
THE ISLAND PROVIDENCE

CHAPTER I

THE SECOND ADVENT

In the year of grace, 1675, the seventh day of September, John Upcott, being that day breeched for the first time, contemplated his shadow with no small pride. And his appetite for applause being now but whetted by the fond and jesting admiration of mother, sister, brother, he set off to West Abbots-ham to preen himself before the eyes of Cassandra Gifford. His admiration of himself, crossing the stile from the lane into the cart-track, was immense. Gifford's dog, sighting him from the barn-end, had a moment's doubt, muzzle forward, ears twitching, legs taut, scrutinizing the new playmate. Only with children did the dog renounce the staid, taciturn manner that he had learnt in work with his colleague, old Gifford. With children he renewed his youth, and every new child was of interest. Then he recognised his friend, came bounding—and snuffed. So again John had joy of his breeches; for they had again assuredly been remarked.