also, in due time, from my amazing and profound malady recovered some fragment of a willingness to live. It might have been the third or fourth day after, that I ate without such consequences as I had supposed necessarily incident to the act, and life came to assume an aspect wherein it stood on favourable terms with sudden death. This surprised me, seeing that of late I had conceived life to be (at the best) but a protracted and indefinite dissolution; and I ate again....

"The devil take you!" I cried to the fellow that had just entered the hold with a handful of biscuits and a little rundlet of burnt wine. "What a meal is that to set before starving men?"

"Courage, master," said the mariner with a great laugh, "we be come within but a few leagues of the Straits, and perhaps shall touch at one of the Spanish ports, where we may better provision the ship than our Captain thought it altogether safe to do, the night we set sail."

"And shall we be released then?" I asked eagerly.

The man shrugged up his shoulders with a grin, and for the first time my uncle, who all these days had lain quite silent in the dark of the hold, leaned over from his place among the stuff, and thus accosted me—

"Are you so great a fool yet? When the pawn is taken, it is cast aside, and the game goes on. Teach your mind to expect nothing, and your tongue to require nothing. There is an hell where they and I shall meet." He paused a space, and then with an intensity of purpose that held my blood in the veins: "We shall meet there," he added slowly, "and shall need all eternity for that we shall there do. 'Tis the privilege of hell that no enmities be in that place forgot, nor forgiven."

When the mariner had left us, I asked my uncle what he considered our fate would be; who answered that, as it had been put into the articles of the false contract he had made with Spurrier, that offers of help should be made to the Spaniards, in the which embassage he himself had promised (though he intended nothing less) to undertake the chiefest part; so, he being now deposed, it was probable that Spurrier would take upon him the fulfilment of that office.

"In the which event," he said with great deliberation, "we shall certainly be given over to those devils, to be clapped up in their filthy dungeons, or else sent to New Spain, to work in the mines there. You spoke of a release a little since; there is but one release from this pass."

We conversed in this strain from time to time; but ordinarily kept silence. By the running out of a cable, we knew that we were come into that harbour the seaman spoke of, and momentarily looked for the trap above in the deck to be opened, and ourselves to be haled out to our dooms. A curious sense of unreality came over me in this interval, yet joined to a minute perception of all that passed, as though I could actually see the same with my eyes. For I seemed to detect the departure of our Captain, that went ashore; I heard the rattle of the oars against the pins as he was rowed off. Later, I understood that he was returned again, and with him another, whose step upon the deck was firm and stately. His spurs jangled as he moved. "It is the Governor of this Port," I said to myself, "and they debate of treason together."

The most of the crew hung about amidships; the principal persons being upon the quarterdeck, and there remaining a great while. Some little movement as of men dissatisfied, I noted later; and then there was the business of the Governor's leaving us, I supposed to consult with others, his lieutenants, upon the quay.

Presently I was startled by the firing of a cannon, which made our ship to reel as she would have split, and there was trampling and shouted words of command. Spurrier's bargain had failed.

"They had best have left it," said my uncle with a sneering laugh, when he saw how things had gone. "A greedy boastful knave as Spurrier is, none will be matched with. I know this Governor well, if this place we be come to be, as I think, Puerto Real. 'Twas his brother I slew, Don Florida. He would inquire after him, like enough, and wherefore he had not returned into Spain, to which Spurrier would answer him astray and then lie to mend it; a paltry bungler as he is! I might have played this hand through, Denis, had I chosen. But being no traitor I would not. Well, let them look to their stakes!"

It may appear a strange thing, but 'tis true, that our old animosity had quite sunk between us and although we used no particular courtesy in our scanted speech, yet my uncle and I nevertheless found (I believe) an equal pleasure in our enforced companionship. In the presence of almost certain death, whether men fear or contemn it, there is in the mere thought of it a compelling quality that directs the mind to it only; and where two minds be thus constrained to the same point, along whatever paths they may have moved, there is of necessity a kind of sympathy betwixt them, and a resolution of their differences in that common attent.

Succeeding upon that firing of the great gun there was an immediate confusion wherein we in our dungeon were wholly forgot. A cannon from the fort answered our challenge a while after, but by its faintness 'twas easy to suppose we had got a good way out of the harbour and thus were free from any present danger from a land attack. But whether there were in the roads gathered any vessels of war that might do us harm upon the sea we could not conjecture, though it appeared not altogether likely, or at the least that they were not at all points prepared upon the sudden to give chase. Our main fear lay in the probability that, the alarm being given, messengers would be dispatched to all points of the coast, with particulars given of the rank and appearance of our ship, in order that, attempting to sail through the Straits into the Mediterranean or to slip away again northward, we should be made to answer for our gunnery salute in such sort as would hardly please us.

But however these considerations affected his two censors in the hold, Captain Spurrier was evidently nothing moved thereby, who warped his ship as it were along the very shore with a most insensate impudency until he had her within the narrow waters about Gibraltar, where a

man could have slung a stone upon our decks, so nearly did we venture ourselves into the enemy's power. Nay, a general madness seemed to have grown to possess the whole crew, so disappointed were they of the outcome of their late negotiations and proffers of treachery; and no folly that presented itself to them, but they took it as a drunken man takes water, feverishly. Thus our cannon were continually being shot off, not of offence but for the mere show of bravery it put upon us; and so likewise of defence, there was no order taken nor was any especial guard kept, so far as we could tell who knew not the watches, but yet could distinguish well enough the sounds of cups clinking and of quarrelling and curses. Indeed I doubt whether, at any hour of this our frenzied voyage, had a cock-boat of resolute men put out to intercept us, we should not have been made prize of, before we were aware that opposition was so much as offered.

In the meanwhile we in our chains were, as I say, left undisturbed; and as hour after hour went by the hunger we suffered increased so that I think another day of such absolute privation, and of the burning thirst that went with it, would have ended our business altogether. Yet it was to this incredible affliction we owed our resolution to get free, come what would thereafter.

I must have fallen into some raving speech, that served to make manifest to my uncle the abject condition I was in, for before I knew of it, he had dragged himself over to me, and with his skeleton fingers had loosened the band at my throat and chafed my hands together between his own.

"Oh, let me die," I cried fiercely.

"You are like to," said he, without the least resentment; "but if you will take the advice I shall give, you will either notably increase your chances of it, or else will get what is hardly less to be desired, I mean food."

Too faint to demand what he intended by that, I lay still, careless whether he made his purpose clear or not.

"Seeing that we cannot get off our irons," he went on, "we must eat or die, bound. Now I believe that it is night and most of the crew drunk. If it be so, we shall get food enough and perhaps our freedom too. If it be not so, you shall have your will presently and die; for it is you who must go above, Denis, seeing I cannot do so, that have my ankle broke with this cursed chain."

I got upon my feet, all confused as I was and sick with famine; but his greater courage moved me to obey him in this if I could, though I expected but little good of it.

"They will hear my chains," I said.

"I will muffle them," he replied, and tore off three or four strips of his silken coat that he yet wore, and with them wrapped up the links in such sort as I should move along without noise, though still heavily. After that I left him, going up the ladder to the trap in the roof of the hold, which none had troubled to make fast, knowing, or at least believing, that we were safe enough in our shackles, without further precaution taken.

It was indeed night, as my uncle had supposed; and such a night as seemeth to lift a man out of his present estate, so limited and beat upon by misfortunes, and to touch his lips with a savour of things divine. There is a liberation in the wide spaces of the night, and a glory unrevealed by any day.

I stood awhile where I was upon the deck, simply breathing in the cool air and taking no thought for my safety. A gunner lay beside his gun, asleep with his head upon the carriage; I could have touched him with my outstretched arm....

I looked about me. We were riding at anchor in a little bay that from the aspect of the stars I took to be upon the Moorish side of the Straits: an opinion that became certainty when I gradually made out the form of that huge rock of Gibraltar to the northward and the mountainous promontory which lieth thereabout. There was no wind at all, which something excused the slack seamanship that was used amongst us, and in this principally showed, that our sails were but some of them furled up, although we rode at anchor; and the rest of them hung flat upon the yards. The moon had not risen, or was already set, but there was that soft diffused pallor of the stars by which, after awhile, I could see very well. In the general negligence the ship's lanterns were left unlit, but the gunner had one beside him, and also (what imported me more to find) a few broken morsels of bread. To carry these and the lantern down to the hold was my next concern, and was happily effected; but I judged my enterprise incomplete until I had got wine, or at least water, to wash it down, for even less to be supported than our hunger was our horrible scorching thirst.

Now, how I should have fared in my quest of that commodity I know not, seeing I did not proceed further in it than just so far as the prostrate gunner, whose leg in passing I chanced to touch and so woke him. He raised himself on his elbow, grumbling that he was o'er-watched, and would stand sentinel no more for all the Moors in Barbary. Upon the impulse I fell upon and grappled with him, managing the chain betwixt my wrists so that I had his neck in a loop of it, upon which I pulled until his eyes and mouth were wide and the blood pouring from his nose. Gradually I slackened my hold to let him breathe, for he was pretty far gone.

"You must knock off my irons," I whispered, "or else I will strangle you outright," and made as if to begin again.

He was beyond speech, but made signs he would do it, and implored me with his eyes to desist. Then he made me to understand that his tools were abaft in the gunroom, so that I was fain to follow him thither, or rather to go beside him with my arms about his neck like a dear friend. We encountered some dozen men in the way, but all sleeping, save one that I made my captive put to silence, which he did very properly and workmanlike.

Not to be tedious in this matter, I say that at length I stood free; for the which enfranchisement when my man had perfected it, perceiving that he was like to be called in question, he fell on his knees before me and besought me to let him escape with me.

"I have had pity of you many a time," he cried, "when, but for me, you must have starved;" which was indeed true, he being the bluff ruddy fellow that had brought us our meals from time to time.

Nevertheless I would not altogether promise to do as he wished, but commanded him first to fetch drink and more food to my uncle, and to me too; which when he had done, I told him we would at our leisure consider of the success.

"At your leisure, quotha!" cried the man, whose name was Attwood (a Midland man and a famous forger of iron as I found). "'Twill be but an hour ere the sun rise."

"Whither are we bound?" I demanded.

"To some port of Italy," he replied, "or Sicily, as I think. But upon our voyage it is intended to snap up whatever craft we shall encounter and may not be able to withstand us; at which trade, if it prosper, it is purposed we shall continue, and perhaps join with others that do the like. And to this course our Captain is principally moved by one, a rascal Greek, that affecteth to have knowledge of a certain stronghold and harbourage in an island to the northward of Sicily, where he saith he is acquainted with a notable commander of armed galleys that should welcome our adherence."

"Bring forth our supper therefore, Master Attwood," said I, "for if not now, I see not when we shall eat it."

We ate and drank very heartily together; for we made Attwood of the company, who knocked off my uncle's chains and bound his ankle very deftly betwixt two battens to set it. Our conversation was naturally upon what should be our means of escape, which would have been settled out of hand had it not been for my uncle's broken bone that prevented his swimming ashore as else we might have done; for our cock-boat had been lost at the start in the gale, and we had nothing of which to make a raft, or at least none we could get loose without risk of alarming the crew.

But as was usual my uncle gave the word by which we were ready to abide, and that was that I should swim to shore alone and seize upon one of the boats that would certainly be to be found drawn up on the sands (for we lay close under the shore), and with this returning with all dispatch, take them off that awaited me. Accordingly, I let myself down by the side, Attwood assisting me, and swam toward the shore. But scarce had I set foot upon it, when I saw a long boat, filled with a troop of half-naked Moors, that rowed out from beyond the point and aimed directly for the vessel I had left.

Without any other thought but to save them if I could, I shouted to Attwood that they were threatened by the Moors, and the distance being as I say but small betwixt us, he heard me, and ran to his cannon. But the stir he made aroused two or three of the mariners, so that soon all stood upon their guard to defend themselves. The Captain ordered the gunner to lay to his piece and sink the enemy, but they got away in the dark, and so nothing was done. However, the Captain, who was greatly affrighted by this accident, called out to them to weigh anchor, for he would presently be gone; and about sunrise, a wind springing up, he loosed from his moorings and made away eastward under all sail.

Now, if it be admired why I neither returned to the ship, rather than remain alone in this barbarous unknown country, nor yet extended a finger to help my uncle and Attwood to their freedom, I must answer that it was because I could not. For I had not stood above three minutes upon that starlit shore, ere I was seized by two Moors, that carried me with them to a rough hutch of skins they had hard by the quay. And here they told me, by signs, I must await their king and by him be judged for my swimming ashore in the night; which manner of reaching the country was, I understood, as well open to suspicion as a notable infraction of the rights of the licensed ferrymen. They seemed to be honest fellows enough, and except that they kept me in pretty close ward in the tent, treated me, in all else, very well.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TEMPLE BENEATH THE WATERS

Now, had I but had the luck to know it, my two captors were themselves of this guild of the ferrymen whose rights they so stoutly stood by; and I could have obtained my freedom at any hour of the night for two-pence: the statutory passage money of which I had unwittingly defrauded them. But upon this twopence saved were to depend many events I could well have spared, together, too, with much I yet thank Heaven for; so small a matter doth our fate require (as a rudder) to steer us by along what course she will....

The sun came up, as I say, in a little fresh scud of wind, and athwart the golden dancing waters went the good ship the *Saracen's Head*, fair and free; while I, her supercargo, remained behind in this evil-smelling tent of half-naked and infidel Moors; cursing the mischance that had led me thither, and altogether discouraged.

The thought of Idonia, that amid all the distractions of my late captivity on board the ship had been predominant over all, affected me more than ever now, as I sat in this pure light of dawn, in a perfect silence save for the little lapping of the waves. I remembered the wild look of love that her eyes had held, when she said: "Free, oh, free!" and: "Denis, Denis, do not let me go!" I caught again the drooping lassitude of her posture, when, spent by the varying terrors of the night, she had swooned in my arms. For the thousandth time I reviewed the dangers that threatened her, the bitter cold of the rain, insults of the soldiers, her wandering wits and the nearness of the river. To this was added a fearful burden of doubt whether I should at all be suffered to return home, to seek her; knowing as I did that not two or three, but many men that had set foot upon this coast, had been sold as slaves or slain outright; while others, to escape the seeming worst, abjuring their faiths (as Nelson the Yeoman's son had done), had embraced the false religion of this country and by that currish means gained favour and furtherance in their servitude. It seemed to me a strange thing, as I sat in this place where all around was peace and grave silence, that so small an interval might separate me from such intolerable cruelties as we in England had oftentimes heard tell of as continually practised by the men of these parts; and I in particular had listened to this sort of tales, by the mariners of our Company narrated, when, as I was used, I went to meet them and bring them to Osborne the Governor. But there is (I find) a surprising declension from the amusement got by hearing of the customs of other nations, to that is got by going where they are practised; and I settled it in my mind at that time (nor have I ever exchanged the opinion) that what lieth beyond the West Country is of very small account; always excepting the City of London and the Berkshire downs.

Now when the sun had been risen about an hour, I perceived some stir to grow in the town, and men to begin going about their daily business. From the petty harbour I saw a barque or two warping their way out, and was marvellous surprised when, presently, that great boat that had rowed, as we all supposed, to the attack of the *Saracen's Head*, returned very peaceably to the quayside laden with a fine catch of fish; by the which it manifestly appeared that they were no robbers, but a company of Moorish fisherfolk that had gone before daybreak to cast their seines; and as the sequel showed, to good purpose.

I laughed aloud at the error into which I had fallen, and the more when I imagined with what consternation these simple men would have received Master Attwood's cannon shot, had he prosecuted his intention and fired it.

My two guards looked upon me with some anxiety, when they saw me laughing in this manner, and spoke together in a low voice; after which the one of them got up softly and went away. Something perturbed, I questioned the other man, by signs, that being our only method of converse, whither it was he went; who answered, similarly, that he was gone to see if the king were yet awake, and ready to administer justice in my cause. I should have sought to learn more, had I not chanced to observe upon one of the ships that lay by the wharf, a flag hauling up, at which sight I was filled with an excessive joy; for it was the English flag; and the ship, when I had more particularly noted her, one of our Turkey Company's merchant vessels, namely, the *Happy Adventure*, seventy tons burden and very sound craft.

Leaping to my feet, I made signs to my Moor that these were friends of mine who would speak for my general probity, and at the same time offered him three or four pieces of silver (all I had) the better to enforce my request.

Never have I seen a man so metamorphosed as he, who, expecting at the utmost to receive his legal two-pence, had suddenly thrust upon him a handful of crowns. From a petty evader of duties, I became in his eyes a fountain of generosity, and prince of swimmers. He fell prone on his face before me in the sand, and covered my shoes with kisses, naming me in his language his eternal benefactor, the light of his life, the supporter of his age (or if not these then what you shall please, for I understood nothing of it all save his cringing and kissing of my toe).

Now while he was thus engaged, his companion returned together with him they called their king, but was only an ordinary Moor to see to, extremely fat (which is perhaps a sign of pre-eminence in these parts) and abominably filthy. He had two curved swords stuck in his waist, and wore a patched green cloak.

But when he saw who it was approached, my newly purchased friend left kissing me, and did obeisance to his king, very reverently saluting him with his hands raised to his forehead; and the king in his turn bade him, as well as he could for lack of breath, be at peace. Which done, a long debate ensued among the three of them wherein my gratuity was displayed and commented upon, with a great show of delight by the Moor, with astonishment by the king, and with an uncontrolled disappointment by the Moor that had gone to bring him. By the greedy looks with which he, and soon the king too, regarded this chiefest feature of the case, I understood that my acquittal was likely to depend upon the nature of the evidence (that is the amount of the bribe) I could bring in, to satisfy my second accuser, and after him the Judge. But satisfy them in this kind I could not, for as I have said, I had imprudently parted with my entire wealth to my first accuser, who, as I am assured, would have been perfectly content with half a groat. The fat king, without the least disguise, but pointing to my unlucky crown-pieces, told off upon his fingers the rate at which I might obtain my discharge, while the ferryman, whom anger seemed to have robbed of speech, convulsively gripped at the haft of a very dangerous long knife he had, as if to demonstrate the province of effective law.

What course I might have followed herein I am not careful to imagine; enough that it was decided for me by one of the ship's company of the *Adventure*, who, observing us, came over a little way to see what should be the occasion of this argument. To him then, without delay, I dispatched my Moorish friend I had suborned, praying the mariner to hasten to my assistance. And no sooner did he see the English pieces in the fellow's hand than he understood it was a countryman of his in peril, and so called together the rest of his crew, or at least such as were within hail. A little after, therefore, I was set free, the whole company coming about me, and thrusting away the poor fat king, that they told me was but a petty chieftain, of no authority at all, except that he took the half of the harbour dues; which being a mere pittance, however, he was fain to eke out the stipend with the selling of sweet oil and justice, as either was called for.

But when they heard I was employed by the Turkey Company, as they were, and moreover was acquainted with Sir Edward Osborne, whom every one greatly honoured, there was no end to their protestations of friendship; and in especial the master of that voyage, one Captain Tuchet, offered to carry me with him to England; albeit he must first, he said, finish his trading in these waters, as he had engaged to do.

I thanked him very heartily for his kindness, and, at his request, opened with him at large of my imprisonment on board the *Saracen's Head*, and of all matters I have above set down, which he heard very patiently and advised himself of the principal outrages that were either committed or intended by Spurrier and the rest. He was a short, squat man, of a very heavy appearance and so dull an eye that I had set him down for almost a fool before he showed me pretty convincingly that he was not, but rather of a nature at once astute and undaunted, he being indeed at all points a commander and worthy of trust.

"So you tell me that these gentlemen purpose to join themselves to a certain pirate of note," he said, blinking his thick-lidded eyes, as we leaned over the rail of his high deck. "And where might he be found, prythee?"

"It was upon some island, as I remember, to the northward of Sicily," I answered.

"'Tis as I thought then," said he, "and having a part of our cargo to discharge at Amalfi, we will read our instructions something more liberally than we be wont to do, and shape our course toward—well, should we chance to make this island of yours upon the way, there's no harm done, Master Supercargo;" and he blinked again.

"You will give them chase?" cried I.

"We be men peaceably inclined at all times," replied Tuchet, closing his eyes altogether, "and I should be sorry if resistance to our demands led to bloodshed."

"But my uncle..." I said and hesitated.

"Is a reasonable villain by all accounts," replied the Captain, and so for that while dismissed me.

The news that we were to alter our course in order to the end I have named, soon spread amongst the crew, who one and all rejoiced at the prospect of fighting it offered them; that being a luxury not often to be indulged in upon a merchant ship and therefore the more highly prized. From the mate I learned that there was an infinite number of such secret nooks and fastnesses by pirates and desperate thieves infested, in this sea, and that to any ordinary man it would appear an absurd thing to attempt, from amongst so many, to discover the particular refuge that Spurrier might affect. "So that were it not for some hint we have to go upon, which our Captain thinks sufficient, we might indeed run far astray; though now, if we do, I shall greatly admire it."

"Upon what place hath he fixed as likely?" I asked.

"'Tis a little rock among the Æolian Islands," he answered me, "for it is indeed hardly more than a bare rock. The people name it the Three Towers, because of certain watch-towers formerly set up against the Saracens and yet remaining: as you may see them likewise in Amalfi, and other places too. It hath a fair anchorage and haven and a flat strip of good land where they used to

cultivate vines before the robbers took the place and killed the islanders. There was a pleasant village there among the vineyards, and a temple, nigh perfect, of the old heathen gods. But now all is in ruins, except that those men have retained for their safeguard, or for the storage of their treasure."

"You seem to know their lurking-place pretty well," said I, with a smile.

He let the jest pass, it being none to him as I soon learned.

"I should know it, master," he replied, "having lived there, and there married and had children. 'Twas those devils of pirates drove me forth ... but not my wife. My children they slew in the room where the wine-press stood. I think if we fall in with that company, sir, by how much soever their number exceed ours, we shall yet get the better of them, God helping us."

All that day we held our course eastward, with a pretty strong wind following, so that we had got about seventy or eighty miles from the port by sunset. The night also continuing fair, with lucky weather, we made a further good progress, by which the Captain hoped, within two or three days at the most, we should make the Island of Tre Torre (that is, the Three Towers aforesaid), and therefore set every one to the preparing of his weapon, and the hauling up of the powder from the magazine.

For my part, while these preparations were making, I was full of heavy thoughts, for it must needs be in this imminent battle that my uncle and I should be opposites, who but lately were become friends.

I doubted indeed whether Spurrier would grant him liberty to fight; but the alternative was rather to be feared, namely that, unwilling to be cumbered with the ward of prisoners at such a time, the Captain would rid himself of him before the fight should begin. But either way I certainly could not refuse to draw my sword against these pirates merely because my uncle was kept prisoner by them, and especially since our quarrel was like to extend to all such robbers as should choose to take sides with Spurrier against us. It appeared indeed a mad impossible enterprise we undertook, and had it not been for the extreme faith all our crew had in Mr. Tuchet, I might perhaps have gone the length of protesting against the risk we ran.

However I did not, and am glad that I refrained, for no man loveth to be thought a coward, though some that are not be content to appear so in a noble cause; which I think is the greatest degree of courage a man can attain to.

Now, about the fourth morning, when the watch was changed, I being one of those appointed to serve that turn, we remarked that the sky, which until then had been quite clear, was now spread over with a thin haze, such as ordinarily intendeth an excessive heat; and indeed as the day wore on it became oppressively hot, the vapour remaining the while, or rather withdrawing to an unusual height, so that there was no mist upon the waters, but merely a white sky for a blue one. At noonday this strange whiteness of the heavens became charged with a dull copper colour particularly to the eastward, and the wind died away suddenly, leaving us becalmed.

Tuchet summoned the mate to him, to the upper deck, and held him long in consultation of this mystery, presently calling me too to join them there, when he put two or three brief questions to me as touching the rig and burden of the *Saracen's Head*, which, when I had answered, he resumed his conference with the mate, jerking his finger impatiently toward some object far out to sea.

I followed the direction of his finger, and at last perceived right upon the clear line of the horizon a grey blot, that might have been a rock or ship, or indeed anything, so great was the distance of it from us.

"I cannot tell," said the mate; "but I think 'tis not so big."

"Tush!" said the Captain. "Consider it more closely."

Again I strained my eyes for any indication of sail or hull that should resolve my doubt; but even as I gazed the thing was lost as completely as though the sea had opened to swallow it.

"Why, 'tis gone!" I cried.

Neither of the men spoke for a while, but after a full half minute the mate said in a low voice

"Yonder comes the eagre," meaning, as I learned afterwards, that great wave that sometimes comes with the high tide, and is otherwise named the Bore; the cause of it none knoweth certainly, though it is said to follow upon an uncommon meeting of tides, or else is rolled back by earthquakes and such-like horrid disturbances and visitations of the Almighty.

"Strike sail, lads," shouted the Captain, "and close up all hatches; there's tempest at hand."

We did what we could, but the time was brief enough, so that before we had well concluded the wave struck us. The ship seemed to be lifted like a plaything and tossed about as lightly as

though a giant had put forth his hand from the deep and flung us. Three men were washed overboard at the first assault and our mizzen mast burst asunder, which falling, grievously hurt one that stood by, who a little after died.

Meanwhile the calm that had previously held us bound, was exchanged for a furious hurricane worse almost to withstand than the shock of the eagre-wave itself. The sky was now as black as night, with great hurrying clouds urged on as it seemed by the pitiless goad of lightning that lacerated them as they thundered by. Wave after wave swept over us as we rose and fell, abject and waterlogged, now lying low in the lane of waters, now impelled to the summit from which we looked forth as from a falling tower in whose ruin we were presently to be involved....

I cannot relate all that followed, for a spar struck me senseless, and when I recovered we were riding in an untroubled bay, under a lee shore. Too sick and weak to question those that stood about me, I nevertheless could not but note the amazing beauty of the scene. Upon an eminence a grove of palm trees stood out against the blue of the sky, while upon the slope of this hill and below it to the water's edge extended the buildings of a city, dazzling white and magnificently builded with long arcades and lofty gateways and tiled domes. At first I supposed we had been carried by the storm backward to that Moorish port where I was held captive, but soon I perceived that this place greatly exceeded it in splendour and apparent wealth. The city, in fact, was Argiers, whither we had been carried wide of our course by the stress of the storm: but being here our Captain thought fit to make good our ship that was pretty near stove in. Some nine or ten days in all we stayed, during which I not only regained my health but took an infinite pleasure in going about in the town, which was like nothing I had ever seen or imagined, so white it was, and so strangely supported upon deep arches that caught the shade at all hours; and having high towers with balconies, from which a man called these poor infidels to prayer. The flies were abominable, and the stench incredibly offensive; but saving these things, Argiers is a good town, and the people of it (that is, the men, for I saw no women) very grave and orderly.

Our masts and timbers made good at length, Mr. Tuchet called the crew aboard, and bade them cast off the hawser that held us, which was soon done, and we departed. And because of the privilege extended to me and the favour of the Captain, I left the common seamen and went upon the deck that the Captain used, who spoke cheerily to me, saying he hoped we should meet with no more disasters on this voyage. I laughed and said I hoped not neither, and asked him when he thought we should come to Amalfi; for it never entered my mind that he would prosecute his old purpose of going against the pirates.

"To Amalfi?" said Tuchet, scratching his grey stubble beard. "Oh, about a week hence, Mr. Denis, if we get done with your uncle by Thursday, as I expect to do."

Nothing deterred him when he had once resolved upon any course, and I am assured that had we lost half our complement of men and all our ammunition, he would have gone into it with his fists. The Thursday then, having doubled the Cape of Marsala, which is the westward point of Sicily, we came amongst the Æolian Islands to the very hour Tuchet had named; and towards evening we clearly descried the little rocky islet of the Three Towers; whereat every man grasped his weapon, and the gunner ran out his long brass piece. 'Twas no time for the conning over of moral sentences but rather of rapid silent preparation; yet I could not but feel the solemnity of this our slowly sailing onward through the still autumn evening, whose outgoing seemed so sweetly attuned to that praise for which the Scripture saith it was created, but which for us meant no more than an unlucky light to shoot by. For, as more than one stout fellow whispered, our ship having the sun behind it was a mark for any fool to hit, while we upon our part could distinguish nought upon that barren rock but the crumbled watch-towers that crowned it.

Without a word, we stole on. It was dangerous navigation, for there were said to be sunken reefs to the westward (that is the nearest to us as we came from the west), where the rock divided into two horns or spurs, that, jutting out into the sea, enclosed the little parcel of flat land where the vineyards used to be and the ruined temple. The harbourage lay a little to the southward behind the right-hand spur I have noted, and was therefore not yet to be seen; though we, approaching so closely, must have been perfectly visible to any one that lay concealed amidst the innumerable lurking-places and caves of the rock.

The mate, who knew the island but too well, had gone forward, but now returned to us, that is to Tuchet and me, upon the high deck. His face was very white.

"The shore hath sunk," he said.

"What do you mean?" cried Tuchet, turning about sharply.

"Vineyard and all gone; our cottage and the garden where my boys played.... The eagre hath whelmed them."

"But the wave hath long since receded, man; it cannot be! You have mistaken the place belike."

"Mistaken!" repeated the mate with a hard laugh. "I tell you the whole island hath been disturbed; its foundations shaken—Lo, there!" he cried out. "A whole cliff hath gone down in the earthquake; and there is driftwood under the headland, of wrecked ships."

And even as he had said, so it was.

For the late upheaval had had its origin in the recesses of this barren rock, which it had burst open as a robber bursts forth from his ambush, and loosed that charging hurricane upon the sea. And indeed not this island of Tre Torre only, but all these islands to the northward of Sicily be so eaten under by fire, and liable to sudden calamity therefrom, as none may properly be named habitable, though the most of them be inhabited in despite of almost constant threatenings, until, as this place was, they be at length in a night destroyed.

We sailed about the place in our ship, but found no living soul, and night soon after falling, we were fain to use the shattered remnant of the pirates' harbour, where we lay till the morning, very sad and perplexed.

But a great while before full day I rose up alone and went ashore, in the hope to light upon some vestiges of my uncle, or if not of him, then of any of that infamous crew of the *Saracen's Head*. From the one of the watch-towers that I found to be the least shaken I surveyed the rock over every part, but could discover nothing more than that we had before espied, namely, the few broken boards of a ship and spars strewn about the sweep of ground betwixt the two promontories, and so descended slowly to where they lay. And having descended but a little of the broken path that led, as I judged, to the submerged hamlet amidst the vineyards, I looked out upon the waters of the bay; and on the sudden, clear beneath them, saw the hamlet, house by house, and the pergolas of hanging vines. So translucent and untroubled was the water at that hour that scarce anything the least was hid, but even the grass between the stones I saw, yet fresh and waving, and the rusted tools abandoned in the fields. An untended way led further off to the temple, of which I could dimly perceive the pillars, between which great silver fish swam in and out, and upon its steps the seaweed slightly stirred.

But caught in the weed on the steps of the temple I saw a drowned man lying, and when I had gone down to the edge of the shore, I knew him for my uncle....

Of the rest we could find at first no trace at all, but (having sent down divers into the deep water about the northward headland) we at length recovered the bodies of Spurrier and Attwood and one or two beside. When the ship had split, idly trusting to such pieces of the wreck as they could lay hold of, they had evidently been dashed against the rock, and so perished. But the prisoner in the hold had been carried forward, as it seemed, almost into safety, but at the last had been let slip. There was no hurt upon his body when we raised it, and the features were unclouded by any premonition of his fate.

CHAPTER XXV

IW WHICH THE SHIPS OF WAR GO BY AND THE TALE ENDS

To tell all that befell me ere I set foot in England once more were scarce less tedious to the reader than it was to me in the happening, who counted each day for lost until I had got home; which was upon Christmas Eve; and should prosecute my search for Idonia Avenon.

But so strangely into peace did all my affairs seem to move, after my uncle's death (as though upon his removal who had every way troubled us so long, we were come into an unknown liberty and fulfilment of our hopes), that my search was ended as soon almost as begun, and Idonia restored to me within an hour of my landing at Wapping Stairs.

'Twas the simplest cause that led me to her, as it was the simplest act of mere gratitude that I should go at once to the kindly folk on the Bridge, I mean Gregory Nelson and his wife, to requite them for all they had done for me and to excuse myself in having gone away from them so without warning as I did; which must at that time have appeared very graceless in me and unhandsome. And being thus come to their house, as I say, who should be in the doorway, as if expressly to greet me (although she had heard nought of the arrival of the *Happy Adventure*), but Idonia herself, sweet lass! and blithe as a carol burden. 'Twas some while ere we got to relating our histories, but when Idonia did at length relate her own, I learnt how Nelson's brother, the yeoman, had found her that dreadful night, lurking about the precincts of the *Fair Haven Inn*, nigh distraught with weeping and the terror of loneliness. He had questioned her straitly of her purpose in being there, to whom she presently confessed she sought me, and told him where I was used to lodge, which was in this house upon London Bridge. And no sooner did the yeoman apprehend the matter, than he got permission of his captain to leave watching of the Inn, and so carried her home to his brother's wife, who tenderly cared for her, until I should return.

"As indeed I never doubted of your doing," said Idonia, her eyes shining for very pride of this ineffable thing we had entered into possession of; "though you have been gone a weary great while, dear heart, and no tidings have I had to comfort me."

"Ay, and mickle tidings you needed, housewife!" interposed the scolding voice of Madam Nelson, that (good soul) had no notion to leave us two by ourselves, but burst into whatever room we were in, upon the most impertinent excuse, as of a mislaid thimble, or a paper of pins, or else a "Lord! be you here still?" or a "Tell me, Denis, how do the ladies of Barbary wear their hair?" until I swear I was ready to pitch her out of the window for a second, but more virtuous, Jezebel.

"Small tidings you needed, I wis," said she, "that turned even silence to advantage, and the very winds of Heaven to your way of thinking! 'He will be safe in this weather,' would 'a say when 'twas calm; or if it blew fresh, 'Denis hath no fear of a tempest!' and with such a fulsome patience of belief, as I think, had she had positive news you were dead, she would have said you feigned it on purpose to have leisure to think upon her."

"Had it not been for your own good courage, mother," replied I donia, with a run of laughter, "I had often enough desponded. And 'twas you went to Mr. Osborne for me, as Mr. Nelson did to the Council, to give account how matters had gone, and to exonerate this long lad of remissness."

"Tilly vally!" cried the lady. "I exonerate none of your lovers, not I, that steal away at midnight, to leave their sweethearts weeping by the shore!" And so, as if blown thence by the strong gust of her resentment, she was gone from us, ere I could mend her wilful misconstruction of the part I had been enforced to play.

But that part of captive I was now content enough to continue in for just so long as I donia willed, who held me to her, and by a thousand links bound me, pronouncing my sentence in terms I shall neither ever forget nor shall I now repeat them. Such sweet words of a maid are not singular, I think, but rather be common as death; to which for the first time they give the only right meaning, as of a little ford that lies in a hollow of the highway of love....

I told her gently of her guardian's drowning, at which report she shuddered and turned away her face. But all she said was: "He was a kind man to me, but otherwise, I fear, very wicked."

We spoke of the Chinese jar, that had contained that great treasure of diamonds and precious stones my uncle had rent away and stolen from those he privily slew. I donia said it had been seized upon by the party of soldiers that had searched the Inn, and that the Queen had confiscated it to her own use, as indeed she was accustomed to keep whatever prizes came into her hands, without scruple of lawful propriety. "Which was the occasion, I fear, of some sharp passages betwixt Madam Nelson and her husband," said I donia, with a smile, "she being for his boldly demanding them of the Queen's Secretary, as pertaining to my dowry, but he stoutly dissenting from such a course, and, I hold, rightly. But in either case I would not have kept them, knowing as I do how they were come by; and although the loss of them leaveth us poor."

I was of her mind in that, and said so. However, we were not to be so poor as we then supposed; for besides the jewels which Her Grace had possessed herself of, with her slender and capable fingers, there was afterwards discovered a pretty big sum of money her guardian had laid up, together with his testament and general devise of all he had to I donia Avenon, whom he named his sole heir. This we learned from the attorney in whose hands as well the money was, as the will, which himself had drawn; who, upon my solemn attestation, and the witness of Captain Tuchet, admitted, and procured it to be allowed by the magistrates, that Botolph Cleeve, the testator, was legally deceased, and I donia Avenon, the beneficiary, incontestably alive. And upon our counting over the sum (we both being notable accountants, as is already sufficiently known), we found it more by nigh a thousand pounds than my father had formerly lost by this man whose death now allowed of the restitution of all. For I donia would hear of nothing done until my father should be first paid, and of her own motion made proposal that we should immediately journey down into Somerset to pay him, in the which course I concurred with great contentment, for it was already near upon two years since I had set eyes upon him, and upon our old home of Combe.

The snow lay somewhat less thickly upon the downs, as we rode over them past Marlborough and Devizes, than it had done when I set out in the company of that very warlike scholar, Mr. Jordan, whose campaign I had seen to be diverted against the books and featherbeds of Baynards Castle, with so singular a valour and so remote a prospect to be ever determined.

I donia was delighted with these great fields, all white and shining, that we passed over, they being like nothing she had ever seen, she said, except once, when she had gone with her guardian into Kent, where he lay one whole winter in hiding, though she did not know wherefore.

By nights it was my custom to request a lodging for I donia of the clergyman of the town we rested at, while I myself would lie at the inn; and by this means I was enabled to renew my pleasant acquaintance with the Curate of Newbury; who (it will be remembered) had preached that Philippic sermon against the Papists, and had moreover so earnestly desired me that I should tell the Archbishop of his adding a rood of ground to his churchyard. He seemed, methought, a little dejected when I said I had had none occasion to His Grace, who therefore remained yet in ignorance of the progress the Church made in Newbury; but he soon so far forgot his disappointment as to tell me of an improvement of his tithes-rents, by which he was left with seventeen shillings to the good at Michaelmas; and with a part of this surplus he had, he confessed, been tempted to purchase of a pedlar a certain book in the French tongue called *Pantagruel*, from which he had derived no inconsiderable entertainment, albeit joined to some

scruples upon the matters therein treated of, whether they were altogether such as he should be known to read them.

"However, since none here hath any French but I," said he, "I bethought me that no public scandal was to be feared, and so read on."

We rode into the little town of Glastonbury, where it lieth under its strange and conical steep hill, about four o'clock in the afternoon; it being then, I think, toward the end of January, and clear still weather. And because it was already dusk I would not proceed further that day; but in the morning, before daybreak, we proceeded again forward, going by the ridgeway that, as a viaduct, standeth high above the levels, then all veiled in chill grey mists. We got into Taunton a little ere noon, and there baited our horses, being determined to end our journey before nightfall, which we could not have done except by this respite. The name of Simon Powell had been so oft upon my lips, and I had with so many and lively strokes depainted him in conversation with Idonia, that she had come to know him almost as well as I, and thus I was hardly astonished when she turned about in her saddle to gaze after a young man that walked in a meadow a little apart from the highway as we were entering the hamlet of Tolland, and asked me whether he were not, as in truth he was, my old companion.

Marvellous glad to meet with Simon after this long interval, I drew rein and beckoned to him, who, running forward almost at the same instant, took my hand, gloved as it was, and covered it with kisses.

"How doth my father?" I demanded eagerly, and ere he had concluded his salutation.

"His worship may mend when he sees you come home," said he gravely, and by that I saw I was not to indulge too large a hope of his mending.

"I would we were indeed arrived home, Simon," I replied; "but at all events, this lodging shall soon be exchanged for a better; that is, if he may yet bear to be moved."

We walked our horses along very slowly, Simon between us as we went, to whom I donia addressed herself so kindly that the lad, falling instantly in love with her, had nearly forgot the principal thing of all he had to say, which was that Sir Matthew Juke had but at the Christmas quarter-day past renounced his tenancy of the Court and gone to Bristol, where he had formed the acquaintance of a merchant-adventurer that was about to attempt the Northwest passage (as it is named, although none hath yet found it); and upon this voyage the knight also was set to go.

"His head is full of the design," said Simon, "so that those about him fear his wits unsettled, and indeed he spends the better part of every day poring upon books of navigation, treatises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert and the like, while his speech is ever of victualling and charts and ships' logs, but of other things, and even in the Justices' room at the Sessions, never a word."

"Say you he hath resigned his lease of our house at Combe?" cried I, interrupting him for the very impatience of my joy; and when I knew he certainly had so done, struck the spurs into my tired beast and galloped forward to the Inn.

Of the interval I say nothing, nor of the mutual delight with which my father and I embraced each other; and afterwards of the bestowal of his welcome upon Idonia, which he did with that accustomed courtly grace of his, and bound the maid to him in love by the simple manner of his doing it.

Within a week, or perhaps a little over, we were all returned to the Court, where I donia was at once proclaimed mistress; and a week after Easter we were married. My father was for giving up to us the great room, hung about with tapestries, he had always used, but neither I donia nor I would allow of it, preferring for our own chamber that high narrow attic in the tower that had been mine before, and was, moreover, as wholesome and sweet a place as any man could lead a wife to, with a rare prospect of meadow and moorland from the window; too, and away up the deep valley to where it is closed in ascending ranks of pines.

Here yet we live, I donia and I: "Idonia of Petty Wales" I have named her, and Simon is therefore wondrous pleased to suppose some affinity in her to his wild ancestors, of whom he now tells her, as he formerly did me, incredible long legends; yet none so out of all compass of belief as is the story we might have told him, had we chosen, of that ruinous secret house over against the Galley Quay, where she dwelt so long, pure and brave, amidst desperate evil men.

Here we live, as I say, I donia and I, but no longer my father, who after we had been married but a year, died. Worn out by that lingering malady of which I have spoken, and having been for so long a while confined to that poor shelter where, I learned, was to be had the merest necessaries but nothing to foster his strength, he soon gave manifest signs that the betterment of his fortune had come too late to advantage him. To himself it had of necessity been well known, but the knowledge neither discouraged him at all, nor caused him to exchange his habitual discourse for those particular sentences that men in such case will sometimes burden their speech withal.

In I donia's company he seemed to take an extraordinary quiet pleasure, and indeed spoke with her (as she afterwards told me) of matters he had seldom enlarged upon with me, but to

which she opened so ready an apprehension as drew him on from familiar chat to reveal to her the most cherished speculations of his mind. To me he continued as I always remember him, using that gentle satire that was a sauce to all his sayings. He would oftenwhiles question me of the difficulties and dangers of my sojourn in London, but although he would hear me attentively, I knew he took small pleasure in tales of tumult and strife. There was in his nature that touch of woman that, however, is not womanliness but rather is responsive to the best a woman hath; and thus it was, in the perfect sympathy that marked his converse with Idonia, I read, more clearly than I had done in all the years we had lived together, the measure of his loss in losing his wife, and the pitiful great need which he endeavoured so continuously, in his reading, to fill.

I had supposed him to be a complete Stoick, and to have embraced without reservation the teaching of that famous school; but Idonia, to whom I spoke of it, told me that it was not altogether so.

"For," she said, "it was but a week since, as we sat together on the side of the moor yonder, that he repeated to me a sentence of the Roman Emperor's, whose works he ever carrieth about with him, in which he bids a wise man expect each day to meet with idle men and fools and busybodies and arrogant men. But that, your father said, was to bid a man shut himself up alone in a high tower, whence he should look down upon his fellows instead of mixing with them and trying to understand them. Expect rather, he said, to meet each day with honest, kindly men; in which expectation if you be disappointed, then consider whether the cause of offence lieth not in you; the other man being full as likely to be inoffensive as yourself."

Of time he was wont to say, "When one says to you: There is no time like the present, reply to him that indeed there is no time but the present: future and past being but as graven figures on a milestone which a man readeth and passeth upon his road."

"In order to the greatest happiness in this life," he said, "it is well freely to give to others all they shall require at your hands, being well assured that they will readily leave you in the enjoyment of that the only real possession of yours, which is your thoughts."

To Idonia, who once asked him why he had never written down the rules he lived by, he answered with his grave smile that rules were the false scent, subtle or obvious, with which the escaping outlaw, thought, deludes its pursuers, sworn of the law.

But the speech that hath struck the deepest in me was spoken when he gave Idonia, as he did, that picture of my mother, of whom he said (but not of himself) that she had known a world of sorrow, and after awhile added that "he believed ere she died she had found her sorrow fashioned to a splendid gift."

I accurately remember the last day he lived, in every least accident of it: the sense of beauty that all things seemed to have above the ordinary, and the stillness that clung about the Combe.

We had gone up, all three, and old Peter Sprot with us, to a little coppice of firs upon the moor side, to see a squadron of the Queen's ships, that went down the Channel under the command of Sir Richard Grenville, who was lately appointed to survey the defences of the West, and to marshal the trained bands that had been put into readiness against the expected, but long delayed, invasion of the Spanish.

Our talk was naturally of war, and the chances we had to withstand so notable an army as was gathering against us, upon which my father said, very quiet, that the principal thing was never victory, but the not being afraid. Later on, as if pursuing a train of thought that this observation had set him on, he said—

"That which we are accustomed to call the future hath been by the elder men of all ages generally despaired of, or at the least feared; and I think it always will be so, for an old man's courage naturally turneth backward to the past and occupieth itself in enlarging the obstacles himself hath overcome, which no young man again might do; and this maketh him fearful, and oftentimes angry too."

He paused there upon Idonia's pointing with her finger to the Admiral that just then shook out her standard from the mast-head, but presently proceeded, smiling: "Had England not already a motto to her shield I would petition the Heralds to subscribe these words beneath it, that in what estate so ever we be found, we be neither angry nor afraid."

He sat silent after that, and I thought seemed to fetch his breath something uneasily. However, he lay back against the bole of a fir awhile as resting himself.

"Of ourselves too," he went on at length, "I would have it written when we die, not that we did no wrong, for of none may that be said, but that as we entered into life without knowledge, so we departed from it without shame. For to be ashamed is to deny."

He closed his eyes then, and we thought slept. But when the ships had gone by, Peter Sprot touched my arm and pointed to him. He was already dead.

We bore him down through the golden sunlight, strangely troubled, but I think, too, filled with the thought of the majesty of such a dying. And I was glad his end was upon the hills, rather

than in the valley; for life is ever an ascending, or should be, and to its consummation reacheth with face upturned toward the vehicle of light.

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK IDONIA: A ROMANCE OF OLD LONDON ***

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