

MILES WALLINGFORD

BY JAMES FERRIS O'CONNOR

CHAPTER XVI

You are safe; Nay, more—almost triumphant. Listen then, And hear my words of truth."

Marino Faliero

It was just 4 o'clock, p. m., when the dawn and the Palliser partner company the former steering on her old course for Brest, while the latter continued her cruise. The lugger sailed like a witch, and away she went toward the chops of the Channel on a bowline leaving us to stand toward the French coast, close-hauled, also, but on the opposite tack.

It is scarcely necessary to dwell on the feelings with which we four, who were eye-witnesses of all that passed, witnessed the proceedings. Even Diogenes was indignant. As for Marble, I have already alluded to his state of mind, and if I had not, the following dialogue, which took place at sunset (the first that occurred between us in private since the second capture—while the French were eating their dinner) would serve to explain it.

"Well, Miles," the mate drily observed, "whatever we have to do, must be done at once. When shall we begin in the middle, or in the morning watch?" "Begin what, Miles?" I asked, "little surprise at the settled manner in which he put his question.

"To throw these Frenchmen overboard. Of course, you don't mean to let them carry your ship into Brest?" "Why not? We were bound to Brest when we fell in with them, and if they will take us there, it will only save us the trouble of doing it ourselves."

"Don't be deceived by any such hope, Miles. I've been in the hands of Frenchmen I know you, and there is little hope of getting out of them, so long as the ship's cargo will pay for detention. No, no, my dear boy, you know I love you better than anything on earth, my dear old soul of a mother, and little Kitty accepted, for it wouldn't be religious to like you better than my own flesh and blood; but after these two, I like you better than any one on earth; and I can't be quiet and see you run your property into the fire. Never let the ship go into France after what has happened, if you can help it. Or do you propose that four men shall retake this vessel from seventeen?"

"Well, the odds are not so great, Miles," Marble rejoined, looking coolly round at the noisy set of little Frenchmen, who were all talking together over their soup; certainly not a very formidable band in a privateer, as far less certain than they might very well be placed in the same category. I was not subject to the vulgar prejudice of national superiority, I hope; one of the strongest of all the weaknesses of our very weak nature. I have never yet been in a country, of which the people did not fancy themselves, in all particulars, the salt of the earth; and in the very highest degrees in the modes of bragging on such subjects. In the present instance, Marble had not the least idea of bragging, however; for he really believed we four, in an open onslaught, fire-arms out of the question, might have managed those seventeen Frenchmen.

"Still, I began to regard my chances of escaping, should we be sent into a French port by a privateer, as far less certain than they had appeared at first. Marble had so much to say of the anarchists in France, as he had known them in the worst period of the Revolution, and so many stories to tell of ships seized and merchants ruined, that my confidence in the right was shaken. Bonaparte was then at the height of his continental power, on the point of becoming emperor, indeed—and he had commenced this new war with a violence and disregard of acknowledged rights, in the detention of all the English then resident in France, that served to excite additional distrust. Whatever may be said of the comprehensiveness and vastness of the genius of Napoleon, as a soldier and statesman, I presume few upright and enlightened men can now be found to eulogize his respect for public law. At any rate, I began to have lively misgivings on the subject; and the consultation between my mate and myself terminated in our coming to a resolution to serve the French prize crew substantially as we had served the English prize crew, if possible; varying the mode only to suit the new condition of things. This last precaution was necessary, as in the fulness of my confidence, I had made Monsieur Gallia acquainted with all the circumstances of throwing the fender overboard, and the manner in which we got possession of the ship. It was not to be expected, therefore, that that particular artifice could be made to succeed with him.

It must have been the result of prejudice, and of constant reading of articles extracted from the English journals, that influenced me; but I confess it seemed a not easier matter to remain than from twelve Englishmen. I was not so befooled as to suppose surprise, or artifice, would not be necessary in either case; but, had the issue been made upon brute force, I should have begun the fray with greater confidence in the first than in the last case. All this would have been very wrong in our particular situation, though as a rule and as applied to seafaring men, it might be more questionable. How often

and how much, have I seen reason to regret the influence that is thus silently obtained amongst us, by our consenting to becoming the retailers of other people's prejudices? One of the reasons why we have so long been mere scribbles on this point, is owing to the incompleteness of the establishments of the different leading presses of the country. We multiply, instead of enlarging these enterprises. The want of concentration of talent compels those who manage them to resort to the scissors instead of the pen; and it is almost as necessary for an American editor to be expert with the shears, as it is for a tailor. Thus the public is compelled to receive hashes, instead of fresh dishes; and things that come from a distance notoriously possessing a charm, it gets the original cookery of London, instead of that of their own country.

Prejudice or not, confidence is not a bad thing when a conflict is unavoidable. It may be well to respect your enemy down to the very moment of making the charge; but, that commenced, the more he is despised, the better. When Diogenes and I were told it would be necessary to go over again the work so lately thought to be completed, neither of the negroes manifested the least concern. Diogenes had been in the Orises, as well as Neb, and he had got to entertain a very Anglican sort of notion of French prowess on the water; just as for my own black, he would have followed without the slightest remembrance, wherever "Masser Mile please to lead."

"They're only French," said Diogenes, in a philosophical sort of way; "we can handle 'em like children." "I would not discourage this notion, though I saw its folly. Telling our two supporters to hold themselves ready for an attack, Marble and I left them, to cogitate and commence the manner of proceeding. Whatever was done, must be done that night; there being reason to think the ship would get in somewhere, next day.

The name of our prize master was Le Gros. He was not aptly designated, however, being a little, shrivelled, yellow-faced fellow, who did not seem to be a Hercules at all. Nevertheless, unlike Benoit, he was all vigilance and activity. He never left the deck, and being so near in with the coast, I felt pretty certain we should have his company above board all night. Whatever was attempted, he was to be employed in defence of his watchfulness. Nor was this all; additional prudence was necessary, since we were so near the coast as greatly to increase the chance of our being picked up by some other French cruiser, should we even escape from this. Extreme caution was our one resource, and Marble and I separated, each to take his post, with a perfect understanding on both sides.

Monsieur Le Gros paid no attention to the state rooms, or to the accommodations below. His whole care was bestowed on the ship. Apprehension of falling in with some British cruiser kept him on the deck, and his gaze constantly sweeping the horizon so far as the obscurity would allow. I was incessantly on the alert myself, stealing up from the cabin, as far as the companion-way, at least a dozen times in the course of the night, in the hope of finding him asleep; but, on each occasion, I saw the gleam of his eyes in the quarter-deck, in rapid motion, armed to the teeth, and seemingly insensible to fatigue and all the other weaknesses of nature. It was useless to attempt to find him off his guard, and, worn out, Marble and myself fell into a deep sleep, about three in the morning, out of pure exhaustion. As for the two negroes, they slept the entire night, waiting our summons for their rallying to the work. Neb, in particular, had all the absence of responsibility that distinguishes the existence of a slave, feeling very much the same unconcern as to the movements of the vessel, as any other human being feels in connection with those of the earth in which he is a passenger.

It was ten o'clock when I awoke, refreshed, but disappointed. Marble was still snoring in his berth, and I was compelled to give him a call. I could perceive there was a breeze, and that the ship was going through the water fast; by her lurching, she was close-hauled. It takes a second minute or two to get the ship on its loose attire, and no time was lost on the present occasion. While my mate and I were thus engaged, the former happened to cast a look out of the cabin windows, which were open on account of the warmth of the weather, and offered no obstruction to a long view of the ocean directly in front.

"Halloo, Miles!" Marble exclaimed; "by Jove, we are chased! Such is the secret of Mr. Frog's being so much alive this fine morning. Yonder comes a frigate, or my name is not Olaf Marble!" "A frigate there was, sure enough. She was about two leagues astern of us, and resembled a pyramidal cloud moving along the water, so completely were her spars covered with canvas. That she was an Englishman was more than probable, from the cruising ground, as well as from the fact of the prize crew running from her. In that day, no French ship—was loitered long at any particular point, her enemies being so numerous as to render pursuit certain, ere many hours could elapse. After determining these facts in our minds, Marble and I went on deck.

My first look was ahead. To my deep regret, there lay the land, actually within three leagues of us! The wind was fresh at northeast, the Monsieur Le Gros appeared to be steering for a group of islands that lay little, and ever so little, on our lee bow. Brest was out of the question; if we could get in with the land, among these islands, it was as much as we could do, before the racer astern would be up to us. The Frenchmen were evidently in quest of their prize-ship, with all its iron horrors, being very vividly placed before their eyes. Monsieur Le Gros screamed, and gave twenty orders in a minute, while the other sixteen men made more noise than would be heard among a thousand Americans. Heavens! what a clamor these chaps kept up, and all about nothing, too, the ship having every stitch of canvas on her that would draw. I felt like the Arab who owned the rarest mare in the

desert, but who was coming up with the thief who had stolen her, himself riding an inferior beast, and all because the rogue did not understand the secret of making the mare do her best. "Finch her right ear, or I shall overtake you!" called out the Arab; and more than twenty times was I disposed to trim the Dawn's sails, and send Neb to the wheel, in order to escape the disgrace of being overhauled by the frigate. There was a chance for me, however, in this second capture, and I thought it preferable to let things take their course. My conqueror might be mystified, whereas, there was little hope for us, should Monsieur Le Gros get in, after such an uproar.

In a little more than an hour's time, the Dawn began to shorten sail, hauling up her courses and topgallant-sails, xks showing themselves within half a mile of her. A large boat, not yet coming alongside as soon as certain who we were. The people in this boat were fishermen, and were so much accustomed to all the movements of the coast, that they understood the nature of the affair as soon as they were apprised of our character. Of course, they were eagerly questioning the possibility of the Dawn's being carried in through any of the rocky-looking passages that lay before us. Monsieur Le Gros looked very blank when he was told that all his hopes lay in there being sufficient water in one channel, and of that the fishermen confessed their own ignorance. If the noise and confusion were annoying before these men came alongside, they were astounding afterward. All this time the frigate was drawing near fast, and half an hour would certainly bring her within gunshot. There is something intoxicating in a race. I felt a strong desire to get away from the English man at the very moment I believed my chances for justice would be worst in the hands of the French. Feeling the necessity of losing no time I now made a lively appeal to Monsieur Le Gros, myself, proposing that we should both go in with the fishing-boat and examine the passage ourselves. By using proper activity, the whole might be done in a quarter of an hour; we should then know whether to carry the ship in, or to run on the rocks and save what we could of the cargo, by means of lighters.

Order on board ship is out of the question without coolness, silence, and submission. A fussy sailor is always a bad sailor; calmness and quiet being the great requisites to be wanted in such a case. No sooner was my proposition made than it was accepted by acclamation, and the privateersmen began to pour into the boat, heels overhead, without order, and I may say without orders. Monsieur Le Gros was carried off in the current, and when the fishermen cast off, but three minutes had elapsed, the boat was full of the others had been swept away by a sea to be useful, and that was a little quickened, by the horrors of an English prison-ship.

Even Diogenes laughed at the random manner in which we were thus left in possession of our own. There is no question that the French, on their return, while there is no question it was also their intention to go. In short, they were in a tumult, and acted under an impulse instead of under the government of their reasons.

"You will have the complaisance, Monsieur Wallingford," cried Le Gros, as the boat started away from the ship's side, "fill the top-sails, and give the John Bulls the slip."

This was said in French, and it drew cries of "Bon" and "Vive la France!" from all in the boat. "What the fellows thought, I will not pretend to say; but if they thought they were to get on board the Dawn again, they did not know the men they left behind them. As for the Frenchmen who remained, Marble and I could have managed them alone; and I was glad they were with us, since they could be made pull and haul."

The ship was under her three top-sails, spanker, and jib, when Monsieur Le Gros thus singularly gave her up to my control; the main-yard lying square. My first step was to fill the top-sail and gather way on the vessel. This was soon done; and, ere we were well on our weather-bow, determined to run as near them as I dared, thinking to frighten the Englishman so much as to induce him to keep at arm's length. I might cast away the ship, it is true; but even this would be preferable to falling again into English hands, with all the consequences still so recent. A year or two later, the affair of the Speedy's men might be forgotten; but while a thing is fresh there is always some danger of its creating feeling. At least, thus I reasoned, and thus I acted.

Once more I had the Dawn under my own orders; and could I keep the frigate out of gunshot, I cared very little for Monsieur Le Gros. As for the privateersmen, I supposed that, by filling away, I merely intended to further their views; but no sooner did they perceive the ship standing on to leeward of the passage, than the truth seemed to flash on their befooled faculties. This was not until the depth of water was ascertained to be sufficient for their purpose; and such a flourishing of tarpaulins and greasy caps succeeded, I had not witnessed for many a day. All these signals and calls, however, were disregarded; but away went the Dawn, with her yards jibed around in a point, with the wind fairly abeam, coasting along as near the islands as I thought it all prudent to venture. As for the frigate, she was still keeping her luff, in order to get far enough to windward to make sure of

her prey. At this moment, the two ships might have been a league asunder. Monsieur Le Gros was no sooner aware of the trick I had played him, than out he dashed with his flag-boat, making sail in chase, and helping his dull craft along with half a dozen oars. Seeing this, I let the foresail drop, and sheeted home and hoisted the main-topgallant sail; not that I felt at all afraid of the boat, but because it was my wish to avoid bloodshed, if possible. Among the other absurdities the French had committed in their haste to get away from the frigate, was that of leaving six or eight masks, with several cartridge-boxes, behind them. With these weapons it would have been easy for us to have given the privateersmen such a hint, as would not fall to keep them at bay. Then always had my pistols, which were not only valuable implements, but were double-barrelled and well loaded. Our only ground of alarm, therefore, came from the Englishman.

Possibly Monsieur Le Gros thought differently, for his chase was animated and apparently in earnest. But, not withstanding all this, the Dawn led him astern, going through the water at the rate of about six knots. But the frigate was coming up at the rate of eight knots, making it certain that she would get us under her guns in an hour or two at most, unless some great advantage was obtained over her by means of the complicated navigation and shallow water.

When at Bordeaux, the previous year, I had purchased a chart of the French coast, with a book containing directions similar to those which are to be found in our own "Coasting Pilot." As a matter of course, I had them both at my disposal, and I might have described the islands we were near as being separated by narrow channels of deep water, in which the danger was principally owing to sunken rocks. It was these rocks that had induced the fishermen to pronounce the passages impracticable; and my coasting directions cautioned all navigators to be wary in approaching them. The Dawn, however, was in precisely the situation which might render these rocks of the last service to her; and preferring shipwreck to seeing my vessel in either English or French hands again, I determined to trust to the very dangers of the narrow passages, rather than to the clear light of the bottom, but it was certain, if I kept outside, I could not escape from the frigate. An accidental occurrence, in connection with the boat favored us, and I was not slow to profit by the advantage it offered. Finding it impossible to come up with the ship by the narrow passages, I determined to make her first gun at the boat, which just fell a little short. Did we pass the channel in which Monsieur Le Gros had carried the boat, we should fall to leeward of the whole group of islands—or islets would be a better word—when all would literally depend on the heels of the men; but a moment in which to decide, in another minute, the ship would be past the opening, which could only be regained by tacking, if it could be regained at all. I gave the order to luff.

Our three Frenchmen, fancying themselves now certainly bound to la belle France, were as active as cats. Neb was the first to luff, and, in so doing, he took the boat by the bow, which just fell a little short. Did we pass the channel in which Monsieur Le Gros had carried the boat, we should fall to leeward of the whole group of islands—or islets would be a better word—when all would literally depend on the heels of the men; but a moment in which to decide, in another minute, the ship would be past the opening, which could only be regained by tacking, if it could be regained at all. I gave the order to luff.

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The distance enabled me to look about. Within the range of islands was a sort of sound, quite a league in width, and on this sound the main coast presented several bays in which coasters were at anchor. Most of the prominent points of the batteries, of no great force as against a fleet, or even against a single heavy ship, but which were sufficiently formidable to keep a sloop of war or a frigate at a respectable distance. As all the guns were heavy, a vessel passing through the middle of this sound would hardly be safe, more especially if the gunners were their duty. By anchoring at the spot where the boat waited for us, we at once gave up the ship to the privateersmen, the battery first mentioned commanding that point completely. As good luck would have it, however, an expedient offered, in the direction of the wind and tide, and which were opposed to each other, and I directed myself of the circumstance as promptly as possible.

Our boat, the Dawn could not fetch the spot where the boat had dropped her keel. We passed within half of it, notwithstanding, and loud were the calls to shorten sail and anchor, as we came within hearing. A feeling to be anxious to get up to the precise point where the boat lay, I mystified Monsieur Le Gros in my answers, telling him I would stand on a short distance, or until I could fetch him, when I would tack. As this was intelligible it satisfied my captors, though I was not without a little misgiving as to the result. "I'm in port" it was in fact, one spot being just as good to anchor in as another, for a half a league all around us.

The Dawn did her duty that day, and there was occasion for it, the frigate still continuing the chase. The circuit she had to make, and the berth she thought it prudent to give the first battery, enabled us to gain on her materially. When we passed the boat, the Englishman's upper sails were visible on the outside of the island, flying along the rocks at a rate that spoke well of his heels. He rounded the point when we were mid-sound, but here the battery served us a good turn, for instead of hauling up close by the wind, the English were obliged to run off with the wind free, to keep out of harm's way. Their presence, notwithstanding, was probably of great service to the Dawn, for there had been a communication between Monsieur Le Gros and the batteries, by means of a small boat sent from the latter, and we should have been very likely to have a messenger, in the shape of a shot, sent after us, when it was seen we continued to stand across for the main instead of tacking for the designated anchorage, had not the men in the battery had the higher game in the frigate in view. The boat John Bull got this range, the gunners began to play on him, but it was at a distance that rendered their fire next to useless.

Any one in the least acquainted with the movements of ships, will understand the advantage we now possessed. The Dawn was beating through a good breeze with the wind on her beam, and her sails were set for a steady six-knot breeze blowing. The passage between these islands and the main was about four leagues long, while that which the fishermen had wished us first to enter was near the middle of the group. We were already a mile from the boat, and considered it to windward of her, the tide having done that much for us, when Monsieur Le Gros saw fit to lift his keel and commence a new parant. He had the sagacity to see that we should soon be obliged to tack, on account of the main coast, and to stand over toward the island again; accordingly, instead of following in our wake, he pulled directly to windward, with a view to cut us off. All this we very plainly saw, but we cared very little for Monsieur Le Gros and his boat. The ship could outlast the last we very easily, in such a breeze, and it was always in our power to tack in mid-sound, and to cross over, or coming near her at all. The frigate gave me more trouble.

The Englishman, as I afterwards learned, was a French-built ship, called the Fortune, or as Jack termed her, now she had got to be designated in the Anglo-Saxon dialect, the "Happy Go-Lucky." She was an old ship, but an exceedingly fast one, and her commander had rendered himself famous by the manner in which he ventured about on the French coast. This was the third time he had gone through this very passage in spite of the batteries, and having some experience in the windings and turnings, he was now much better able to get along scathless than on the two former occasions. As soon as he thought himself at a safe distance from the six-and-thirty, he hauled up, and made five short stretches near the main, where he had much the best of the tide, and where there was nothing to molest him, the usual roadstead being under the island of course.

The first hour sufficed to let me understand there was no chance of escaping the frigate; if we continued to beat up toward the head of the tide and in the whole strength of the breeze, we might reach it, it is true, but no hope at all of getting away would remain when we again reached the open ocean, and she in-above of us. In this dilemma, Marble made one of his happy suggestions, my merit amounting to no more than seizing the right moment, and carrying out his idea with promptitude. The passage first named lay in a line with us, and we had every reason to believe the ship could go through it. When we were invited to enter, the tide was not as high by five feet, as it had now risen to be, and my mate suggested the expedient of trying it, in going out.

The Englishman will never dare follow, on account of the battery which lies on the side of it," he added, "whereas the French will not fire at us, believing us to be escaping from a common enemy."

The whole force of what had been said flashed upon me in an instant. I set the tricolor over a British ensign, to cause the people of this second battery straight for the pass, just without which lay a small brig at anchor. In order to make the deception more complete, we

hauled up our courses, and let run the topgallant halyards, as if ready to bring up. Seeing this, Monsieur Le Gros fancied we were about to anchor under the battery, and that we had hoisted our flags to taunt the English, for caps and hats were waved in exultation on the boat, then distant from us a quarter of a mile. We passed close to the brig, which greeted us with acclamations and "vives la France," as we swept by her. My eye was on the battery, the whole time. It was built to command the roadstead, and without any reference to the pass, which no enemy would be apt to attempt. It is true, two heavy guns pointed on this entrance, but they were in a detached work, that was never manned except in emergencies.

I drew a long breath, and felt a mountain removed from my very soul, as the ship passed out of the range of the last gun in the last semicircle. The soldiers were making gestures to us to indicate we were getting too far west for a good berth, but we heeded them not. Instead of shortening sail, the fore and main-tacks were boarded, and the topgallant-sails set. This revealed our intention, and the clamor on the shore even ceased the ship. Preparations were made to get a piece of light artillery to bear on us, and some twenty gunners began to scamper toward the detached battery. The whole thing was now reduced to a sheer race. We passed the last battery ten minutes before the French could reach it, the latter having to go round a considerable bay; and six minutes later we went out to sea, with the American ensign, and jacks, and pennants flying at each masthead, and wherever else such an emblem of triumph could be shown!

TO BE CONTINUED

ATHIRST IN THE DESERT

My wagon was outspanned in a rock-strewn valley at the foot of a ridge of low hills and the oxen had been tied up for the night. I sat on a rock by the roadside, smoking a comfortable pipe. I knew that the girl who occupied my wagon tent was weeping, and I longed to comfort her in her desolation. But what could I say—I who was but a clumsy fellow at putting his thoughts into words at the best of times? And if I had had the whole dictionaries of fine words at my command, they would not have made less awful the thing that had happened. If I had been a woman or an old friend I might have stayed beside her, held her hand in mine and wiped away her tears. But I was neither. Indeed, though I loved her more than anything else on earth, I was little more than a stranger whose presence would seem an intrusion. Her tears would ease her sore heart better than any halting words of mine, but the knowledge that she was shedding them alone in the darkness turned my heart to a lump of aching pain.

I had met Cecile Gunther for the first time a month ago, when I had crossed into German territory from Grignoland. I had learned to love her in the week I had spent at her father's station; but she was not the sort of girl to whom a man may venture to speak of love after a week's acquaintance. So I had my silence and gone away, meaning to make a longer stay with the hospitable old German on my return. Meantime, Witbooi and his Hottentots had risen against German authority, and when I again reached Gunther's Station it was to find it a heap of smoking ruins, and Cecile weeping over the mutilated body of her father.

Together we laid the old man in the grave I hastily dug. Then I placed the heart-broken girl in my wagon and hurried with all speed to the border. This had happened five days ago. I no longer had any fear of falling in with a roving band of Witbooi's followers, yet my heart was heavy, for I knew that there lay in wait an enemy still more to be feared. We were in the heart of a desert land and for mile on mile about us stretched nothing but flinty ridges, waterless dongas and thorny scrub. Even the silver light of the newly-risen moon in the sky seemed to soften the giant hideousness of the scene. The desolation and solitude were profoundly depressing. Worse than either was the silence—the awful, brooding silence of the desert, unbroken by cry of bird or chirp of insect.

But it was neither the silence nor the solitude which daunted me, but the fear—may, for the last few hours it had been a certainty—that I had lost my way. The worthless Griqua who had guided me into Damara-land had deserted me, and I had no one to trust to but myself. Unfortunately for myself and those who depended upon me, I was not blessed, as are so many South Africans, with an abnormally developed sense of locality. In most parts of the country to have wandered twenty to thirty miles out of the way would have meant only inconvenience and delay. But in this waterless wilderness it might mean death in one of its cruellest forms. My oxen had not tasted water for twenty-four hours, and our own supply was limited to a few pints, barely enough to make our breakfast coffee in the morning. I grew sick as I reflected upon what must inevitably happen should we fail to reach a village or a water hole before to-morrow's sunset. I shuddered and let my pipe go out. Then, realizing the folly and uselessness of this morbid brooding, I rolled myself up in my rug and lay down upon the warm sand and tried to sleep.

But deep anxiety would not suffer me to rest. I rose and began to pace up and down, listening to the heavy breathing of the tired oxen and experiencing a chill creeping of the flesh whenever one of the poor beasts uttered a low distressed bellow. For the sound was ominous. Already they were suffering, and upon their lives and strength our own depended. Soon the tent sail was drawn aside and Miss Gunther stepped down from the wagon and came toward me. Her face

was white as marble in the moonlight, and to my fancy it was beautiful as an angel's. "Let me walk with you," she said, "I can bear this awful loneliness no longer." For answer I folded about her shoulders the scarf she carried and fell into step with her. Any other man would have found twenty kind and appropriate things to say, but I found not one. It has always been my fate to become possessed of a dumb devil when I most desire to be eloquent.

"You could not sleep either," she said at length, "although you must be very tired. I know what it is that keeps you wakeful. You fear we have lost our way." I had intended to keep her in ignorance of our unenviable situation as long as possible, but I could not lie to her. I bowed my head.

"How did you know?" I asked. "I have watched your face all day, and I have read doubt and apprehension in it. When you outspanned to-night I guessed the truth. I felt sure if you had known where water was to be found you would have travelled on until you reached it instead of stopping here." "You are right," she answered, "I know in the least in what direction to search for water. And if it is not found by this time to-morrow—"

"We will not carry tomorrow's burdens while it is to-day," she interrupted gently, "nor will we take the gloomiest view of the situation. We have not yet prayed, as we should have done. We shall find water, never fear." "It is kind of you to give me encouragement when I deserve only reproaches," I answered. If you have to suffer through my fault—"

But she would not hear me out. "It will not be through your fault if I suffer," she said, "nor will my sufferings be greater than your own or those of your servants, should God permit us to experience the worst. I am not afraid for myself, but it pains me to know how gently my presence here adds to your difficulties and anxieties." I opened my lips to reply but closed them again. Not for want of words this time, but lest I might utter those for which this was neither a fitting time or place. She read my thoughts and her face flushed. She returned to the wagon, first bidding me lie down to rest. Instead of obeying her, I saddled my horse and rode away.

During the Southern Cross for a while in the hope of striking some donga or channel leading towards the Orange River. Even should it be dry we might obtain water by digging. In this I was disappointed, though I rode many miles. The earth might have been a wrong sponge for any trace of moisture it exhibited. Three days after I returned to camp long after midnight. Next morning the sun rose like a ball of fire above the flinty ridges. By 7 o'clock the heat was intolerable, but I ordered my boys to inspan, and we started on again immediately after breakfast. If I had had any faint hope remaining in the heart of the night, the country grew more savage and sterile with every mile we passed. Still we struggled doggedly on till, in the middle of a deep sandy valley, one of the oxen fell down on the yoke with a hoarse bellow of pain.

From the wagon and helped the boys to get the animal upon its feet again, then quickly unyoked the others. The poor brutes sank down upon the sand or stood about with dry mouths and tongues already hard and cracking. Not one made any attempt to eat the coarse dry grass which was parched to the wagon. I directed my course now with throbbing head and blistered hands, then desisted, convinced of the utter uselessness of the task. I did not go back to the wagon. At the moment I could not face Cecile Gunther. I walked away to the further side of a bare hill where I could be out of ear shot of the pitiful bellowing of my oxen. I felt like a murderer, but I was helpless. I think I could have borne the thought of a horrible death for myself and my men and cattle—not cheerfully, perhaps, but at least with stoicism—but not for the woman I loved. To know that she must die in agony, and through my fault, unmanned me. I threw myself down on the hot sand and cried to God from the depths of my misery, then knelt for calmer, stronger prayer. I did not hear her approach, but suddenly Cecile knelt beside me.

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