

CHAPTER V

EAGLESHAM

It was dawning morn, grey and misty, with a thaw setting in on the surface of the snow. Down the narrow, crooked streets, with a wind shivering in our teeth, we went at a breakneck gallop. I lashed my horse for its life, and the poor brute, wearied as it was by the toils of the night, answered gallantly to my call. Sometimes, in a steep place, we slipped for yards; often I was within an ace of death; and at one street-turning with a mighty clatter Nicol came down, though the next minute he was up again. A few sleepy citizens rubbed their eyes and stared from their windows, and in the lighted doorway of a tavern, a sailor looked at us wonderingly.

In less time than it takes to tell, we were at the water-edge. Here there is a rough quay, with something of a harbour behind it, where lie the sugar-boats from the Indies, when the flood-tide is too low to suffer them to go up stream to the city. Here, also, the ferry four times daily crosses the river.

Before us the water lay in leaden gloom, with that strange, dead colour which comes from the falling of much snow. Heavy waves were beginning to roll