

"And to have married one so very noble and high in all things — you should be very proud, Peter."

"I am," said I; "oh, I am, sir."

"Even, Peter — even though she be a — virago, this Lady Sophia — or a termagant —"

"I was a great fool in those days," said I, hanging my head, "and very young!"

"It was only six months ago, Peter."

"But I am years older today, sir."

"And the husband of the most glorious woman — the most — oh, curse me, Peter, if you deserve such a goddess!"

"And — she worked for me!" said I; "cooked and served and mended my clothes — where are they?" I cried, and sprang out of bed.

"What the deuce —" began Sir Richard.

"My clothes," said I, looking vainly about; "my clothes — pray, Sir Richard, where are they?"

"Burnt, Peter."

"Burnt?"

"Every blood-stained rag!" he nodded; "her orders."

"But — what am I to do?"

Sir Richard laughed, and, crossing to the press, opened the door.

"Here are all the things you left behind you when you set out to — dig, and — egad! — make your fortune. I could n't let 'em go with all the rest — so I — er — had 'em brought here, to — er — to keep them for you — ready for the time when you should grow tired of digging, and come back to me, and — er — oh, dammit! — you understand — and Grainger's waiting to see you in the library — been there hours — so dress yourself. In Heaven's name, dress yourself!" he cried, and hurried from the room.

It was with a certain satisfaction that I once more donned buckskin and spurred boots, and noticed moreover how tight my coat was become across the shoulders; yet I dressed hastily, for my mind was already on the road, galloping to Charmian.