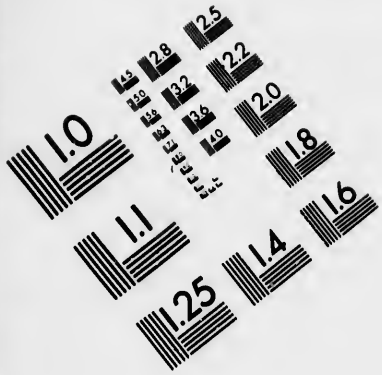

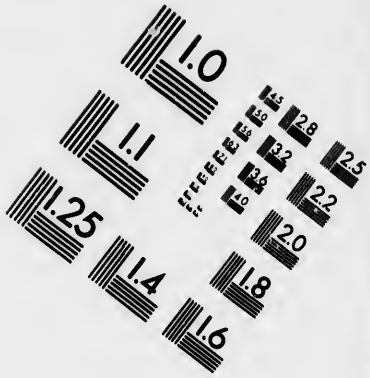

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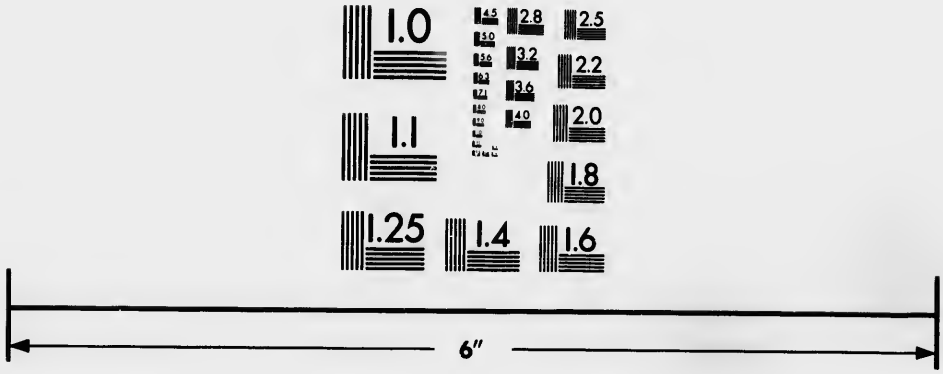

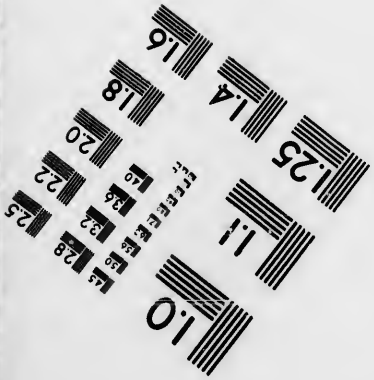

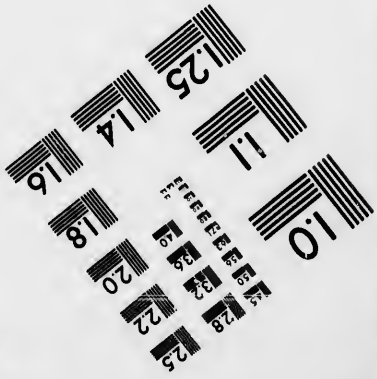

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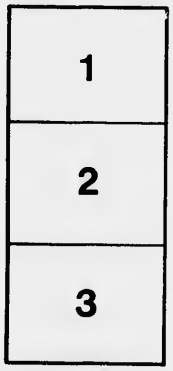

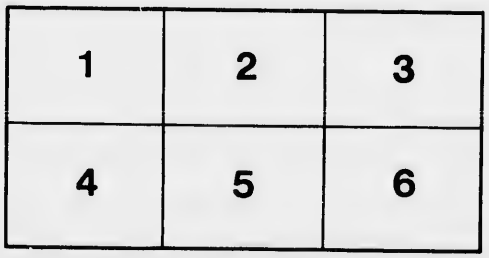

PATROON
VAN VOLKENBERG

ŠTEPHENSON

Patroon Van Volkenberg

"MIRIAM UNMINDFUL OF HER OWN DANGER DASHED BETWEEN US."—*p. 332*

HER

In memory of my aunt, MARY T. W. CURWEN, whose kindness and care for many years has been greater than my utmost gratitude and affection can express

Patroon Van Volkenberg

A Tale of Old Manhattan in the Year Sixteen Hundred & Ninety-nine

By

Henry Thew Stephenson

Illustrated by C. M. Relyea

Second Edition.

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PATROON VAN VOLKENBERG

CHAPTER I

THE FLIGHT FROM PARIS

The long-boat of Captain Tew had set me ashore on the southwest end of Long Island in a cove near the village of Gravesoon, which is just across the end of the island from New York. In those days the pirates were in bad repute with the government and Captain Tew durst not land me nearer the town for fear of the king's officers; so I had to make the rest of my way alone. I was not cast down, however, for I had always a hopeful heart, and, in addition to this fact, I was sick and tired of the bad-smelling ship and of its lawless crew of buccaneers. Yet I ought not to cry out against their captain. He and I possessed a strong bond of friendship. I had done him one good turn and he had done me another, though, at that moment, neither of us foresaw what the latter would amount to in the end.

I turned on my heel to look at the town in which I intended to lodge for the night. It was now late and fully dark, and one or two dim lights were all that I could see in Gravesoon by way of welcome. At that moment a feeling of loneliness took such

strong hold of me that I cast my eyes once more upon the open sea for the meagre companionship of the pirate crew that was gliding away into the dark. But the ship was already so far from shore that the sounds that always accompany getting under way could no longer reach me, though I strained hard to hear them. In ten minutes even the vague outline of the vessel against the sky had completely blended with the darkness. Then I realized for the first time that I was all alone in a strange land. My only companions were the heavy sorrow in my heart and a strong hope that this sorrow would soon be turned to joy by virtue of the errand that was now bringing me to New York.

I had nearly reached the middle time of life and knew by hard experience that when the future looks the darkest one is most likely to be near the light. This thought gave me fresh comfort and put new life into my step as I set out briskly along the shore of the cove. The wind blew strong in my face, and I had to bend over and lean upon it, as it were, to prevent my slipping upon the rocks. Whatever a misstep might mean to me, it would certainly bring misfortune, perhaps death, to one whom I loved better than myself a hundred times. So I picked my way carefully over the rough places, balancing myself upon the wind and setting my feet firmly when I came to rocks that were wet and slippery. By dint of much perseverance I made

fair progress towards the lights of Gravesoon, for all it was so dark upon the shore. As I drew near the town I spied more lights, and at last I came to the lamp hanging over the doorway that betokened a house of public entertainment. I opened the door of the ordinary and went in. The room was quite deserted and I rapped twice upon the table before the host appeared in answer to my summons.

He was a pleasant looking man of no particular appearance. He served me quickly with something to eat and drink, and then sat down on the other side of the table, rippling with questions. I am not given to talking and never was; yet, because I saw here an opportunity to gain information that I should not otherwise possess until I reached New York, I did not turn away from my host's cross-examination as my temper at first prompted me to do.

He had seen the pirate ship in the offing that afternoon and would like to know its name, guessing shrewdly how I had come ashore; but I put him off with an indirect reply and he was fain to be content with my own name, a poor substitute, though he made the most of it.

"Le Bourse," he said thoughtfully. "That sounds like a French name. Are you going to friends in Yorke?"

"I am a stranger there, but I am seeking a person who may help me to a sight of friends."

"What is his name?"

"Van Volkenberg one of the patroons I think."

"Ah, yes, Patroon Kilian; the armed patroon is what the burghers call him. We know him well."

"Is he in New York now?"

"Yes, indeed. He never leaves the island. Kilian Van Volkenberg is too great a man to let himself go far from port. His ships need his attention every day. Now, when I saw yon ship in the offing, I said to myself, 'Tis a ship of the patroon's.' But you seem to say not."

I had said nothing of the kind; but I let the matter pass without correction, knowing that it was only another effort on his part to learn the mystery of my arrival.

"How can I get to New York from here?" I asked after a short pause.

"There is a good road direct, not more than eight or ten miles, with a ferry at the end of it. You will see a tree with a shell tied up to blow for the ferryman—he is likely to be on the Yorke side of the river. Can you blow a shell?"

I could not, never having seen this custom before, whereupon the obliging host bustled out to find one. He returned shortly with a huge sea shell in his hands, by means of which he instructed me in the manner of using it as a horn. The trick was not difficult to learn, not so hard by half as whistling with your fingers in your mouth, which feat I never did learn to do well. But after five minutes

practice with the shell I could blow as mournful a tone as you ever heard on the moors of a spooky night.

My music lesson over, I went to my room. As soon as I was alone I took out the pocket Bible that had been the companion of all my wanderings. I opened it at the book of Ruth; this book was my favorite reading, for my sister's name was Ruth. My separation from her long years before this, my great search and heavy disappointment had at last led me to this point in my wanderings. But there was still a strong hope in my heart; and hope will keep the pulse bounding even when the shadows are dark.

But before I continue my story, let me go back and relate the strange events which resulted in my being set on shore in the dead of night like a criminal, from one of the ships which was under the displeasure of his royal majesty the king.

When I was but a lad of three and twenty my parents both died and I was left the only protector of little Ruth, my sister, who was then a child, scarce fifteen years of age, She was a bright-faced, cheery sister, who did as much as a full-grown woman could have done to make our modest home in Paris comfortable and happy. I prized her more than life and would not let her go out of my sight. In this respect the more caution was needed because the long Huguenot peace was

drawing to a close and people of our faith were subject to all manner of persecution.

Our heaviest troubles began, of course, in the year 1685, when King Louis revoked the Edict of Nantes; but for years before that the Huguenots were afflicted with innumerable unjust restrictions. There was one of the king's decrees that caused more confusion than all the others put together. This was the law permitting children at the age of seven to renounce the faith in which they had been bred, and to enter the Roman church. Every kind of inducement was held out to persuade them to acknowledge belief in the Catholic religion. Once confessed, they were considered to be under the jurisdiction of the priesthood. When dolls, fairy stories, idle promises of childish pleasures, failed to make a mere infant nod to some statement mumbled by the priest—when all such ways of seducing little children failed, they were often shamelessly kidnapped and carried away to a convent by force. It was mainly against this latter danger that I had to protect Ruth, for she clung so tenaciously to me and to our Protestant faith that I had no fear of their cajoling her by any fair and open means.

One day Ruth and I were walking in the fields near the edge of Paris. We were on our way home about twilight, and Ruthie, as I called her then, danced ahead of me like a golden-haired butterfly. She always danced—bless her heart!—and carried

sunlight wherever she went. Suddenly, while she was passing the dark gateway of a court-yard, a priest in a black mantle stepped out from the covered way and caught my sister by the arm.

"Come in here," he cried insinuatingly, at the same time drawing her swiftly towards the doorway.

Ruth resisted, and then the priest clapped a big hand over her mouth so she could not scream.

Shame on him! And she a mere child! But he was reckoning without me when he made that false move. I was at her side even before he noticed me. He called for help and soon brought another priest to his assistance. Even so, it was only two to one, which was hardly fair considering my size and the fact that I had been bred to arms. It was a dreadful thing for me to do, but, in a trice, and without even stopping to draw my sword, I had stretched one of them unconscious upon the ground and sent the other crying for help, with his blood dripping all the way.

For the moment, the rashness of my deed quite overcame me. I had struck a priest. In those days the penalty for such an offence could be none other than death; and Ruth would be left alone to worse than death. She and I resolved to fly from the capital and to escape from the country altogether if we could. We packed what little of value we possessed, and in twenty minutes had left our lodgings behind us. It was our haste only—always ex-

cepting the grace of God—that saved us from immediate pursuit. Even so, it seems a miracle that we got out of the city and found ourselves safe upon the road to La Rochelle.

Ruth bore up very bravely in those hard times and never spoke a single word to reproach me for my hasty act. She sang pleasant songs to me on the way and would comfort me by saying that she was not tired, though I knew she must be weary enough to lie right down in the road and give up. On the third day after leaving Paris we fell in with a party of Protestants and continued our journey with them. We were thankful for their company at the time, but it would have been better had we not met them, for their flight was known to the authorities and was the ultimate cause of my separation from little Ruth.

These fugitives had already made arrangements with a ship owner at La Rochelle to transport them to England. We had at last come to a little stream almost within sight of the town and of safety when we were overtaken by four of the troopers of the Paris guard. A narrow way led down to the place where we should cross the stream. We thought that the advantageous position of this path would enable two of us to keep back all four of the guardsmen. We cast lots to see which of us should defend the others and one of the lots fell to me. Ruth was much grieved at heart when she knew that I must stay behind and risk capture while she

and the others went forward; but she said bravely, "Do your duty, Vincie boy, and the Lord will take care of us."

The guards fortunately had no guns and were armed only with short swords. We held them at bay for some time; then, making a charge together, they killed my companion and I was left alone to bar the path, with a deep wound in my shoulder which prevented my using my cloak as a guard. The rest of our party of fugitives escaped, but, on the arrival of some more soldiers, I was disarmed and taken to prison.

For some reason, I never discovered what, I did not suffer the penalty I expected. Instead of being led immediately to the scaffold, I was kept close in prison among others of my faith whose only crime was an attempt to avoid the oppressive hand with which the church of Rome strove to drain the life-blood of the Protestants.

During the long months of my captivity, I pondered much upon little Ruth. Where had she gone? I thought that England was the destination of the party we had fallen in with. Sometimes I pictured my sister in America, alone in that far off land; but a little thought would convince me that she was not there. Ruth was a hopeful girl. She would never bring herself to think—unless she heard of my actual death—that I should not come to her eventually. In that case, where would I be so likely to look as in England? No, Ruth would not go to

the colonies. As I thought about her whereabouts I became more and more sure, and at last I was certain, in my own mind at least, that she had taken refuge in England.

At the end of a year a happy accident opened the way to my escape. I shall never forget the burden that fell from my shoulders, the long breath of unutterable, thankful relief that I drew upon the day I crossed the French frontier into Holland. I left my native land with my mind firmly resolved upon two things: the first was to find Ruth; the second was to bring confusion to the church of Rome, the slayers of God's people, the tormentors of me and mine. Wherever I should meet a Catholic,—sleeping or waking, in sickness or in health,—he was my enemy.

I made my way at once for England, where I inquired diligently for my sister in all the great cities. A year of this searching brought me no tidings and exhausted my slender means of support. Then I fell back upon military service for a livelihood. My great strength and my skill of fence soon found me employment. I could even choose my master in a way, and managed to take service with those who would lead me into distant parts. You may be sure that during all my foreign campaigns I never lost sight of the darling desire of my heart. But as time wore on and I did not find her, I became less and less positive that Ruth was still alive.

In the years that followed I walked in many strange cities; in all of them I searched the streets hungrily for Ruth. I glanced up into windows; I peered down into cellar ways; but I never saw a familiar face. Once I penetrated in disguise to La Rochelle itself. Even there I could hear nothing of Ruth or of the ship-master who had taken her to England. I began to doubt whether she had escaped at all. At such moments my fierce resentment against our oppressors grew bitter as gall. More than once in those stern, tumultuous times, I fought under the banners of the Protestant chiefs of Europe, and my blade was no sluggard.

At last a new fear began to haunt me day and night. What if I should meet Ruth and not recognize her! She was fifteen years old when I lost her. How a girl changes between fifteen and twenty! I must look now, not for the slim childish figure I remembered, but for the full roundness of a woman. How often I had—and as I grew older it occurred ever the more often—how often I had looked into faces that I felt sure I had seen somewhere before. Then, when it was too late to follow, I would be startled with the idea that perhaps the person I had just seen was Ruth. Such moments wrung my heart.

At last, after eight or nine years of fruitless hunting, I found myself again in England. I had long since abandoned all hope of finding Ruth. I became the trusted servant of an English lord. I

was now three and thirty years of age, though people who judged from my appearance thought I was older. King William was on the throne and my master stood well in the sovereign's graces. Everything, so far as worldly prospects went, gave promise of a happy life. Then of a sudden my master fell under the displeasure of the government. With the quickness of a summer storm, misfortune came upon him. Two months after the first thunder-clap he was a condemned prisoner in the Tower, and I once more masterless and adrift.

This calamity occurred in the year 1698, a twelvemonth before my arrival in New York. I had saved some money and, strange to say, there came to me suddenly and without reason a new conviction that I should yet find Ruth. But where? There was only one place in the world where she might be and in which I had not sought for her: America. My resolution was immediately taken to set out over sea and resume the hunt that I had latterly neglected. With this intent I journeyed to Bristol, where I intended to take ship at once.

CHAPTER II

THE MAID AT THE MARINER'S REST

Bristol was then the second seaport of the kingdom; only London surpassed it in the number of ships sailing from its docks and in the amount of hurly-burly, shuffling traffic in its streets. I arrived in the city near sundown of an evening. As soon as I had had a bite to eat I set out for the water front. The Mariner's Rest was the principal tavern, and thither I went to begin my inquiry for a passage to New York.

A maid served behind the bar and soon brought me a mug of ale. I could not help but notice her frail figure and sorrowful eyes; she looked some two or three and twenty years of age, and had evidently seen much trouble in her short life. Her refined face was wonderfully out of keeping with her coarse surroundings. Sometimes, when she had been rudely spoken to by a tipsy sailor, she would retreat to the back of the room and rest her head in her hands as if from weariness. Though I pitied her in my heart, I soon fell to musing upon other things. My mind was always on the alert now about New York. I constantly pictured myself wandering along its streets, casting searching glances to this side and that, as I had so often wan-

dered here in England when I still believed that Ruth was somewhere near at hand.

I was so wrapped up in my fancy-hope that I did not notice how the room was filling nor how the noise of mingled oaths and ribald laughter of the common herd had risen to a din. I did look up soon, however, in time to notice the entrance of a seaman whose appearance was exceedingly unlike the rest. He wore rich clothes, and a jeweled sword by his side; he was tall, kindly and benevolent looking. This man—I took him for a prosperous merchant who commanded his own ship—made his way laboriously through the crowd of tables, nodding now and then to someone he knew. When he reached the farther side of the room he sat down a few chairs away from me. There was a patronizing look of contempt on his face and he turned his back squarely upon the company. The girl, perhaps, had been the first to notice him, and her face brightened at his appearance.

"Will you take me?" she asked, eagerly, as if her life depended on the answer, as she set his glass before him.

"This is no life for the like of you to lead," replied the seaman. "Yes, I'll take you and I'll do the best I can to find a home fit for you and your pretty face to live in."

At that moment a cry of "Wench, wench, I want some rum," took the girl back to her uncongenial

task behind the bar. As soon as she was gone I moved my chair nearer to the new comer.

"Will you pardon me, sir?" I began. "I have arrived from the country only to-day and am a stranger here. Can you set me on the track of a ship for America?"

"That I can very quick. I am Captain James Donaldson of the Royal Lion. She sails for New York the day after to-morrow. I can let you have a first-rate cabin and good rations to boot if you don't eat too much. You have no idea what a swift and steady craft she is."

"Good," I exclaimed joyfully. "You may count upon me as a passenger."

"Tut, tut, you are as hasty as the girl there. You have not seen the cabin yet, nor do you know my price."

"I dare say we can arrange that to our satisfaction."

"One can never tell," he said, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Folk are so particular in these days; but come to me in the morning and I will show you over. I know you will like her. I must be going now. I only stopped in to speak a word with yon lass. The pretty little wench is going with me on the voyage."

He left the tavern immediately, and I remained for some time longer watching the girl come and go about the room with her easy grace and soft manner. Suddenly her attractive face filled me with

a sort of half fear. A fortune teller had once foretold that I should meet my wife in some such place as this. What if this girl were—! Bah! I should not let such a thing as that get between me and my hunt for Ruth. You cannot appreciate the force with which this recollection took hold of me unless you remember the new conviction, a sort of presentiment that I should at last find Ruth. I always profess great disregard for superstition, but in my heart of hearts I am more or less affected by it. For this reason I got up hastily to go out, meaning to escape from the attractive presence of the pathetic looking maiden. As I stopped at the bar to settle my score I was again impressed by the fineness of the girl's features and could not suppress my curiosity.

"Yours is a strange face to see here," I said while she was counting out my change.

"No stranger than yours," she answered. "You and Captain Donaldson are the only gentlemen who have been here tonight." She heaved a sigh. "I wish they came oftener."

"You are going across the water with him, I believe."

"Did you hear?" she asked in a low, earnest tone. "Please do not speak of it aloud. My master would treat me ill if he knew I was going to leave him."

"Never fear," I said, turning to go. "God be with you."

"Pardon me," she said as if to call me back. And

then, "Oh, pardon me again. I made a mistake."

I left the tavern wondering what the last exclamation meant, for she had dropped her eyes when I turned round to look at her again, and her face assumed a look of disappointment. Yet I was glad to be free of the place, for I still feared that she might come between me and Ruth. For the moment I quite forgot that we should be together throughout the long voyage.

The next morning I left my lodgings early and threaded the badly paved streets that led to the harbor. The ships were headed close up against the shore and I walked beneath their high bows that projected over my head in a row like the half of an arched passage. Before long I came to the Royal Lion. Captain Donaldson was busy directing the movements of his crew, who were engaged with crows and ropes in stowing away the last portions of the ship's cargo. When he saw me, he called to his mate to take his place, and kindly offered to explore the ship with me himself. It was a staunch brig, for the most part fitted out with new canvas and fresh rigging. What struck my soldier eye immediately, and what gave the Royal Lion its best claim as a safe conveyance for passengers, was its preparation for miltary defense. A goodly number of large brass cannons were mounted upon the deck, and Captain Donaldson assured me that his magazine was well stocked with small arms and ammunition.

An ocean voyage at the end of the seventeenth century was a dangerous undertaking. The sea swarmed with pirates. Many a ship returned to port battered up with cannon shots and its decks reeky with blood stains. Other ships never came back at all, and it was as common to attribute their loss to the attacks of the buccaneers as to the furious tropic storms.

Captain Donaldson and I soon came to terms about my passage. As I left the ship in his company—for he would go part way along the dock to point out less favored ships and make comparisons to their disadvantage—as we walked along he told me what he knew of the lass at the Mariner's Rest. She had come of better folk, he told me, and could no longer endure her present occupation. Her determination was to go to the colonies and take service in some respectable family till she could save enough to buy her a little home in one of the Huguenot settlements.

"But that is not what she will really do," said the Captain. "She is too pretty a wench for that. Who knows but that you—tut, tut, man, you are not married, are you?"

He had recalled my fearfulness of the night before and there was particular force in its being put into words by a perfect stranger. He continued to chaff me about the girl till, when I left him, I half repented the bargain I had made to sail in his ship. Yet for all that, and in spite of myself, when night

came I was sitting in the corner of the Mariner's Rest. I fretted inwardly that I was there; but I persuaded myself that I had better get used to her face amid the distractions of other interests than to wait and make her acquaintance in the lonely isolation of the ship.

I found the inn, if possible, more noisy than on the night before. During the day two or three ships had come in from distant parts and many of their crews were carousing heavily after the long voyage. Some of the sailors had already drunk themselves into a stupor, but by far the greater number swore and shouted lustily in their cups. The cry of wench, wench, rose repeatedly, and at times the accompaniment of jocose obscenity was disgusting.

The maid shrank pitifully from contact with the rude atmosphere about her; yet there was a hopeful look in her bright, sparkling eyes. This expression I set down as due to the fact that to-morrow she would be free of all this and once more in the way of a decent life. There were plenty of respectable homes to be had in the colony of New York, and I had no doubt but that the good captain would look out for her to the best of his ability.

Two or three times during the evening the drinkers fell to brawling. Once at a game of cards a Portuguese sailor clapped his cutlass across a comrade's head and threatened to lop off his pate if he said a word more. His opponent was a sniv-

eling bit of a coward who whined at this threat, but swallowed it as best he could, which, however, he did with a bad grace, being neither a bully nor a thorough-going jelly fish of a coward.

I could hardly stand the vile smell of their tobacco, or the look of the sloppy pools upon the floor where they splattered the foam from their ale. I was minded once to quit the room altogether, and had even risen from my feet to go; but I noticed that the clatter of mugs and the din of voices and the stamping of feet was growing louder with every minute. The hopeful look had crowded out of the girl's face, and at that moment the cry of wench was thundered out, together with an indecent oath that made me wince. She cast a scared glance of appeal in my direction. I sat down again, minded to wait and be on hand in case she should need my protection.

She approached timidly the table of the boor who had summoned her. She set down the contents of her tray and was about to retreat when he caught her roughly by the arm. He tried to pull her down upon his knee and made as if to kiss her. I was on my feet in an instant; but before I could stir a step the landlord had taken her part. He fetched the drunken sailor a blow in the face that stretched him on the ground with the blood dripping from his nose.

"I guess she's my brat, not yours," cried the

landlord angrily. "Wench, get back to your place."

The sailors are such clannish folk that I fully expected a desperate brawl to follow the landlord's attack. There was some violent shuffling of feet in the corner, and one or two men started up and took a step or two in the direction of the affray, eager for a row. But before the mob's anger could come to a focus, someone cried out in a mocking voice:

"Portuguese Tom's got his lobster now."

There must have been some local quip to this phrase that I did not understand, for it produced a storm of laughter, after which they fell to drinking again in the best of jovial good humor. Tom picked himself up, a little crestfallen; but even he joined in the laugh against him. As soon as the crisis was passed I turned my attention to the girl. She had not moved a step from where she stood with her hands clenched and her lips tightly pressed together. Her position and the expression of her face were both so full of fearless scorn that I could not repress an exclamation of delight.

"Bravo!" I cried.

She looked at me and relaxed into the sensitive woman instantly. "Sit down," she said lightly, motioning me to resume my seat. "It is not often so bad as it is to-night; but it is over and well over, too. Thank you, sir; thank you."

Though I had done nothing she had seen that I

had been ready to come to her assistance. "I shall stay till the room is cleared," I whispered as she passed me, and then sat down in my place again to watch.

I remained in the tavern for some time; in fact, till it wore on towards midnight. Then, a bell ringing in the town, the landlord rose and advised his guests to depart. A rule of the city closed all public houses at that hour. Slowly, by ones and twos, the riotous sailors took their leave, helping along those who were too drunk to walk alone. My seat was in the corner where a high buffet threw me into the shadow. For this reason probably the host overlooked me, and, for I remained till the last, he thought that the room was quite empty, though I still lingered in the shadow. He stepped to the door to usher out the last guest. On his return he faced the girl menacingly.

"What is this you told me to-day?" he demanded in a fierce tone.

"I am going to leave you, sir."

"Ha, hussy, I don't know about that. By whose authority are you going to leave?"

"By my own." She did not quail at his brutal tone, but stood unflinching as she had stood before the brute of a sailor who had insulted her in the early evening. "There is nothing in my agreement to prevent my going when I like."

"There is this in our agreement, wench," he said, gripping her hand. "We are here alone, and

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"HE WHEELED ROUND IN AMAZEMENT AND DROPPED THE GIRL'S HAND."—*p. 23*

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I tell you plainly that you do not leave this house. You know what I can do when I am in earnest."

"Let go my hand," she answered. "You hurt me."

Instead of releasing his grip he squeezed her wrist so hard that she cried out in pain.

"Yes, let go," said I, stepping into view.

He wheeled round in amazement and dropped the girl's hand.

"Who the devil are you?"

The excitement of the evening had told on the girl's nerves. Her spirit was weakened as we stood in the deserted room that a moment before had been a very bedlam. "Oh, take me away," she cried piteously. "He will beat me if you leave me here."

The landlord caught up a chair and lifted it above his head.

"Get out of here," he cried, coming toward me with a swing of the chair aloft.

"Too fast," I replied, drawing my sword. "Too fast, my friend. Put down that chair."

He obeyed with a vengeance and I sprang aside just in time to avoid the blow. The chair broke to pieces and then I had him at the mercy of my sword. He was a bully by nature and a coward at heart. He was soon whimpering in the corner and begging for grace. I directed the girl to go to her room and get ready to leave. The main part of her luggage was already aboard the brig and she had

left but a few things to take with her. While she was doing as I bade her, I guarded the innkeeper and enjoyed the scared replies he made to my continual threats. We soon left him to shut up the shop alone and went out into the street.

"You can obtain respectable lodging for the night in the house next to where I am stopping," I said. "Will you let me take you there?"

A chill breeze was blowing from the sea and as we walked along it cooled my heated temper. It must have had the same effect upon the girl, for her tight grip upon my arm gradually relaxed, and by the time we reached the second street she was walking with her usual alert step.

"Monsieur," she said after a while, "from your accent you must be French."

"Ah, yes, from Paris; but that was many years ago. There is the house I am taking you to."

"Indeed," she said musingly. "I am from Paris, too. Are we so near the place? I am almost afraid to go to a strange house alone." We had stopped beneath one of the occasional lanterns that were hung out from houses to light the street. "May I know," she continued, "who has helped me tonight?"

"My name is Le Bourse."

"What! What did you say?"

"Michael Le Bourse. Is my name a strange one?"

"Strange?" She caught me by the shoulders

and twisted me towards the light, looking eagerly in my face. "Was I right last night?" she continued, all of a tremble with excitement. "Is it—can it be?" Then she threw herself into my arms. "Don't you know me, Vincie, don't you know me?"

I held her from me in the light; then I knew. "Ruth," I cried. I took her in my arms and covered her face with kisses. For a moment we had nothing to say to each other there in the still street under the solitary lantern. There seemed to be no world outside; only we two: I and Ruth, for whom I had sought so many years.

"Ruthie," I kept whispering again and again. "I have found my little Ruth."

CHAPTER III

THE ROYAL LION

How long we stood there in the joy of that moment I can never say. We were brought back to a sense of our surroundings by the jarring voice of someone speaking to us from the sidewalk.

"Ah ha! Bless my stars if it isn't my two passengers all in one."

It was Captain Donaldson who had spoken, and I was glad of a friend to turn to, for I was at my wits' end to know what to do. Only a few words were necessary to acquaint him with our story. His genial eyes stood out in amazement as the tale of our long separation and accidental meeting unfolded itself to his willing sympathy.

"God-a-mercy me," he cried, striking his chest. "It is hard to believe how the Lord does go about it to work His will. 'Twas only yesterday, Mistress Ruth, that I was charging him to fall in love with you, and now I suppose I shall lose both my passengers."

He took on a thoughtful look at the idea of losing us. After a moment's deliberation, however, he clapped his hands together.

"Well, that shall not prevent my sailing at the usual hour; no, not if I have to go empty-cabined inside and out."

Ruth, who clung to my arm affectionately as if she feared to lose me again, assured the good captain that she saw no reason why we should not go on as we had planned. In fact, though we had not thought it all out, we saw our way clear to continue our journey to America. It was a long distance, to be sure, but we had overcome the greatest obstacle when we had first made up our minds to go; besides, both Ruth and I were full of anxious curiosity to see the new land where so many of our countrymen had found homes of comfort and prosperity. Suddenly the captain broke out anew with a surprised question:

"What are the two of you doing here locking arms at midnight?"

I told him our adventure and all about the brawl at the tavern, and where I intended to take Ruth to.

"It will never do," he said. "It will never do to rouse decent folk up at this time o' night. Odds man, they've been in bed this three hours past, and it's a warm welcome you'd get at one o'clock. No, no, it will never do. Come with me to the ship and I'll make stowaways of ye both till morning."

The three of us set out together along the qiuet streets to the dock. Now that the distracting noise of traffic was all spent, I found the vague roof of ship fronts under which we picked our way silently far different from what it was by day. Every vessel creaked and groaned in a thousand

joints; the air fairly reeked with the smell of tar and cordage; the heaving hulks and the tall figureheads looming upon the prows were ghostly in their slow rise and fall. I was glad to get away from the lonely neighborhood and reach the Royal Lion; Ruth no less so, for she was a timid child when the excitement of the moment was passed.

Captain Donaldson offered to provide for us, but we had so much to talk about that we were quite content to huddle upon the deck with a pair of shawls to shield us from the wind.

Ruth told me that she had escaped from La Rochelle in safety ten years before and had found a good home in England, where she had wearied through the years waiting for me. Her experience had not been wholly unlike my own. After many years her mistress had died and, about the same time that my good master was sent to the Tower, Ruth was cast upon her own resources. Before this event occurred, however, she had given up all hope of my coming. Upon her mistress' death she made up her mind to go to one of the Huguenot settlements in America. With this intent she had set out for Bristol. Footpads and highwaymen on land were then as likely to be met with as buccaneers upon the sea. The van which brought her to Bristol was waylaid and Ruth, as well as the other passengers, robbed of all they had. She arrived in Bristol penniless and had to take what employment came to hand in order to earn a living.

Thus it happened that she was compelled to such base labor at the Mariner's Rest.

"Oh, Vincie," she sobbed. "It was so hard."

An angry tremble shook me as I thought of her harsh treatment; then I recalled the threat the landlord had made in my hearing.

"What did he mean when he said that you knew what he could do when he was in earnest?"

"Do not think of that," she answered softly. She was always so forgiving. "It is all past now."

"Tell me what he meant," I continued fiercely. "Did he ever dare to—"

"Hush, Vincie," she murmured, putting her fingers over my mouth; but I shook her hand down. "He—must I tell you?" she continued with hesitation, not wanting to anger me further. But I insisted that she should speak out. "Well, he beat me once,—but not hard. What are you going to do?"

I sprang to my feet and took two steps toward the gangway; then Ruth was at my elbow. She gripped me by the arm.

"What are you going to do?"

"Never mind what I am going to do. Let me go."

"I shall not let you go," tightening her grip. "Stop."

I looked at her in amazement. I remembered her as a timid child when I used to think out and plan everything she did. But the case was different

now. I had a notion to shake her off and was almost on the point of saying as I used to, "Hush, you are a mere child." But there was a look in her eyes which told me plainly that childhood was past and that, between us two, I was no longer the master.

"Let me go, Ruth," I said. But I spoke without spirit, and when I added "Please" she only shook her head and began to draw me back to where we had been sitting.

"I am ashamed of you," she said, but very gently. "Do you no longer read your Bible, Vincie?"

"Aye," I answered, jumping at the chance her reference gave me. "And it says that whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed."

"But he did not shed my blood."

"Give eye for eye, tooth for tooth,—blow for blow."

"Ah, Vincie, you read only where you like; love thy neighbor as thyself. Have you forgot the parable of the clerk? You must love your enemies and pray for them who persecute you. Were we driven out of home for Jesus' sake to deny all His teachings and forswear His word? No, no, brother, do not forget the woman taken in adultery, and how she was brought before the Christ? Where were her accusers then? Vincent, turn the word of God into your own wicked heart before you judge your neighbor. What shall I say at the great day if they say to me: 'Your brother did this or that

wrong act in your name?' Answer me, Vincent, what shall I say then?"

I could make no answer. Her pure spirit overcame me. I could only ask her to forgive me. She bade me kneel down upon the deck just as we used to kneel when we were children. Ruth prayed that I might come into a better spirit. I was in much need of her gentleness, and with great diligence she set to work to curb my resentment against the Catholics, which ten long years of disappointment and continual warfare had tempered to the hardness of steel. Every morning upon the deck as we sped across the wide ocean she wrought against my contrary spirit till it was partly broken. My little Ruth, whom I had protected so zealously in her childhood, wound me around her finger and ruled me firmly, but with all the gentleness of love.

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." Her words and the promises she talked about in the good Book were like music, and I was beginning to be a better man. "Did we not prophesy in thy name, and by thy name cast out devils?" She showed me what all this meant, and that if I went on in the way I had begun I should some day be face to face with the great denial: "And then shall I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Such was the burden of her teaching. She spoke much of the golden rule, and by that text

she brought me to see how my fierce zeal against the Roman church was but persecution under cover of my own selfish faith as the Catholics persecuted under theirs. I remember one afternoon in particular when we were more than half way across the Atlantic. We were nestling in the bow of the ship beneath a flapping sail, and Ruth sat by my side, and teaching me, just as Jesus may have taught his disciples not to forget what He was telling them. The sun beat down warm and comfortable upon the deck. The merry surface of the water laughed in skipping sunlight. She had talked to me a long time that afternoon, and as she talked a great peace came upon me and little by little the remorse for my evil ways slipped away and vanished at her forgiving words.

Suddenly our attention was attracted by a commotion on the main deck where the cannons were. The sailors began to run this way and that in great confusion. Half a dozen of them started to drag the canvas covers off the guns and to get them ready for use. Others ran below to the magazine to bring up powder and small arms. I could not make out what all this rumpus was about till I glanced in the direction of the cannons' aim and saw a large, square-rigged vessel about a mile away, bearing down upon us like a tower tilted against the sky. Surely all this preparation must be to repel an attack, and I guessed at once that the strange ship was a buccaneer. Our passengers were

in a great scare when they found out the truth. A little baby whose mother lay sick in the cabin set up a wail of fright at the unusual sounds. No notice was taken of the child, however, till Ruth took it up in her arms and hushed it to sleep.

Captain Donaldson was the coolest head among us. He spoke some hearty words to his crew and bade them get ready to fight. Some of them went forward to man the guns in the bow; others climbed into the rigging to shoot down upon the enemy's deck when she came alongside; small arms were dealt out to the rest of us who stood waiting near the main hatch. By the time all our operations were complete the hostile ship was not more than a quarter of a mile away, and soon she spread the flag of the buccaneers.

"I knew it," shouted our captain, and the crew responded with a rousing cheer. I could scarce understand the reason of their joy, but put it down to their love of a good fight, and the escape from the humiliation that would have followed all their hurry if the ship had turned out a peaceful trader. I think the shame of having made a mistake as to the character of the approaching vessel would have smote them harder than a battle. Before the ship had got near us, all the women were sent below as a matter of precaution. Very soon two long-boats, bristling with weapons, put off from the buccaneer.

The two boats tilted merrily along the waves till they were half way to our ship. By that time

some men in the pirate's rigging must have made out the strength of our defenses, for the long-boats were hastily summoned back and taken on board the ship again. The buccaneer now came on under full sail. As it drew near we could see a squad of men at each end with ropes and grappling irons ready to lash us fast the moment we touched.

Ten minutes later, after a harmless exchange of cannon shots, the two ships were lashed fast together and the pirates were popping over our side like frogs into a pond. Captain Donaldson had placed his men in two lines in such a position that the buccaneers had to jump aboard between them. The pirates set themselves back to back in the middle of the ship and fought both ways at once. Donaldson cut down the leader of the band opposed to us. At this his party lost heart and gave back a step or two upon their comrades. They were now so close together that one party of the pirates hampered the other. They fell into confusion, and in two minutes we were chasing them back into their own ship.

It is always easier to defend than to attack. The moment the situation was reversed and we stood upon the offensive, we found our difficulties grown tenfold. Captain Donaldson's voice rang clear above the din, bidding his men to stand firm and capture the ship. Suddenly the clamor increased at a great rate, and I heard hasty orders given to retreat to the Royal Lion. There was scuffling on

the deck, shouts, and orders given in quick succession; then one of the grappling chains broke with a noise like the report of a cannon. Just at that moment I was engaged in a close fight with one of the pirates and could not turn my head to see what was happening. So long as he kept his sword flashing before my eyes I had no desire to look otherwise than to my guard, and my pride would not let me run. But soon I had him, for all he was a good fighter, and, by the time he slumped backward with a groan, the ships had drifted apart, and there was fifty feet of clear water between me and my friends.

Captain Donaldson made every effort to put his ship alongside again; but the pirates had had enough of fight for that day and their ship was the faster sailer. My heart sank as I saw the gulf widening between us; nor could I catch a last glance of Ruth, who had gone below with the sleeping baby in her arms at the beginning of the engagement.

In this way our short-lived reunion came to an end. I watched the Royal Lion drop behind till, night coming on, I could no longer see her. Strange to say, my captors had nothing to say to me for a while, and left me quite alone as long as I wished to keep my eyes on the vessel that contained my sister. In fact the treatment I met with at the hands of the buccaneers was such as to belie much of what I had

heard concerning their reprobate character. When I passed my word of honor, they allowed me the freedom of the deck and set no sort of watch upon me. Some of them who thought that I had showed bravery in the fight even pressed me to join their crew, offering me equal rights with the buccaneers who had ventured money in the ship. Though I would not hear to this, I won favor in other ways, particularly by casting their accounts and by writing fair in the logbook. I practiced a good hand for the latter business, which was eventually the means of saving my life. One day when I was engrossing the date in large round letters at the top of the page, the captain, who was looking over my shoulder, began to laugh. He would not tell me what amused him, though he imparted it to his companions. Each one as he heard it looked at me and clapped his hands for fun. It was not long, however, before I understood how they intended to make use of my scanty store of learning.

About a week later we sighted a point of land. Though we soon passed this cape, I knew by many signs that we were making for the coast. That afternoon the chief spoke to me in the cabin.

"Monsieur Le Bourse, you know very well that you are our prisoner, and we paid dear for you, too; that was a jolly brush we had with the Royal Lion. Once more, and this is the last time I'll say so, you can have full freedom and a share in the prize money if you will sign our articles."

"I shall not do it," I replied haughtily. "Take yourown way with me."

At that he opened a locker, not at all offended by my manner, and drew out a suit of black clothes and a powdered wig which he told me to put on. This done he handed me a book and a silver-topped cane.

"Now walk," he cried, "from here to the port-hole and back again. There, there, you'll do," he went on, chuckling with delight. "Now, look you here, Monsieur Le Bourse, we are going to redeem you in the plantations for a schoolmaster, for they are sore in need of a little sense in Lord Baltimore's colony. That's where we shall set you. On my life, we'll do it! And a brave dominie you'll make in your black coat and wig."

I did not resent this arbitrary disposition of my services. I had expected to walk the plank, and this was a great sight better than that. So I waited patiently for this new change in my fortunes. On the evening before we reached port I was seated in the bow of the ship alone. No one was near me, and soon the captain crept stealthily to my side.

"We'll bind you out for five years of service," he began. "Whoever takes you will pay us twenty pounds." He tossed a purse into my lap. "There's the money in good pieces of eight, Spanish gold. Never say Ned Teach of Bristol's not a gentleman of honor."

I pressed him to know the cause of so much generosity; and I learned that the man I had killed in the fray was a desperate mutineer who threatened to overthrow the captaincy of Teach.

"Now," continued the buccaneer, "you've got some money, and if you don't find a way to escape in less than six months you deserve to hang."

The approach of some of the crew prevented any further talk between us. The next day we ran into port. I was duly bound out to service in the capacity of what is called a redemptioner. This kind of service, I was told, received its name from the fact that the redemptioner, or bond-servant, could buy back his freedom by paying a certain sum of money at any time after five years of service. It was into this kind of bond that Ruth had intended to enter before I found her in Bristol. As I had given her but little ready money, I feared that fate had again laid its harsh hand on Ruth and me alike.

The immediate effect upon me of my service, or imprisonment, for such it really was, was to undo what small tolerance towards the Roman church I had learned from Ruth. The buccaneers bound me out to a Catholic owner of plantations, and soon, upon an attempt to escape, he had me stripped and flogged at the public whipping post on a crowded market day. I was kept close after that and not allowed to stray from the spot of my labors.

For some time, in memory of Ruth, I struggled hard against a change of heart. But little by little my bitter hatred came back to me, and the mere shadow of a Catholic was something to be trampled under foot and spat upon. I resolved to make my escape, come what would, and to this end I was alert to every accident that could be turned to my advantage.

At that time the governments of Europe, and especially of England, were determined to put down the evil practices of the buccaneers. Orders were sent to all the American colonies to arrest the pirates wherever found. They were by this means driven from the larger ports and forced to frequent the smaller villages on the sea. Sometimes, nay, generally, their visits were connived at because of their liberal exchange in captured goods and of the cupidity of the merchants. It chanced, however, that an occasional honest magistrate made a rapid descent upon some unexpected place and captured a rover in an out of the way anchorage.

I had been in Maryland nearly a year when an event occurred that offered me a desperate chance of freedom. Captain Tew, a noted pirate, was discovered lying in a cove not far away. The planter to whom I was bound out, and who was also magistrate of the district, prepared to capture the buccaneer. By accident I learned his plans. They were so well laid that, if carried out in secrecy, they

could not but be successful. I made up my mind to warn the pirate of his danger, to win thereby his gratitude, and purchase the means of flight. I succeeded in my venture by so narrow a margin that Captain Tew was quite aware that I had rendered him a great service. His gratitude knew no bounds. Though he had intended to sail farther to the south, he set his vessel northward again in order to land me near New York, where I hoped to find Ruth awaiting me. But before we reached our destination he did me the service I have already spoken of. Upon the gift he gave me the day before we reached Long Island turned an important part of my career in the province of New York.

CHAPTER IV

THE BUCCANEER'S GIFT

We made a quick sail from Maryland to the neighborhood of New York and drew near Long Island on a bright day in August. The stiff wind caught up the jetting water from the prow of our ship and rained it down upon the slant of the waves with a rattle like sand falling upon the deck. I clung to the deck with both my hands and my heart rose higher with every bound of the ship.

"You look merry to-day," cried Captain Tew at my elbow. "I have good news. The lookout on the mizzen top has sighted land."

I stretched one hand towards the horizon as if I could reach Ruth. The buccaneer seemed to understand my gesture for he continued:

"She's been there a year, you say? That's a long time to stay in Yorke. I suppose she took service up the Hudson, perhaps even as far as Albany on the great Van Rensselaer estate. Do you know any one in Yorke?"

"Not a soul," I answered, the admission damping my spirits somewhat. "But I shall hunt up the Huguenot pastor and inquire of him."

"I mean no offense, Monsieur Le Bourse," continued the pirate. "But if you will take my advice you will go slow in your dealing with your coun-

trymen in Yorke. I hear they have been on the fence since the Rebellion:—one year Leisler men; the next, Jacobites to a man. I don't know much of the new governor either, curse him, except that he keeps us out of the port."

He stopped talking and looked down absently at the buttons of his coat, fondling them tenderly and turning them up one by one so that he could look at the device engraved on them.

"Fine buttons, Monsieur, fine buttons. Did you ever stop to look at the workmanship and the coat of arms on the back? It goes hard with me to part with them, it does indeed." Then he cried out more to himself than to me, as if he had made up his mind to a difficult task: "You old ungrateful dog! Off with the pair, I say, off on the instant!"

With that he drew his cutlass and slashed away clumsily at two of the buttons which he presented to me, holding them out on the flat of his hand.

"I'm an ungrateful dog to think twice about letting them go, but you must know their value. They came to me from his Excellency, Colonel Benjamin Fletcher. Ah, he was a merry soul. When he was governor of Yorke we had no trouble to land, but the present earl sets close watch upon the ports. You'll find the city as full of brawls as tobacco is of smoke. There are Jacobites and Earl's men and the devil knows what besides. You may be sure of one thing: whatever is at

stake, Kilian Van Volkenberg will be at loggerheads with the new earl. When you get there, show these buttons to Kilian. He brought them to me from Fletcher. I'll stake my ship and cargo he'll do all that the love of a good fat bargain can make a Dutch merchant do."

Soon after this conversation the buccaneer took me into his cabin where he presented me with a purse of money, a pair of pistols, and a handsomely mounted sword. All these articles put together, he assured me, were not worth the eye-hole of one of the buttons. "For," as he said, "old Ben Fletcher was a merry dog and profitable to the jolly sea-rovers."

An hour later we sighted land from the deck. During the rest of the afternoon our ship stood off and on, waiting for night. As soon as it grew dark enough to conceal my landing, a long-boat was lowered and they put me ashore at Gravesoon. As I went down the side of the ship, Captain Tew bade me a last farewell. He thanked me again and again for the warning I had given him, assuring me that I had saved him and his ship and all his crew.

"Commend me to Kilian," he said. "And to Ben Fletcher, and mind the factions in the city—and—and—oh, yes, there's Mistress Miriam, the patroon's daughter. Tell her that old Tommy Tew hasn't forgotten her pretty face, and he'll bring

her something from the east when he returns. God speed!"

The long-boat shoved off and soon I was on land. I have already told how I made my way to Gravesoon where the host of the ordinary was curious to know the manner of my arrival, as well as anxious to teach me how to blow a summons upon a conch.

I went to bed that night, as I have already stated, and rose early the next morning to set out on foot. The distance to Brenckelen was about ten miles across the end of the island. The day was bright and cheery, and the road passed through a rich country of farms. This region supplied most of the food for the city and was carefully tilled by the various tenants of the island. On nearing the Sound the road, which was a poor, rutty track at the best, dipped steeply from a crest and in a hundred yards I was at the water's edge. A small wooden platform floated on the surface and near, tethered to a tree by a thong of buckskin, hung the sea shell. I put it to my lips and, thanks to my practice of the night before, I was able, after one or two unavailing attempts, to send forth a dull wail that echoed over the water and back again half a dozen times.

While I was waiting for the ferryman to come from the Yorke side of the river, my eyes scanned the town impatiently. The city lay huddled on the side of a hill covered with verdure. The tiers of

flaming red-tiled roofs extended nearly to the water's edge where the white walls of the lower houses made visible the cluster of masts swaying in the harbor. Two structures stood out in conspicuous prominence before the rest of the town. High on the right loomed the Stadt Huys, topped by a pointed belfry. To the left on a bold hump of rock squatted the low fort. There the eye lingered with most interest. The slender staff floated the flag of England. In one corner the double gable of the fort chapel peeped above the top of the bastions. What must have been the portholes were mere black blotches upon the gray face of the wall; and below, at the foot of a steep cliff, the climbing surf fretted the rocks with foam.

My eyes were not drawn from the pleasing scene for fully half an hour. By that time the boatman had crossed the river. On the way back both wind and tide were against us and the crossing took much longer. We passed beyond the greater part of the town, having it upon our left, and landed at a little half-moon battery which projected into the East River near what was called the Water Gate. This gate was the eastern entrance to the city through the Wall, a line of palisades backed by a ditch that extended quite across the city from the East River to the Hudson. It formed the northern boundary of New York, and thus it happened that I entered the city from the rear or landward side.

"There is the way to Van Volkenberg manor," said the ferryman, advancing one arm like a guide-post and pointing along a road that vanished northward among the wooded hills. "But you'll do no good to follow it now. The patroon will be in the city to-day. It is all furred up with excitement at the meeting of the new assembly. What are you, white or blue?"

I assured him that I was a stranger and that I belonged to neither party as yet; at this information he lost all interest in my affairs. Even from that distance I could hear the confused din of shouting crowds bowling along the streets in the lower part of the town. While I stood irresolute, trying to decide whether to go north towards the manor-house or south into town, I caught sight of a woman in the distance. I made off hastily in her direction with my mind constantly upon Ruth. I laughed to myself when, all out of breath, I caught up with the woman and found her a squalid wife with clumsy wooden shoes that clattered noisily over the stepping stones of the unpaved street.

In this pursuit I had followed the street next the Wall which was bordered on the left by the houses of the chimney sweeps. Now and then a besooted urchin would run out in front of me, point to his grimy rags and call out: "Hi, mynher! I'm an Earl's man." This would set him and half a dozen other sweeps to laughing. I did not understand the humor of the youngster's joke till later

when I found that white was the color of the Earl's party. Then the thought of his little partisans dressed in their sooty rags would set me laughing with a will.

There was a smell of slops to the street next the Wall and nothing attractive about its appearance. I soon came to a turning and, as I glanced down an avenue curving broadly to the left, I stood still with wonder. As far as I could see the street was loosely filled with people. They were in constant motion; now opening into a gap, now closing into a compact mass from house to house; yet the crowd did not grow smaller nor did it move one way more than another.

Above their heads flags projected from every house-front. Many were white, a few were blue; the most distant were indistinguishable as to color, being mere silhouette patches against the sky. They made a pretty sight, fluttering together in the breeze as if the houses trembled with the same excitement that throbbed in the streets below. Bunches of white ribbons hung from the door-knobs and polished knockers. Festoons of the same color looped across the street. Just overhead, so near me that I had not noticed it at first, a large placard was suspended over the middle of the street. It bore in tall figures the inscription "19 to 5." I accosted a bystander, or runner-by, for no one was still an instant, and asked the meaning of the numbers.

"Good lack! Are you a stranger? That is our majority. Ours!"

He twirled a bunch of white ribbons in my face by way of explanation and then made off towards the scene of a new excitement. I followed his direction and began to hear the cry "Marmaduke, Marmaduke," which was swelling farther down the street. I followed the crowd which was all moving in one direction now, and elbowed my way along with the others. Men, women and children pressed eagerly forward in the direction of a low building with a peaked gable that stood on the corner of the next street. Soon I fell into a walk; and then we were so jammed together that I had to fight my way tooth and nail to gain a yard. I looked over the tops of people's heads to where a coach drawn by six white horses had been brought to a stand. A lady had stepped half out of the vehicle and was about to address the people. She was a strong, dignified looking woman with angular features and flashing eyes. She lifted one hand and everyone became still.

"Men of New York," she began in a rich melodious voice that won its way to my heart immediately, "on this day of victory and joy, it does my old heart good to see the people alive to their rights. When the liberty of the citizens is at stake, who is their friend?"

The crowd broke into a shout of "Marmaduke, Marmaduke." A woman who stood next me in

the street flourished a white flag and cried: "Three cheers for Lady Marmaduke, the friend of the people!" The lady who stood on the step of the coach caught the flag in her hands and motioned for silence.

"Yes, the Marmaduke is the friend of the people. But that is not what I meant. Our bulwark is the Earl. Stand by Earl Richard, friends. You are the strength of Yorke. He is your champion against the blue." She waved above her head the flag she had taken from the woman and cried: "Three hearty cheers for the Earl of Bellamont!"

By the time the ringing response had died away and order was once more restored the whole attitude of Lady Marmaduke had changed. Tears stood in her eyes and her voice trembled with emotion.

"Dear people, when it pleased God to take my husband, He took from you your staunchest friend. 'Helen,' he once said to me, 'if by chance you should be left alone, never forget the people.'" Then she grew brave again, and her deep voice rang clear and distinct. "I shall do all I can, but —remember—remember what I say: our bulwark is Earl Richard."

She sprang back into the carriage. The driver struck out with his lash. For a moment the six white horses reared and plunged till the swaying crowd gave way in front. The huge vehicle lum-

bered forward over the uneven street, followed by the cheering of the people.

I turned into a deserted by-way, wondering who this woman was and hoping to make progress more quickly towards the lower part of the town. Even here I met with the same assertion of victory. Three little bare-legged urchins were belaboring a fourth who was scarce able to toddle. He stood on a doorstep warding off the blows of his assailants with a stick. The cause of their attack was the blue blouse he wore;—blue was the color of the defeated party.

"Hiky tiky, you Jacobite!" cried the three little soldiers of the Earl. "Come down and fight fair, you coward."

I caught up the nearest of the three boys and spanked him well for a bully; upon which the other two fled precipitately into the midst of a duck pond where they stood knee deep in the slimy water and dared me to follow them at my peril.

"I'm as good an Earl's man as them," cried the defender of the doorstep. "But I'll be a Jacobite now for spite. Don't come near me, you rebel brats."

He shouldered his stick like a musket and strutted ahead, offering to accompany me to the next corner if I was afraid.

I took the little fellow safely to his mother's doorstep and then continued my way through King Street to the Slip, whence I could see the whole

water front and the merchant ships lying at anchor. I had scarcely reached the battery by the Stadt Huys when a crowd of people came pell mell along the square. They were shouting and yelling at a score of persons who went before and were provided with brooms decked in the victorious white ribbons of the Earl's party. They were sweeping the street industriously. As they drew near I saw that the ground in front of them was plentifully strewed with little blue marbles the size of birds' eggs. The sweepers were thus in play cleansing the town of the blue taint of their enemies. They drew near the water, each vying with his neighbor to be the first to get the marbles in front of him into the bay. Ere long they were popping merrily upon the surface. At that moment a diversion occurred in the form of a charge by a company of marines from one of the merchant ships in the harbor. The marines came up the Slip on the run, and in two minutes a hot fight began.

The brooms were not bad weapons of defense. The cutlasses of the sailors got entangled in the brushy ends and sometimes the weapons of the sailors were jerked clean out of their hands. Now and then a stinging thrust in the face would set a man yelling with pain and anger. Meantime the bystanders amused themselves by egging on the combatants as if it were a cock fight.

This sort of thing could not last long. One by one the ends of the brooms were lopped off. The

sweepers gave back and at last broke into flight just as the sheriff and a guard of six men came to their relief. Not at all daunted by the appearance of the officers of the law, the marines continued the attack, now gaining ground, now losing, but keeping to it with a will.

My blood was up. Swords ringing and mine in its sheath was a craven plight. I was for joining in but did not know which side to join. Suddenly the sheriff fell wounded and his men turned tail to run.

"Cowards," I yelled, flourishing my sword. "follow me."

They plucked up courage and did as I bade them. I led them aside some twenty yards to the mouth of a narrow lane where we were protected on the flanks by a fence on one side and a house on the other. Here the fray began again with redoubled spirit. I had time to notice that each of the sailors wore about his arm a band of red cloth that gave his dress somewhat the appearance of a uniform. Three of them soon lay on the ground by the mouth of the lane, and I doubt not that they were killed, for there seemed to be great enmity between the marines and the city officers. The sailors continued to fight like fiends, yelling and cursing between their blows like so many madmen. I have no doubt they were full of drink, for they did not fight well together but often turned on one another, or hampered themselves by crowding shoul-

der to shoulder too close to fight to good advantage. In twenty minutes we had reduced their number by half. The sobering effect of this lively scrimmage put a little reason into the heads of those who were still upon their legs. It was now their turn to run, which they did with a marvelous speed considering the fact that they were sailors.

The battle at an end, I wiped the blade of my sword and continued down the Slip, casting my eyes curiously upon the tradesmen's signs. There were but a few names on the street, though a symbol of some sort stood over the entrance to each shop. At one place a pair of scissors indicated the dock barber and peruke maker. A red ball hung before a vender of cheese; and an empty cask before every third or fourth door showed where spirits was sold. I made my way past a long row of petty shops and small ordinaries till my eyes fell upon that for which I was looking.

This was a tall, pretentious building decked from top to bottom in blue hangings. Within the ample doorway I could see piles of boxes, casks, bales of cotton, and to the rear there were many clerks bending over huge account books, or skurrying about with pots of paint in their hands to mark the numerous parcels for shipment. What made this warehouse of more interest to me than all the others was its sign and the name of its owner. It read "KILIAN VAN VOLKENBERG—MERCHANT."

CHAPTER V

THE JACOBITE COFFEE-HOUSE

When I recognized the name on the front of Van Volkenberg's warehouse I dipped my hand into my pocket to make sure that the silver buttons Captain Tew had given me were safe and ready to be produced by way of introduction. I crossed the street and entered the open doorway. A courteous young clerk who desired to be of service to me regretted that his master was not on the premises.

"Patroon Van Volkenberg went out not long ago with Colonel Fletcher," he said. "You know that the town is in such excitement that the patroon, who is the chief merchant of the city and also a member of the governor's council, has many cares upon him. But I am in his confidence and should be glad—no, is it a personal matter? I am sorry that I cannot attend to your business. I should advise you to return this afternoon if you desire to see him in person. He will probably dine with Colonel Fletcher or perhaps with the governor. You know that Patroon Van Volkenberg is one of the most representative men of the city. I see you are a stranger. Would you like to look at our cellars and see our ships? There are none equal to them in the whole province."

I thanked him for his kindness, but said that I wished to explore the city and would wander about on the chance of seeing the patroon at large. I passed out into the busy street and stood at the door of the patroon's warehouse for a moment in hesitation which way to turn. A large sign which projected into the street not far away on my right indicated the Leisler Tavern. I turned that way, intending to find a suitable place to lodge until my plans became more settled. At the door, however, I stopped. The room within was noisily full of people all of whom wore white cockades and badges. These decorations represented the Earl's party and reminded me of the fact that the hangings on Van Volkenberg's house were blue. The Leisler Tavern was evidently not frequented by the partisans of the patroon. I had better seek farther; perhaps I should come upon an inn of another color.

I wandered along, keeping a sharp lookout on all sides. My attention was much taken up with the quaint little houses and the curious sights of this strange city. Before long, on returning from a near view of the fort which I had already seen at a distance from my point of vantage on Long Island, I ran suddenly upon the Jacobite Coffee-House. This ordinary was draped in blue, and the empty neighborhood cast upon it the melancholy atmosphere of defeat.

The large interior was portioned off upon three

sides into stalls containing tables like those I had seen in London. Most of the chairs at these tables were occupied by persons drinking; but by far the greater number of people present stood mug in hand in the open center of the room. Upon my entrance there was a sudden lull in the conversation; then they began to whisper among themselves and look at me. Every person in the room was soon staring at me as if I were some public curiosity on exhibition. There was a hostile expression in their eyes, too, that I could not comprehend. I wondered whether, after all, this was really a public ordinary. Had I made a mistake and blundered into some private place of meeting? On one side of the tap-room in plain sight hung the governor's license to keep open house. No, I had not made a mistake. What, then, was the meaning of this obvious turning of eyes in my direction? How could I account for the hostile contempt they showed towards me, an utter stranger?

I crossed the room to where I saw a vacant chair in one of the stalls. At once two men who were also seated at the table I was moving towards, arose, making a great parade of their efforts to get out of my way. The laugh that followed this treatment vexed me much. I called out in an ill temper to the host to fetch me some rum and not to keep strangers waiting.

"Have you a room to let?" I inquired as he set my liquor down on the table in front of me.

"No," he replied curtly, turning on his heel, and showing me his back across the room.

Shortly the attention fell off from me somewhat and the inmates began to talk again. Kirstoffel, as they called the host, was a merry fellow. He soon seemed to repent of the rude way in which he had answered my question, for he saw when I took out my purse that I had plenty of ready money. Taking advantage of a moment when attention was diverted to the some disturbance in the street, he came across the room to me and made a qualified apology.

"Gott, man," he began. "Your demand was too sudden. I have got no rooms here to let out. They were all thrown into one for that what-you-call-it Jacobite Club to meet in. No, I have no rooms."

As he seemed to be friendly, I asked him why my entrance had been the cause of so much attention. He was about to answer when the people who had been temporarily attracted to the door came pouring back. The tapster laid his finger on his lips, shook his head at me in a warning sort of way, and then stalked haughtily back to his place as if to affect his customers with the largeness of his contempt for me.

I was all alert to discover the clew to this treatment. As each of several new people entered I was pointed out amid whispering and shaking of

heads and threatening glances. One fellow, a sailorly looking man, cried out an angry oath and took a step or two in my direction. A comrade caught him by the arm and whispered something in his ear. At that the fellow gave up his notion, whatever it was, and soon their interest in me waned.

Everyone I had seen in the room so far wore somewhere on his coat or hat a bit of the blue ribbon that stood for the Merchants' party. It was not long, however, before I noticed in one corner a slight, alert man who looked as if he might be a native of my own country. Furthermore, so far as I could see, he wore none of the blue ribbon. I changed my seat so as to come near him. He was an affable sort of fellow and spoke to me at once.

"You and I seem to be on the under side," he began. "I wonder you don't wear white."

I told him, as I had told the ferryman, that I was a stranger in the city and that I had not yet learned the difference between the parties. He at once began a long explanation, telling me all about the Earl of Bellamont and the People's party whose color was white, and of the Merchants' party, whose color was blue. Thus begun, I pressed the conversation further to learn why I had been treated with so much attention when I came into the coffee-house. He did not know. Had I worn white or no color at all, as he did, they would have let me alone. There must be something more than

that. Did I not know? "How could I?" I said, in answer to his question, for I had been in New York scarce above two hours. All this mystery was very annoying to me, for every few moments I was pointed out and showed off to some new comer like an animal in a cage.

In the meantime my chance acquaintance, who informed me that his name was Pierre, drank continually and was in the merrier mood therefor. "I hate these Dutchmen," he said, "with their dozen pairs of breeches like barrels round their middles. And the women, ha! I've seen a very bean-pole swell out below like a double jib."

This reference to the Dutchmen reminded me of my desire to see the patroon, and I asked Pierre if he knew Van Volkenberg.

"Know him? I'd know his bones in a button shop. You couldn't polish the crabbedness out of him. I could tell you where he is at this very moment only—I declare, my head is getting fuddled. I must have a gill of rum to settle this weak beer with." In a moment he came back from the tap-rail, empty-handed and shaking his head disconsolately. "He will not trust me, not another stuyver. I'm plum fuddled. Where was I?"

I suggested Van Volkenberg, but he did not seem to know the name. I handed him half a crown, but he would not take it.

"No, sir; I'm not a beggar," he said with a little dignity. "That would hurt me to the heart,

and what would Annetje say?" Then he added cunningly: "You are a man of influence. If you would speak to him and ask him to extend my score on credit a little he would do it out of respect to you."

A moment later Pierre was sipping rum to his satisfaction and I was secretly a shilling out to the landlord.

"Where was I?" continued Pierre, whose memory was improving now that I had got him some liquor without offending his dignity with money. "Where was I? Oh, yes, Van Volkenberg. He is in the room above this one—president of the Jacobite Club. If you wait here you will see him. They always come in for a sup all worn out and dry with thinking."

Pierre soon fell asleep and I awaited the appearance of the patroon. In a short space of time I was again quite out of the consideration of every person in the room. They talked in low tones as people will who have not the honorable sense of success to be noisy over. They no longer paid any heed to me, not even when further additions were made to their number.

I kept my ears open and I soon learned from the drift of conversation what was the present state of politics in New York. The recently defeated Merchants' party had been in power for many years; in fact, ever since the trial and execution of the leader, Jacob Leisler. This party's

grip on affairs had, however, been steadily failing ever since and it was quite loosened by the arrival of a new governor. This governor was the Earl of Bellamont. Upon his arrival in New York he had at once espoused the cause of the Popular party, as the adherents of Leisler were called. He made it his especial duty to enforce the Acts of Trade and to put down the illegal traffic with the buccaneers. This unlawful trade was the chief bone of contention between the two parties. To the Merchants' party belonged all the great tradesmen of the city, hardly one of whom had not in times past, or was not at that very moment engaged in the profitable but unlawful exchange of smuggled goods. It was to continue this trade in defiance of the law that they stood together against the Earl. In the recent election they had been overthrown by a large majority. Their defeat was due mainly to the Frenchmen, which portion of the population of New York was then quite under the control of Lady Marmaduke. She was the lady I had already seen addressing the people from the step of her coach.

While I was gathering the above information piecemeal from the subdued conversation about me in the coffee-room, my acquaintance, Pierre, had roused himself occasionally, swallowed another draught of rum, and then relapsed into sleepy unconsciousness. The group in the room was continually changing, but the people composing it had

ceased to point me out as an object of interest. Two or three men had latterly come in who wore upon their arms a band of red cloth like what I had seen on the sailors I had fought against in company with the sheriff's men. But these fellows took no notice of me, nor did I recognize them as belonging to the band we had fought with.

Before long a sudden lull in the conversation greeted the appearance of two men. Heretofore I had examined the face of every visitor as he came in, wondering if he were Van Volkenberg. I now scanned these two with like attention. The older looking of the two was a large man, powerful but spare in build, with a sharp passionate eye. He returned cordially the numerous greetings with which he was welcomed. Then, for everyone in the room stood silent as if in expectation of a speech, he struck his ebony cane with decision on the floor and began to speak.

"Friends, we have suffered a severe defeat and to-day the Assembly goes into session that will unmake our laws. But the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. We are not yet dead. Power shall return to us. Hush——" He raised his cane and made a motion to cut short a slight attempt to cheer. "Our enemies have triumphed through the vote of the Frenchmen. But you must not let this turn you against them. They are led by the black Lady Marmaduke. We must bring them back to our support. They are willing to

come, but we must not drive them sharply. There is one thing I have to tell you that will make you glad at heart. To-day I have been at the governor's council board. He is at heart our friend. To be sure, he has restored the confiscated property to the family of the traitor Leisler. That strikes home against us, but he could not help himself. The attainder was removed in England and he was bound to carry it out whether he liked to do so or not. This victory has been won in his name, but it is not of his heart. Do not the two traitors still lie at the foot of the gallows?"

A sullen murmur of dissatisfaction followed this appeal. "Ay, they have lain there these eight years," cried one. "May they rot in their graves forever," said another. For a moment the air was full of sharp, savage curses directed against the memory of the two leaders of the people.

"And now," continued the speaker, as Kirstoffel handed him a cup, "let us drink to the health of our stout friend, Colonel Benjamin Fletcher."

Fletcher! I remembered that name. He was the person who had sent to Captain Tew the buttons that I now had in my pocket. The toast was drunk enthusiastically. Then someone sprang upon a chair and began to beat time; the company followed his example and soon they were all singing this song which they accompanied boisterously with the jingle of mugs and the clatter of feet:

"Hi! Ho! Kirstoffel's brew,
Gi' good den to Kilian's crew;
Klink the can,
Let every man
Drink to Van Volkenberg."

At the last word the tall speaker bowed right and left, whereby I knew he was the patroon.

I felt in my pocket for the silver buttons and, taking one of them in the hollow of my hand with my fingers closed over so as to conceal it till the proper moment, I rose to approach the patroon. This act drew all eyes upon me. There was the same ominous silence as before, accompanied now, however, with ten times the contempt and anger shown at my first entrance. The ill feeling against me was so evident and, so far as I knew, so without cause, that I was fairly nonplussed. No one spoke. The only sounds were the ticking of the tall clock in the corner and a few taps of Van Volkenberg's cane upon the floor. He likewise seemed to share the general resentment against me.

"Mynher," said I, as yet holding the button in my hand. "I came to ask——"

"Ask nothing of me, villain."

"Ay, he is a villain," chorused several voices.

"Mynher," I began again, astonished at this reception from a perfect stranger.

"Not a word, wretch, not a word to me. I have no dealings with vagabonds, scum of the streets. If you have anything to say, go talk to my dogs. Zounds! Away! Out of my sight!"

I was about to expostulate, having no idea whatever how to account for this sudden burst of anger, but he raised his cane to strike me. Then I noticed a narrow band of red cloth about his left arm just beyond the elbow.

"Hush, Kilian," said the companion who had entered with him. "Do not anger yourself."

"Pish! May I not strike a dog?"

"'Tis not for him but for yourself. Beware, Kilian."

The patroon was visibly affected by this rejoinder and made an effort to control himself.

"You say you don't understand what I mean?" he continued in disdain, for he had given me a chance to profess myself ignorant of offense. "Have you not stood against my men? Have you not drawn your sword against the Red Band? Bah, dog! You shall know what it is to kill the men of the Red Band. You shall hang for this if there is a law left in the province."

He had begun this speech with a measure of self-control. But as the words followed one upon another, he spoke quicker and quicker, and with more and more anger, till he had worked himself to such a height of passion that his friend interfered a second time.

"Be careful, Kilian. These are grave times and we must be on our guard. You know your failing. What if you should make some——" He spoke the rest so low that I could not hear it. It

had the effect, however, of calming the patroon. "Hear the man," continued his friend. "Hear what he has to say."

"Mynher Van Volkenberg," I explained, "if the men I fought with on the Slip this morning were your men, I can only say that we gave and took fair blows. Half a score of men fighting two or three or four is what no man of honor will stand by and see unstirred. I fought fair and I confess no crime. I should do the same against the very troops of the Earl."

"Damn the Earl!" burst out the patroon.

He shook and trembled with rage. This time there was no holding him back. He stormed up and down the room, cursing me, and the Earl, and even his companion, for trying to quiet him. What had been the outcome of our altercation but for an accident I do not know. Just at that moment Pierre, who had been sleeping quietly on my rum all this while, roused himself and stumbled to his feet. When I had first spoken to him a short time before, he was merrily drunk; by now he had swallowed himself into a royal state for quarreling.

"Hi, my duck!" he hiccoughed, as he lurched across the room. "At it again, eh?"

The room was dumb at this sudden outbreak from an unexpected quarter. Pierre drew upon him the attention of us all except the man who had entered with the patroon. His eyes were fixed

upon Van Volkenberg, his hand was laid upon the patroon's arm.

"Come with me, Kilian," he said in a voice so low that few heard it. "You are wrought up to-day. You cannot trust yourself. Come home with me. Remember how much depends upon your coolness."

"Old man," Pierre cried as he tottered indirectly out of the corner where he had been asleep. "You will set your dogs on me, will you?"

There was almost no sound from anyone. Only the slow tick of the clock and the sand crunching beneath Pierre's feet. Van Volkenberg trembled with fury, but was unable to speak. His companion tried in vain to drag him from the room. Pierre stopped two steps in front of them.

"Take that," he cried savagely, emptying a glass of rum on the patroon's waistcoat. Then, waving his arms drunkenly, he began to sing:

"Klink the can,
Let every man—
Down with Van Volkenberg."

In the uproar that followed I was aware of but two facts. The patroon was dragged off by his companion through one door, and Pierre by the crowd through another. In the midst of the pushing and shoving about the street door someone plucked my elbow. It was Kirstoffel, the host, with his finger to his lips.

"His offense is ducking," he said, jerking his thumb over his shoulder towards Pierre. "But you. Gott, man! You've killed three of the patroon's best men. I would not be in your shoes for a month's brew. You will be up for ——." He pointed significantly, first at his neck and then at a beam over head. "Take my advice. Seek you the French dominie. He has got a great hold on Lady Marmaduke as well as the governor. But don't stand still on your legs or you will hang fast by your neck."

The fact that I was in unusual danger on account of my part in the brawl of the morning came home to me now for the first time. I resolved to take Kirstoffel's advice without delay, feeling keenly the danger of my situation. I inquired where the house of the Huguenot pastor was and then asked the name of the person who had been so eager to restrain the patroon's wrath.

"That? That was Colonel Fletcher, the governor of the province before this one came to the fort."

It was a strange coincidence that I should be thus thrown against the only two men in New York from whom I had expected any help. All this time I still held the silver button clasped in my hand. I put it back into my pocket and set out along the street in search of the minister who I hoped would be able to assist me out of my difficult situation.

CHAPTER VI

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE EARL

The French pastor met me at his door with a cordial welcome. I laid my case before him without reservation, telling him how I had joined in with the weaker party in the street attack that morning, and how I had encountered Van Volkenberg in the tavern.

"It is a bad business," he said. "I wish it had not happened. What can be done? Let me see. What can be done?" He was thoughtful for a few moments. "We must go to the Earl. He is a fine gentleman and a kind man. He sets great value on the city officers. Yes, he will do what he can for you. You say that some of the men were killed?"

"I was told as much by the tavern keeper, and, in truth, I guess there were. It was very stirring for a time. I think the sheriff was also killed."

"It's a bad business, as I said. Van Volkenberg and his Red Band will ruin the city yet. I must speak of your case to Lady Marmaduke as well as to the governor. She is very popular with the people and stands as leader of our countrymen here, for all she is an Englishwoman."

"I have already seen her," said I. "And I heard them speak of her at the coffee-house as the black Lady Marmaduke."

The minister smiled. "There are two meanings to that. She has black eyes and a dark skin; and Lady Marmaduke is a black enemy to the patroon and his band of soldiers. Ay, she's the black lady sure enough. But what was your message to the patroon that he cut short before you had the chance to deliver it?"

This question reminded me that I should be thinking of something else besides my own selfish needs.

"I had hoped to inquire of him some way to find my sister."

"Your sister?"

"Yes. I have some hope that she is in the province of New York."

"How comes it that you are here with so little knowledge of her whereabouts?"

I gave him an account of the last sad year of our life; our meeting in Bristol; our second separation on the high seas; and, last of all, the year I had spent in Maryland. "Thus it was," I ended, "that I expected to find my sister waiting for me when I got to New York."

"Ay, take cheer. She is doubtless somewhere near at hand. Last July, you say? I was in Albany then. I have forgotten it; what did you say your surname is?"

"Le Bourse."

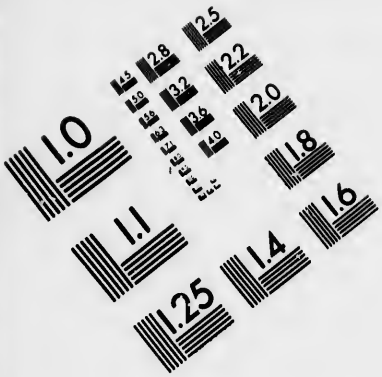
He repeated the name over again half aloud. "I have heard that name somewhere," he mut-

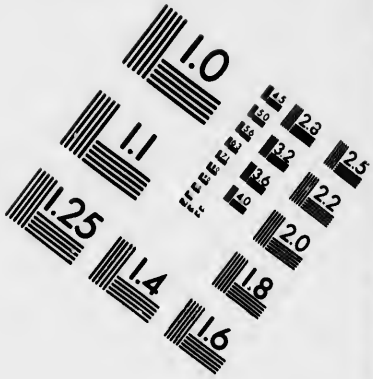
tered. "Yet I was in Albany this time twelvemonth." He was silent several minutes longer, and then he broke out with, "Where have I heard that name?"

How I hoped he would remember! I durst not speak to him lest I disturb his thoughts. Suddenly he fixed his eye on me and, while he gazed, a look of recognition overspread his features.

"I have heard it," he said, his eyes opening wider and wider; "and I have seen—can I be mistaken?" He took both my hands in his and I could feel that they were all of a tremble with emotion. "It is you I have seen. Don't you mind the brook by La Rochelle, and how we cast lots years agone, and how one fell to you and one to my brother? I recall you plain now. I looked back and saw my brother fall. The Lord giveth and He taketh away, blessed be His name. But you stood firm and the rest of us were saved. How many times, my lad, an old man's prayers have gone up to the throne that you might be safe."

We clasped hands in silence; my feelings were too deep for words. The change brought about by the lapse of ten years in even the happiest life is stuff for sorrow. What must I have felt after ten unhappy years of wandering and fight, of sorrow and disappointment, year in and year out? The minister's voice was the first to break a long silence.





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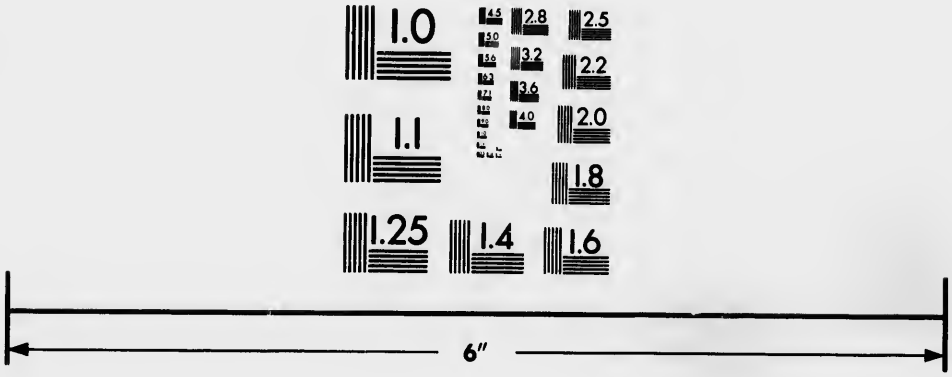

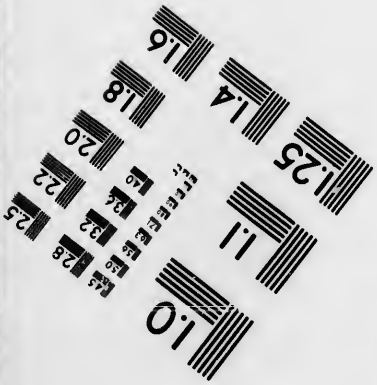

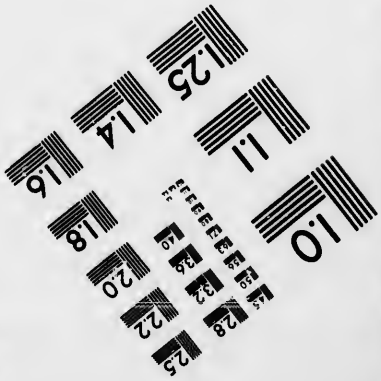

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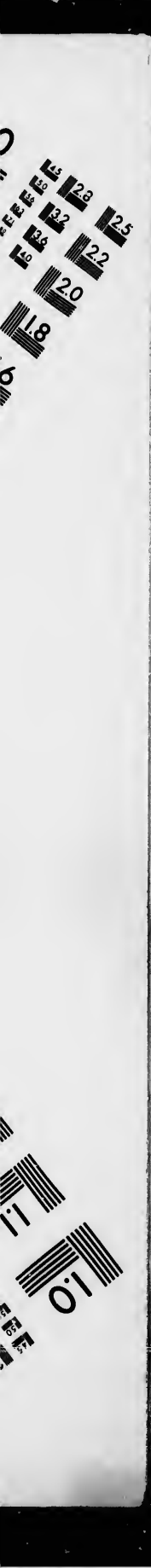
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"Let us go to the Earl," he said, but he was not yet master of his voice.

As we made our way to the fort through crooked narrow streets my companion was at great pains to enlighten me still further in regard to the condition of affairs in the city.

"Friend Michael, you must know somewhat, so that you can talk well to his Excellency. He and Patroon Van Volkenberg are at swords points day and night. I count much on that as telling in your favor. But his hands are half tied in spite of all. I wonder that you can look so calm, for I must say plain the patroon is a powerful man and clever at the law-twisting. Kirstoffel told you what it would be, but I hope he cannot bring it to that. He's a cruel man, a cruel man. What little Pierre said about the dogs—that was some of it. Poor little Pierre! He had gone up to see his sweetheart, Annetje Dorn, at the manor-house. But the patroon set the dogs on him and now he will have to be ducked. But it is your case that worries me."

We had nearly reached the fort. A large green sloped gently up to the walls. Near the entrance a dozen soldiers in the gray uniform of the Governor's Guards loitered about a public pump.

"Do you see yon dipping trough of stone?" queried my companion, pointing towards the pump. "When you get close you can see the Marmaduke arms cut in the side. That is only one of the

things she has done to make the people throw up their hats when she comes along. We used to get the water we drink from the Tea-Water pump, which is more than a mile beyond the city wall to the north. All the wells in this part of town were brackish till this one was dug and presented to the city free of cost by Lady Marmaduke. Ask anyone—yon tradesman in his shop door, for instance—who is Lady Marmaduke. Like as not he will answer that she dug the Marmaduke well. She has been a great benefactor to the city in other ways than that, and there is a warm spot for her in everybody's heart."

Thus, doing his best to keep my mind off the subject of my suspense, the minister led me through the great stone gateway into the fort. The buildings were ranged along the four sides of an open court which we crossed to reach the governor's mansion. We entered this through a wide door and were shown into a spacious reception room, from the end of which the Earl came forward to greet us. He was a tall man of much dignity, with a calm, benevolent face and bright, understanding eyes. He welcomed my friend cordially and then addressed me in a gracious tone.

"Monsieur Le Bourse, I have already heard of you. Patroon Van Volkenberg has killed one of my best officers, and he says that you did the same by three of the sailors of the Red Band. But he smiled when he said it and added, 'If you will not

prosecute, neither shall I.' The patroon does not often smile in a case like this, but he smiled to-day and you are to be congratulated."

The three of us passed words of mutual congratulation at my fortunate escape from the evil eye of the patroon. Then my story and Ruth's was related to the governor.

"And you say it was your intention to communicate with mynheer for assistance?"

"Yes. I had an introduction to him in the shape of a button given me by Captain Thomas Tew."

Bellamont started perceptibly and his face clouded when I mentioned the name of the buccaneer. I stopped short in my talk. More than once during the account of my adventures my voice had faltered when I came to speak of my sister; hence it was that the governor misunderstood my hesitation.

"Do not haste, my friend. You have my kindliest sympathy in your distress. Take your time and recover yourself."

"It was not for that I stopped, your Excellency."

His eyebrows lifted. "No? What then?"

"I am a plain spoken man, Earl Bellamont; shall I have free leave to speak what I feel? Your face showed disfavor when I mentioned the name of Captain Tew. I am ignorant of what he may be to you, but I do not wish to compromise one who has played the part of a good friend to me."

I stopped. There was a look of amusement in the Earl's eyes as he put out his hand and touched a bell. A servant appeared who, at the governor's bidding, fetched a tray with wine and glasses for three upon it, and a dish of salt. I could hardly contain my surprise at this unusual proceeding, nor did I understand its import till the Earl, after moistening his finger in the wine, placed it on the salt and then touched his tongue.

"It is an old custom we have in Yorke," he said, smiling.

"You honor me more than I deserve," I cried in admiration at the way he had put it out of his power to use these communications to his own advantage. For the observation of this custom meant that we were friends and guests, and that our talk would be held in the strictest confidence.

"I think you will trust me now," he continued gravely. "If I read your face aright, Monsieur Le Bourse, you are the kind of man we need in these troublesome times. Now—if you will be kind enough to continue your narrative."

I told him all I knew, holding back nothing, for I had full faith in the man whom I already looked upon as a sort of patron. He listened with grave attention, now and then expressing his hearty sympathy in a way that was at once delicate and reassuring.

"Here is to the safety of Mistress Ruth," he said lifting a glass.

"Safety!" I cried. "You do not doubt?"

"Not in the least. Drink. To a quick search and a happy."

He rang the bell again and bade the servant call Bromm, the aged bell-ringer who lived by the church in a corner of the fort. In a few minutes a slow deliberate tap, tap resounded upon the paved courtyard without; next the old man entered, leaning upon his staff, which he grasped high up at the level of his head. The Earl advanced to meet him and took the faithful old man by the hand.

"How is it with you to-day, my Bromm; and how is the Juvrouw Betchen?"

"Please your Excellency, she is well, considering her age. But she was a fair wench in her day."

Then he caught sight of me. It took a moment of deliberation for him to adjust himself to the unexpected surprise of a stranger in the room. He made me a low bow, slipping his hand down the body of his staff as he did so.

"Pardon me, sir, but I am turned eighty and I did not see you at first. No offense I hope. My sister always says—you don't know the girl, do you? Of course not, but she was a wench in her day though she's not so comely now. There is a sad look in her face for her man—him that was to be her man went to sea and she's waiting for him yet. That's forty years ago and the girl's turned sixty-

four last Niewe Jarre. Oh, our family has memory."

"It is your memory I want to test, Bromm," said the governor. "We have good reason to believe that within a twelvemonth Ruth Le Bourse was bound into service before the Stadt Huys. If such be the case you may have cried the proclamation for her sale. Have you any recollection of it? Now make an effort to remember. The name is Ruth Le Bourse."

The old man planted his staff firmly on the floor and grasped it with both his hands while he thought. His memory seemed to give him no clue. He knit his brows, changed the position of his hands upon his staff, hemmed and hawed. But at last, just as he seemed about to give it up, his face brightened.

"Ay, Sir Richard, I have it. My cousin's second wife's sister's girl's name was Ruth. I knew we had a Ruth in the family. Ah, we have memory, we Bromms."

I sighed in disappointment. The Earl suppressed a smile and led the crier's vagrant thoughts back and forth among his confused recollections of the past year. But to no avail. He had not the slightest information to give us and we were no better off than before.

"Well," the Earl said at last. "I shall request you to be on hand at two o'clock this afternoon, Bromm, to make public proclamation in the mar-

ket place. It is not unlikely that someone will have heard of her and can give me information that we are desirous to obtain."

This broke up our meeting. There was now nothing left to do till the advantage of the proclamation had been put to the test. As we moved toward the door of the reception hall, the minister walked first with Bromm. The governor laid his hand upon my arm and quietly motioned me to step back into the room with him.

"Monsieur Le Bourse, we have gone so far in our mutual confidence that it may be well to extend it a little farther. There were words of high contention in the council meeting to-day between me and Patroon Van Volkenberg. What I now impart to you is strictly *entre nous,* as you Frenchmen say. I trust the patroon's word no more than —at least I do not understand this sudden spleen of friendliness. You say that Colonel Fletcher was trying to soothe him in the coffee-house?"

"Yes, continually."

"Well, you will observe when you come to know more of our politics that that is unlike Fletcher too. He is a savage cur. I do not trust either of them. I should be more at my ease to have the men of the Red Band baying at my window like hounds than to have them feed me with words of honey. Keep your own counsel, my friend. Stay out of the narrow streets after nightfall. I should advise you to take lodgings at the Ferry-House.

It is a quiet place of entertainment, modest, and remote from the turmoil of the lower town. It may be that I shall desire to communicate with you. If I do, I shall send there to find you. Say as little of your name as suits your convenience till this mvstery unravels itself somewhat. Farewell; I may send for you before the day is over."

CHAPTER VII

PIERRE'S SECRET

Good humored little Pierre was ducked for his offense in the coffee-house. He was taken before the magistrates who sat in the great room in the Stadt Huys, and they tried him legally for unbecoming conduct towards a member of the upper class. Against this charge there was very little Pierre could offer in defense. In vain he pleaded that he had seen indirectly and meant to empty the rum upon Kirstoffel. The charge was immediately changed by the grave Dutch magistrates to drunkenness in order that there should be no mistake. Pierre perforce gave way to the inevitable. Through the influence of Van Volkenberg who had not yet recovered from his anger, Pierre was sentenced to the ducking stool. The indignity of this punishment was particularly galling to Pierre because it was commonly reserved for scolding wives and spinster crones whose tongues were too long for their mouths.

"I'll go to the pillory, your honor," he said piteously, "or ride the pinch-back horse a week of market days; but to be ducked like a woman! And they say there are great fish in the bay who will nibble my toes. Your honor, I was only a little drunk."

But the magistrates' hearts could not be softened away from duty. They were bringing the culprit out of the Stadt Huys at the very moment that the dominie and I were returning from our visit to the fort. We met them with half the town flocking at their heels and clamoring for the sport to come. Pierre, slightly sobered by his experience at the court-room, had plucked up a small amount of dignity. He walked erect as if he had made up his mind to take his punishment like a man. I looked at him closely and believed that there was more stuff to the fellow than at first appeared. His face wore a look of dogged resentment; such a look as I should not care to see in the face of an enemy.

The ducking-stool, which was attached to a low, wheeled platform, was soon pushed to the edge of the water. Pierre was securely bound into the chair so that he could move neither hand nor foot, and then he was swung out in mid air over the water. The magistrate mounted on a platform near. He took out of his pocket a string about a yard long with a small iron ball attached to the end of it. He held one end of the string in his hand and set the ball to swinging like a pendulum.

"Let him go down," he cried.

At this command Pierre was soused into the water. The crowd gave a cheer and fell to counting the swings of the pendulum. At first there

were not many voices, but the number grew with the seconds. At twenty they sounded like a dull roar. At thirty the people were clapping their hands and stamping their feet and yelling like mad.

"Thirty-eight," rumbled the mob. "Thirty-nine, forty."

"Fetch up," shouted the magistrate.

Pierre was lifted out of the water, dripping and snorting from his forty seconds beneath the surface.

"Have you had enough?" asked the magistrate.

"No," answered Pierre defiantly.

"Dip him again."

Once more he was mercilessly ducked into the cold water. The pendulum was again set in motion. The crowd fell into its boisterous count. I looked around in dismay.

"Is there nothing we can do?" I asked the dominie.

"Nothing," answered a strange voice over my shoulder.

I whirled about to see who had spoken, and stood face to face with Patroon Van Volkenberg. He was no longer the anger-tossed man I had seen in the coffee-house. He was now cool and collected. A sinister smile scarcely ruffled his calm features. But when he spoke to me his voice bit like a cold wind.

"No, Monsieur Le Bourse—you see I know your

name—no, there is nothing you can do. But we shall meet again."

He turned away instantly and was swallowed in the crowd. There was no mistaking the expression of his fierce eyes. I recalled th. warning Earl Bellamont had given me and I clinched my fists.

At that moment Pierre was ducked for the third time. When he came up the magistrate put the usual question.

"Have you had enough?"

Pierre's head dropped forward upon his breast.

"Yes, yes," shouted all. "He nods yes."

They unbound him and stood him on his feet. He fell full length upon the ground, unconscious and half drowned. At that moment the report of a cannon boomed over the city.

"A ship, a ship!" shouted a hundred voices.

This signal, fired from the Battery, was the way of announcing the arrival of a vessel in the port. The crowd forgot all about Pierre and his helpless condition. In two minutes the square was vacant save for three men: Pierre, the dominie, and myself.

Pierre was not long in regaining consciousness. He was, however, too weak to walk alone. I lifted him in my arms and was about to carry him away when we met Lady Marmaduke in her chair. She bade the negro carriers set her down, and inquired what was the matter.

"Good lack! Little Pierre ducked for being drunk! You naughty fellow. How often have I told you not to do that or I should never speak you well again to sweet Annetje Dorn?" She paused; her face clouded and grew hard and bitter. I heard her mutter the name of the patroon. "Here, put him in my chair," she said at last. "I will attend to him." She got in herself after he was comfortably stowed away, and then left us alone upon the Slip.

"Just her way," said the dominie. "She'll take care of him and nurse him and feed him up as if he were her own child. She is good to every one, friend or slave, it makes no matter which."

I accompanied the dominie as far as the door of his house, where I left him in order to continue my way to the Ferry-House. It was in this quiet ordinary that the governor had advised me to seek temporary lodgings. I reached the place without difficulty and was surprised to find that it was the very house before which Lady Marmaduke had halted her coach when I heard her speak to the people and bid them to stand fast by the Earl of Bellamont.

I went in and made the necessary arrangements to stay there that night, and then sat down to eat my dinner and to think over the events of the day. By the time I was ready to rise from the table the hand of the clock was close upon the stroke of two. This was the time set for Bromm's

proclamation concerning my sister. I betook myself to the square before the Stadt Huys, where I walked up and down in momentary expectation of the crier. The public excitement of the morning was somewhat abated; but a fair crowd had gathered by the time Bromm appeared, marching behind two drummers, who beat a sober rap-tap suited to the aged man's deliberate step. Bromm mounted the platform near the public scaffold and began to read his proclamation. It was short, simply requesting in the name of the governor any information concerning the whereabouts of Ruth Le Bourse. At the first reading no one came forward to volunteer any information. The drums beat again and Bromm read the proclamation a second time. Just as he finished, some one touched my arm from behind. It was Van Volkenberg at my elbow for the second time that day. He smiled as before, the same cutting smile of contempt. He spoke but a word or two before he vanished in the cover of the crowd; but he had said enough to rouse my anger.

"Good luck, Monsieur Le Bourse; but, as I said before, we shall meet again. Beware of the Red Band."

That was all he said. His words were nothing but a mere threat. But he had done something that set every drop of blood in my body to tingling with hot anger. I should have followed him had he not disappeared instantly. From the moment I

had first laid eyes on this man in the Jacobite Coffee-House I had taken an unaccountable dislike to him. Even when I advanced to meet him in the tap-room, I had kept the silver button hid in my closed hand as if I were unwilling to acknowledge my claim upon him. Now I understood what had given birth to my unreasonable antipathy. As he turned away after speaking the above words, Van Volkenberg made the sign of the cross. The patroon was a Catholic. How I thanked God I had received no favor from him! Instantly, as one sees the landscape at night when the lightning flashes, there lay before me that scene in Paris of the black robed priest who years before had caught my sister by the arm, and whom I had struck down upon the spot as he deserved. In quick succession there passed before my mind's eye our flight to La Rochelle, my ten years of fruitless search, the Mariner's Rest at Bristol, our last separation—finally the public flogging I had received in Maryland. All these troubles had been brought upon me by Catholics. A Catholic was once more threatening my peace of mind, telling me to beware. I little knew then how much greater cause I had to hate the patroon for wrongs already done to me and mine. I thought only of the present instant. I felt that we two were fated to—God knows what! I gripped my hands together and wished that I could hurry time.

Bromm repeated the proclamation again, but re-

ceived no response. He marched back to the fort and soon the crowd drifted into smaller groups. I returned to the Ferry-House to nurse my disappointment alone, hoping also that some word would come from the Earl concerning news received at the fort. I found Pierre sitting alone in a corner of the public room when I entered the Ferry-House.

"Well," I said. "Have you recovered?"

"Quite," he answered; then he blew out his lips with an explosive shiver. "Ow, it was cold! But I was in great luck."

"Luck, Pierre, to be ducked?"

"No, not to be nibbled. There are great fish in the bay." He leaned forward and continued in a low confidential voice. "Lady Marmaduke gave me such a dinner. You cannot imagine it. There was wine right out of France. Do you think if I should happen to be ducked again she would happen to come along?"

I could not forbear to laugh and Pierre smiled too. His face, however, soon changed, and his jovial expression was replaced by the hard look that I had seen in his face when he walked to the place of his punishment.

"I came here for a purpose, Monsieur Le Bourse, but—" He stopped and looked about him as if fearful of being overheard. His lips almost touched my ear as he said, "I don't mind the ducking. I have been ducked before. It was the man who did

it. I shall have my revenge. Are we together on that?"

He put out his hand and I clasped it.

"I thought so," he continued. "But you do not know the half."

Again he manifested some fear of being overheard. He said that the patroon was too great a man to be talked about in a public place like this. Would I walk a short distance into the country beyond the Wall? He had news that should be heard only by me. I was indeed glad to go with him. We left the city by the Land-Gate, and soon came to a little bridge over a narrow creek.

"This is the Kissing Bridge," he said with a forlorn sigh. "Annetje will never cross the bridge with me. She always makes me walk in front."

Annetje Dorn, he told me, was his sweetheart. She was a bond servant at Van Volkenberg manor-house and maid to the patroon's daughter Miriam.

"Ay, that she is; bond servant to the patroon just like your sister." He clapped his hand quickly over his mouth. "Oh, I did not mean to let it out so soon."

I gripped him by the arm. "What do you mean?"

"I said that you did not know half of what you have to hate him for," replied Pierre fiercely. "Your sister Ruth was bound out in service to Kilian Van Volkenberg."

I was now to learn the stuff that was in Pierre. His jolly manner was but a garment. He cast

it aside, and, as we walked along, he spoke to me with a fierce zeal that I had not suspected in him.

"There are but half a dozen persons in New York who know what happened to your sister. I dared not speak openly to-day when Bromm was crying the proclamation, but I knew that my time had come. He set his dogs on me one night; but he made a mistake. He called me a giggling monkey. I'll monkey him. Do you——"

"For God's sake, Pierre," I interrupted. "Tell me what you know of my sister."

His vague hint that I did not know half of what I had to hate the patroon for filled me with dread. The earnestness of my voice affected him. He dropped the side threads of his own affairs and fell into a direct relation of my sister's fate. She had arrived safely with Captain Donaldson and had lived in the city for a short time. Then her money gave out and she took service with Van Volkenberg, laying the condition, however, of redeeming herself at any time if I should return.

"I saw her more than once," said Pierre. "She was a sweet girl. Annetje boxed my ears once for looking at her. She said that it was rude. God knows I did not mean it, but she had a winsome face. Every one said that, Annetje like the rest. Her lot was none too easy at the manor. They say that Mistress Miriam took great abuse for standing between her and the patroon."

"Was she abused by him?" I asked.

"Ay, that she was."

I was past being angry. My thoughts did not take in the situation at the manor-house all at once; instead I found myself thinking of the Mariner's Rest and of Ruth's treatment there. Something in Pierre's face bade me give up hope, as if a heavy blow had fallen. Suddenly I turned and caught him by the shoulders with so quick a motion that he uttered a startled cry.

"Tell me, Pierre. For God's sake make short work of this. What has happened to her?"

Instead of answering me, the kind hearted fellow burst into tears. "I cannot," he wailed. "Oh, I cannot; it will break your heart."

"It is past that, Pierre. Is she dead?"

"You have guessed it. God forgive me that I have to say it."

"Pierre," said I. "Go over there by the bridge and wait for me till I come to you. I shall follow you soon."

When I was next aware of outside things, Pierre stood by my side with his hand upon my shoulder.

"You said you would come to me soon and you didn't. That is why I came back." He put out his hand kindly. "It is hard work to bear ill news. I would have spared you if I could."

We walked silently around the small lake by which we had stopped. I felt in a daze and was more than once aware of the pressure of Pierre's

hand as he guided me gently by some obstruction over which I might have fallen. Under the first weight of this piece of news, I felt only grief at the death of my beloved sister. It was not until I had in a measure recovered my self-control that I began to think of the manner in which she had met her death and of the vague hints about the patroon that Pierre had dropped. Then, with the pain of comprehension when it comes too late, I recalled the sneering smile upon the patroon's face as he accosted me in the crowd before the Stadt Huys.

'But we shall meet again," I cried aloud, unconsciously repeating his words to me. "He knew it when he spoke to me, and he sneered at me." I turned upon Pierre. "Tell me further. What had he to do with her death?"

To this question Pierre would give no answer. He could hardly say, he said. My heart sank, for I saw from his face that he was afraid to tell the truth.

"Come back with me, Monsieur Le Bourse. Let me take you to Lady Marmaduke. She knows the whole story. She will tell you."

Impatient as I was, I was content to wait. The blow that had fallen upon me was so great that I could scarcely think. A child could have led me. For the time being I had no will of my own. Pierre took me by the arm and led me forward. We had nearly reached the bridge on our return

when the clatter of horse hoofs fell upon our ears along the road.

"Hush," said Pierre. "It is the patroon."

He drew me back behind some bushes, where we waited in silence the approach of a numerous armed cavalcade.

CHAPTER VIII

LADY MARMADUKE

We had halted behind some willows that overhung the brook beneath the Kissing Bridge. Over this bridge ran the road, which led north from the city through the length of the island to Harlem, passing on the way the manor-house and park of Patroon Van Volkenberg. We had scarcely concealed ourselves behind the bushes when the forward members of the cavalcade came in sight. Two horsemen led the way, wearing the red band upon their arms and carrying blue pennants upon staves that were th ust into their stirrups. Next came the patroon. At his side rode a slight, almost dwarflike man with pale features and snow white hair.

"That is Louis Van Ramm," whispered Pierre as the dwarf drew near the bridge. "It was he let loose the dogs on me."

The patroon himself, who sat his horse firm and erect, looked forty-five or fifty years of age. From time to time he would turn in the saddle and glance back with satisfaction upon his score of followers, who rode two and two behind him. He was their feudal chief. The clanking of their harness, the irregular clatter of the horses' feet upon the hard road, the look of respect with which every eye met

his—all this inspired the patroon with the feeling of satisfaction that showed so plainly in his finely modeled face. They rode by, over the hollow sounding bridge and up the long hill, till the last sharp sounds fainted in the distance. Only the rustling tree tops and the rippling brook remained to disturb the soft stillness of the autumn afternoon.

Pierre rose and I followed him; first up a steep footpath and then along the highroad till we came within sight of the town. When we arrived at Lady Marmaduke's, Pierre led the way to the back entrance, telling me to wait in the servant's hall while he sought admittance to my lady's presence. He soon returned to me with the command to follow him.

"She will talk to you," he said, as we threaded a long, dimly lighted corridor. "Do not fear. She is a good friend though a hard woman. I have let her know what I have already told you. She will tell you what else there is to be known."

In answer to Pierre's knock a soft voice bade me enter. It was not such a voice as would suggest the "hard woman" of Pierre's description. It was the tender, feeling voice I had heard when Lady Marmaduke spoke to the people about her husband—when she spoke to them tremblingly, straight from the bottom of her heart. Pierre thrust aside the drapery of the door and I stepped into the room alone.

Lady Marmaduke was in the farther end of it, half leaning, half sitting upon the arm of a chair. One hand rested against her hip, the other shaded her eyes while she watched my entrance. I had not taken three steps before she rose and came forward to greet me with kindness. Even in the half light of the room I could catch the sweet expression of her face. Despite the sorrow in my heart, I noticed how tall and straight she was, and how well formed. Though her face looked sweet and soft, when she took my hand she gripped it with the strength of a man, looking me withal squarely in the face as if she would read me through and through.

"Sit down," she said with a firm air of command. The very tone of her voice was soothing and made me want to do her will. When I had obeyed her, she seated herself by my side and took my hand again. "How old are you?"

"Thirty-five," I answered mechanically, for I was still half dazed.

"Then I shall call you Michael, for we are to be good friends and I am old enough to be your mother. Pierre has told me about you and what it is you want. It is sad news I have to tell you, sadder news than his; yes, much sadder. But I should not hold back. You are a brave man, are you not?"

She paused and cast her eyes upon the floor. In spite of her assertion that she should not hold back,

she found her task a hard one, and she was loth to begin it. "I think I have seen you before. Were you not with the dominie when I found Pierre?"

I nodded and for a while we were both silent.

"Madam," I said at length. "Anything is better than suspense."

"Poor child," she murmured tenderly.

Even yet she must cross the room to adjust the curtains before she found voice to continue. She resumed her seat by my side and cleared her throat two or three times.

"It is seven or eight months since your sister entered service at the manor-house. For a while all went well enough. I heard often about her through Annetje Dorn. But things never go well there for long at a time. I saw Ruth now and then and her cheeks grew pale and her eyes hollow. I think she must have done much weeping. She found her lot a hard one, much harder perhaps because the patroon cast longing glances at her pretty, winsome face. Yet he held her only as his chattel. One morning she was found in her bed—dead, Michael Le Bourse—dead on the twelfth day of last July—I say the twelfth of July."

Short as her narrative had been, Lady Marmaduke had worked herself into a state of excitement that I could not comprehend. It was certainly not due to me nor to her interest in my affairs, for she rose and trode up and down the room as if talking to herself and utterly oblivious of my presence, all

the time snapping her long fingers in anger. A hound asleep in one corner of the room awoke and came leaping towards her. She exclaimed a sharp word of rebuke and the dog slunk back with his tail between his legs. After five minutes more of this behavior she stopped in front of me, her tall, spare figure swaying slowly like a tree trunk. I rose instinctively.

"Yes, Monsieur Le Bourse, I remember the day well. On the twelfth of July Sir Evelin Marmaduke was lost on the river. His boat drifted with the tide and was crushed to kindling wood in Hell-Gate. So runs the tale of my husband's death. It was Kilian Van Volkenberg brought that news. Why should he be the first to know it? Before God, he shall have his reward! And the next day your sister was found dead in her bed."

Again she fell to walking back and forth through the room, now like a moving statue between me and the window, now rustling darkly against the hangings on the wall. Soon she was master of her passion and returned to my side.

"There is no truth known of how she met her death. Without doubt she tried once to escape. She was followed and captured by the patroon, brought back and branded on the shoulder with a red hot iron."

A cry of horror burst from my lips. She caught me by the arm.

"Hush! It was unskilfully done, says the pa-

troon. Her weak body could not stand the torture and she died. That is his story, but it is a lie. It is a lie—for I—I stood in the dead of night and saw the grave dug up. I looked at her body with my own eyes. She had not been branded."

We had resumed our seats. I felt like moaning but I had no voice for words. This strong woman charmed me as by a spell. Her manner showed that there was still worse to come.

"Yet she had died, and in some way that the patroon found it necessary to lie about in order to conceal the truth. Annetje has told Pierre that on the night your sister died she is sure she heard the patroon visit your sister's room.

"Don't," I cried. "Anything but that. I cannot stand that. My Ruth, my little Ruth!" I fell to weeping and found great relief in tears. Lady Marmaduke became all tenderness. She stroked my hands, and then put her arm about me and walked up and down the room as if I were a girl. It was long since I had felt the need of an arm to rest on, but I turned to the strength of hers like a child to its mother.

At length she stopped short and took her supporting arm away from me. "You will have time enough to grieve," she said. "You must be a man now." I looked into her face and understood why Pierre had called her a hard woman. But perhaps he had never seen her other side as I had! "Yes, Michael," she continued. "It is time you trod

upon your weakness and became a man. Do you not see your duty? Are you not ready to take your right?" She held me off at arm's length and looked sternly into my eyes as she pronounced the word "Revenge."

"I shall kill him to-night," I answered.

Her only response was a sharp snap of her fingers. The hound she had rebuked before bounded joyfully to her side. She stooped and parted his shaggy hair with her fingers.

"See," she said, showing me a deep scar upon his side. "This was the work of the patroon. The dog would have torn him to pieces but I called him back. Would you have me kill him with a dog? No—I have a score of servants in my house who would do as you say you would do, servants who would kill him to-night if I lifted my hand. But you are not my servant nor shall you do it either."

"But——" I remonstrated, and got no further before she interrupted me.

"Don't but me! You and Pierre and I—each of us has his word to say to the patroon. But we shall say it like men. Though Van Volkenberg is a merchant he knows what war is and understands the game of life. What is death to such a man as he is if he does not know why he dies. I shall ruin him first. With the help of Earl Richard, I shall make him taste of the bitterness of life before I give him death to sweeten his woe. Before God, he shall find death sweet unless I fail. You shall

not kill him till I give the word. Do you promise?"

She laid her hand upon the cross-shaped hilt of my sword.

"Will you swear upon your sword? Will you stay here, not as my servant but as my friend? Will you work with me to bring God's judgment on this Roman Catholic?"

Her last reference wakened all my bitter thoughts. I fell on my knees before her and took one of her hands between mine as the old custom is.

"I swear to be your man," I cried. "I will be loyal to you and to the Earl, who is your friend. My sister's blood shall not dry unavenged, but I surrender myself to you. Henceforth I swear to be your man."

She lifted me and kissed me on the forehead. "We have free manners here, Michael. If you have a sister whose blood cries out, I have a husband's. The patroon brought the news of his death. I know he murdered Sir Evelin. I have seen it in my dreams. This great hate of mine could not come without some cause in nature. We shall play well together, Michael, you and I."

She took me by the arm and led me through the passages of the house, through many turnings and up narrow stairs to a little gable room.

"This shall be your room. I will instruct the servants that you are to come and go as you please. I am setting out now to keep an appointment with

the Earl. He too is engaged in a death struggle with the patroon. Methinks the three of us shall win a victory."

With that she left me alone. I glanced about the room which contained everything for a person's comfort. From the window I could look out beyond the Wall to the rolling hills covered with woodland. Then I threw myself upon the bed and put my face in my hands.

CHAPTER IX

THE RED BAND AT DRILL

When I think back upon the mysterious occurrences of the night which followed my introduction into the household of Lady Marmaduke, I hardly know how to tell them. It was not till long afterward that I knew exactly what I had done that night. I was like a man gone half asleep. Surely I ought to bear no blame for my lack of reason. For the last ten years, with the exception of those short weeks in Captain Donaldson's ship, I had been searching endlessly for my sister. During that long period there had been moments of despondency; at times my search was quite neglected; yet never for an instant had I given up all hope. Now everything was at an end. My life seemed snapped in two. Had such a blow come ten years before I might have cursed God in my folly. I might have plunged recklessly into the first danger that awaited me. But years of restrained impulse had greatly changed my character. I had passed the rash age of youth, and now I almost sank beneath the burden that seemed greater than I could bear.

In this state of mind my little room in the gable of Marmaduke Hall was too confining. It seemed

as if I could not get my breath, and it made my head reel to look down from the high window. I could see the swaying trees upon the hills beyond the city, and they seemed to beckon me to come to their solitary shade for comfort, and I went. I can recollect very little of what followed. I remember that I paused once by the city gate to look back at the house which I had left. A picture came into my eye of the relentless woman who had told me news that was bitter as wormwood; yet she was kind and considerate withal. I turned away and set my face towards the sighing woodland.

I threw myself down on my back beneath an oak tree. There was a small patch of blue sky visible, and now and then a bird swam lazily across it. Did I fall asleep and dream, or did I rise and walk about unconsciously? I do not know much of what I did; but soon I was walking. I was not aware of the exact moment when I began to move, nor how long I had been winding my way in and out among the trees when the sound of sobbing grew upon my ears. It startled me and I began to look around and to follow the sound without knowing just where I went, in that vague way one is so used to in dreams. Soon I came upon a woman kneeling in the grass. She was very beautiful and my heart went out to her for she was weeping bitterly and seemed in great distress. My appearance must have scared her for she hastily covered something upon the ground and then sprang up in great alarm.

She was dressed in a white robe that floated about her like an angel. For just a moment she let me see her sweet tear-stained face; then she was gone. Her dark hair and sorrowful expression made such a lifelike impression upon me that I almost thought it could not be a dream. Yet in a moment she had vanished like a breeze. Near the spot where she had stood the grass curved upward over a small mound. I drew near to examine what from its appearance I thought should be a grave.

When I first came upon the woman she made a hasty move to cover something upon the ground. At the head of the grave I spied a loose sod which I lifted. Beneath it was a flat stone inscribed with the one word "Ruth." I fell on my knees and wept. Surely God had sent me a vision! I lay full length on the grave, kissing the cold stone and plucking blades of grass to strew upon it in place of flowers. How I thanked God for this dream! He had led me into green pastures. Thy rod and Thy staff, O God, they comfort me!

Suddenly the visitant reappeared.

"Sir," she said. "You are in sore trouble."

I pointed to the grave. "She was my sister."

She was startled by this and eyed me with a doubtful anxious look. I cannot recall what she said to me, but after a while she opened the bosom of her robe, whence she drew forth a small ivory minature enclosed in a gold rim.

"See; your sister wore it before she died."

I looked. It contained the counterfeit of my own face, like one I had given Ruth upon the ocean. God is merciful, but His mercies are quick to come and go. The vision disappeared; yet its blessed presence had made me feel that I had stood close in Ruth's heart to the very end of her life even as she had stood in mine.

There follows a blank space in my memory during which I can remember nothing. The trees at last seemed to force themselves into my consciousness again. They tramped by me in an endless procession. I grew cold and began to shiver. A sharp pricking attacked my legs. I looked down to discover the cause of this sensation and saw that I was standing in water up to my knees. Like a flash it all came over me; I had been walking in my sleep.

I waded back to the shore and sat down to think. The place was all new to me, I had not the least idea where I was. A narrow rim of gravely beach encircled the little lake into which I had stumbled; but this told me nothing, nor could I see the least sign of a path. So, after a few moments, I got up to walk around in the hope of discovering some beaten path that would lead me out of the woods.

As I walked I kept dwelling upon what I had seen in my dream. It never occurred to me that perhaps I had seen a real person. To be sure, my memory was so vivid that I was tempted to say: "How could it be a dream?" For all that, I never

doubted that it was a supernatural appearance. My only thought was that our Heavenly Father had sent me this in my distress to comfort me, and to assure me that Ruth's last thoughts were of me, and that she still watched over me in heaven as on earth.

As I said, when I came to myself in the water I was in full possession of my wits though I did not recognize where I was. I had wandered into a narrow lake whose cold water had chilled me into consciousness. I waded back to the shore and set out along the ribbon of pebbly beach, hoping to find a path. The trees were close together, overhanging the steep bank. By this time I must have been abroad in the woods for some hours for it had now become dark and the moon was up. It was not long before I discovered an ascending footpath, very narrow, and cut in steps up the bank. From the top of the cliff to which this path led, the ground sloped gently through the woods towards the north. The trees became more and more thinly scattered as I went forward. Soon I was aware of a reddish glow in the branches ahead of me. As I drew near the light became brighter and flickered like a fire. Sharp sounds of clanking metal fell upon my ears and, from time to time, a quick word or two of command in a ringing voice.

Twenty steps farther brought me to where I could see the source of the light and sound. The

woodland ended at a level, grassy plain that extended a quarter of a mile towards a towered building, a huge pile of shadows and dim walls. At regular intervals before it were planted burning cressets. They were arranged in a large square on the lawn so as to send their vagrant lights and shadows dancing over its gloomy walls. A company of men stood motionless within the square of torches, like troops in regular order. Suddenly another sharp word of command broke the stillness. A sparkling flash from every man showed, what I had not noticed before, that each man was armed with a sword. I looked close for the commander; but not till he spoke a second time could I make out his position on a terrace in front of the house. I started violently when my eyes fell upon him. The leader of this band of troopers was Kilian Van Volkenberg. I had come upon the Red Band at drill in the dark woods at night. "The patroon and his Red Band will ruin this city yet," the dominie had said to me. A hundred or more of his armed men were now before me. Surely this was a dangerous gathering! They were well-armed and perfectly drilled like the regular soldiers of the king.

The host at Gravesoon had spoken of Van Volkenberg as the Armed Patroon. Now I understood the meaning of the term, though I did not know till later that he was the only patroon in New York who had organized his retainers into a regular mili-

tary band. No wonder the authorities looked askance upon this new departure in the province, and feared a serious clash between him and the governor. How just these fears were will soon become apparent; but at that time I was so ignorant of affairs that I thought this company—so suggestive of European customs—quite an ordinary sight.

While I stood in the shadow of the trees, gazing upon this group of soldiers, a woman came out of the house upon the platform. Though I could not see her face at first because of the shadow where she stood, most of her body was in the compass of the light. She was dressed in white and, like me, watching the drilling of the Red Band. After ten minutes had elapsed, she stepped forward and touched the patroon upon the arm. When the light fell upon her face I was startled into a cry of recognition that would have betrayed my presence had the troopers been alert for signs of intrusion. She was the woman who had appeared to me in my dream.

The patroon turned to her and made an angry gesture to depart. She withdrew into the house immediately and I saw no more of her. When the company of soldiers broke up for the night, they disappeared right and left, passing around and behind the house. Van Volkenberg entered the manor-house by the same door through which the woman had retreated. From what I had been told about the position of the manor I was able

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"I HAD COME UPON THE RED BAND AT DRILL."—*p. 107*

to find without difficulty the road that led to New York. As I walked along it my mind was full of the mystery of the strange woman I had seen upon the terrace, and of her I had seen in my dream. Had I really met some one, and had I been but partly conscious of the fact? I could not tell. Of one thing, however, I was aware. My spirit had returned to me. As Lady Marmaduke would have said, I was a man again. I was now firm with determination. I had been through the valley of the shadow. I had come out with new strength ready to fight the good fight. I felt myself to be God's avenging minister, destined to bring punishment upon my sister's murderer. I knelt down in the dusty road, where I prayed to God for power and guidance. I rose from my prayer buoyant and eager in spirit.

Still I could not get my mind away from the woman. Were they one and the same person or had I made a mistake? The woman upon the terrace must have been the person Captain Tew had spoken of as Miriam Van Volkenberg. But if she was the patroon's daughter, how came she to figure in my dream? What trick of fate had coupled her and Ruth and me together in this fashion? Then I recalled what Pierre had said: That the patroon's daughter had loved Ruth and had been treated badly on account of her affection. That seemed to explain the fitness of it all, but it did not reconcile the reality with the dream.

In this frame of mind I approached New York. I continued to ponder that sweet, wistful face. Gradually, as I walked along in the dust and dark, I became aware of a narrow pressure about my neck. I put up my hand and touched a strange piece of ribbon. I caught at it in surprise. My fingers closed on a small locket. I held it before me in the moonlight. It was the ivory miniature in a gold rim; the very picture of myself that the woman had shown me in my dream. Then I understood. I had met Miriam Van Volkenberg in the woods. She had recognized me from the picture in the locket and had given me this keepsake from my sister.

CHAPTER X

MY FIRST COMMISSION

When I returned to Marmaduke Hall I found every one in bed asleep except a lad who had been left to attend me to my room. He informed me that his mistress had been impatient at my absence, had inquired again and again where I could be, and at last had given up waiting for me, very much vexed at my failure to return.

"She was in a great state to see you," said the lad, "and she left word for you to be at her breakfast table early, by nine o'clock."

In spite of the fatigue of my wanderings, I was awake betimes. While the clock was still striking nine I entered the dining hall. Lady Marmaduke sat alone at a table in an alcove that opened out of the main room. When she rose to greet me, which she did cordially, I noticed that she held a sheet of paper in her hand.

"If this letter from his Excellency," she said, pointing to the paper in her hand, "had not arrived before you did, you would have tasted of my tongue. I had a round scolding ready for you, but this letter shall give you a chance to explain yourself."

She was playful in her manner, yet I could see that she had been considerably put out by my

absence the night before. I made haste to acquaint her with my story, though I said nothing of the mysterious woman I had seen.

"Ah, Michael," she said when I was done. "I forgive you and you must forgive me for being angry with you. Yet I had better cause than you think. Listen to this passage from the governor's note which came to me less than an hour ago.

" 'Fortune seems to smile graciously upon us. The ship came no nearer shore, nor did any of its crew condescend to visit the town. Perhaps they have concluded to wait till to-night.'

"Do you understand that, my Michael? A strange ship has anchored in the lower bay. It is probably a pirate ship and Earl Richard and I had planned to have you watch it; but when I came home you were not to be found. However, it has turned out all right after all."

She glanced out of the window, but soon resumed her speech.

"You know of course that the buccaneers are forbidden the use of the port. Van Volkenberg has much dealing with them. This fact I know but we cannot prove it. Oh, if we could only trap him once in a secret meeting! We want a handle against him." She brought her fist down on the table with a blow that made the dishes rattle. "I tell you we must have a handle against the scoundrel or we can do nothing. You need not look so amazed; but I forget how ignorant you are. We

are to meet the Earl at eleven o'clock. I must give you a lesson in affairs so that you will know what we are talking about. You remember Fletcher? He was the man you saw with the patroon at the coffee-house. He was the former governor and a worse wretch never walked the streets of Yorke. The pirates bribed him, and the merchants bribed him, and he bribed them back for he was sore in need of friends. Then, to curry himself into further favor, he began to deal out the land of the province. He gave a hundred square miles to William Pinhorne to make him a patroon in the Mohawk valley. He sold both sides of the Hudson River as far north as Albany. There is hardly a square mile in the whole province that can be bought honestly for love or money."

I interrupted her to ask information concerning the geography of the province, for I was as ignorant of that as of affairs. When she had satisfied my curiosity she continued.

"That is why the king appointed another governor. As soon as Fletcher heard of this check upon his practices, he showed his knavery in a new light. He leased the King's farm, which should by right go to the support of Earl Richard's household. He gave the center of the island to Van Volkenberg so as to have a friend near at hand. The dog had the impudence to title the patroon with this very house. This estate was deeded to my husband during his lifetime, and Fletcher gave

it to the patroon from the day of his death, notwithstanding the fact that Sir Evelin was alive at the time of the grant. Earl Bellamont has reversed the grant and only yesterday, the first day of the new Assembly, this estate was given to me and my heirs forever. Van Volkenberg swears he will have it yet if he has to fight for it. We shall see about that."

A servant came to the door to take orders for my lady's coach. She told him to have it ready before eleven, as she intended to wait upon the Earl at that hour.

"Bellamont prides himself on his gentle blood," she continued as soon as the servant had left us alone. "But it is a great clog to him at times. It was all I could do to get him to permit you to watch secretly upon the strange ship that has come into the bay. He is greatly addicted to open means and he said that it would be taking an unfair advantage to spy on people of whom we knew no absolute harm. But I urged necessity and told him flatly that if he did not I should commission you to do it myself. That fetched him. In spite of his fine blood he is jealous withal. The very idea of someone plotting without his help sets him on end with curiosity. Mark my word, before we are done with this affair we shall have to jog our own gait if we are to jog at all. You must fight a rogue with a rogue's tricks. Never forget that. However, we

must be careful not to ruffle the Earl and not to set his jealousy agog."

A little later I was booted and spurred and ready to ride at the side of my mistress's coach. We set out, accompanied by her numerous retinue of state. At every street corner we were greeted with cheers, for the common people loved her well. I noticed that more than one of the persons we passed on the way showed surprise in his face at seeing a well-mounted stranger in the place of honor by the coach. We passed the Jacobite Coffee-House and among those who stood upon the upper balcony to see us pass was the patroon. He frowned sullenly in answer to Lady Marmaduke's dignified bow of recognition, which sign of displeasure caused her to break into merry laughter.

"I shall drive the old fox into his hole yet," she said in an undertone, when we had passed the tavern. "But he is a crafty old fox. No one can deny that."

At the outer entrance of the fort I dismounted and led Lady Marmaduke through the stone arch and across the paved court to the governor's mansion.

"The Earl was struck with your hatred of the patroon yesterday, even before I told him the story about Ruth," whispered Lady Marmaduke. "Do not be too nice about accepting his commissions. He will be glad of whatever you do, though he may not altogether approve in advance. His great fault

is in delay. Sometimes he gets stirred up and acts like a whirlwind, but generally he wastes time by waiting for a better chance. I have persuaded him this time; that is, if he has not cooled over night."

Lady Marmaduke explained to the Earl in a few words whatever was necessary to account for my non-appearance the night before. He then proceeded to interrogate me closely about all that had passed between me and Captain Tew.

"You see, Monsieur Le Bourse, these enormous tracts of land that have been granted by my predecessor in office must be annulled or the proper revenues cannot be forwarded to my royal master, his majesty, the King."

"Your own table cannot be furnished either," added Lady Marmaduke, "unless you get back the King's farm."

"Quite true, but that is a small matter compared with what is due to my beloved King and master. I well remember the day on which he informed me of the high honor he had conferred upon my unworthy self, which fact he graciously made known to me with his own royal lips. 'Richard,' he said, 'you have used your sword well for me. Now, I want you to use your head. These enormous grants by Fletcher must be annulled. But it must be done legally; I will not have a bad example set in the use of the law. I have implicit trust in you.' "

"Indeed, your Excellency," broke in Lady Marmaduke. "I wish he had shown that trust to a little

more practical advantage. He might have given you more power to act for yourself."

"I am somewhat restricted," replied the Earl. "Beshrew me! That is an ungracious reflection. The King has planned all for the best. Though I must report to his council for approval, the delay gives me all the more opportunity to make certain, to collect more weighty evidence. I wish I could utilize this matter with Tew. I shall not, however, lest I compromise Monsieur Le Bourse."

"The transaction is so old I don't believe it would do us much good," said Lady Marmaduke.

"I have no doubt but that we shall soon stand on firmer ground," continued the governor. "Has Lady Marmaduke informed you of what I intend you to do?"

"In part," I answered.

"The matter as it stands at present is as follows. At noon yesterday a ship was sighted coming into the bay. As is our custom always upon the arrival of a ship, a welcome gun was fired from the Battery. Instead of coming up to the city like an honest trader, the ship cast anchor and has remained in one place ever since. She is a suspicious looking craft, probably a buccaneer who is afraid to enter the port now that the laws are so stringent against them. It may be one chance in a hundred—"

"I should say one in ten or two," interrupted Lady Marmaduke.

"By your gracious leave," answered the Earl with

a courtly bow. "The chances are even that the ship is here to communicate with Patroon Van Volkenberg. If you are willing to help me, what I want you to do is this: To be ready at a moment's notice to keep an eye on any sailors who may put off from the ship, for the purpose of coming into the town. I shall cause a sharp lookout to be kept and send you instant notice of their arrival."

We soon made all the necessary arrangements in order to carry out this plan. The Earl did not expect any one to come ashore from the stranger ship before night. He knew, however, that I should be prepared to act quickly when the moment for action came. He gave me a key that would enable me to come and go in the fort at will, but told me not to make use of it unless in absolute necessity. He also gave me another key to the private postern that opened through the wall of palisades on the west side of the city next the Hudson River. I had a few additional preparations to make on my own account and engaged, when they were done, to remain at Marmaduke Hall till sent for by the Earl. I attended Lady Marmaduke back to her coach and bade her farewell for the time being at the gate of the fort.

"I have business on the Slip," I said when she was seated.

Her eyebrows lifted in curiosity. "What is it?" she asked.

I wondered to myself who was jealous now of plotting without her knowledge.

"I must learn my way about the city."

"Nothing else?"

"And obtain some sort of disguise."

"Anything else?"

"That is all I think of."

"Ah, very well. Be back in time to dine with me. I do not like to sit alone when there is news in the air."

We set out on our several ways. I had not felt in such good spirits for many a day. The likelihood of danger, the opportunity to do something, above all, a good horse between my legs, put me in countenance again and joyed me in spite of fate.

Pierre, my acquaintance of the day before, was a barber. I set out for his shop immediately upon leaving Lady Marmaduke. I found him alone and explained to him that I was employed on important business, and that he must make haste to procure me a suit of clothes in which I could disguise myself as a sailor. Instead of setting about the task which I thus imposed upon him, he made a comical gesture of dismay and stood fast where he was.

"It's of no use," he said. "The Red Band will see me. They watch everywhere. If they see me buying clothes and get a look at what they are like, where will be the use of the disguise?"

I reflected a moment, for what he said had some

show of truth in it. After a moment's thought, however, I concluded that his fears were idle.

"Pish, Pierre! You are too cautious. Do as I tell you."

"I tell you it cannot be done. They have their eye on you; and now that you have come here they will have their eye on me. What did I tell you?"

At that moment, a sailor of the Red Band entered the shop and asked to be shaved. Pierre tried not to look surprised as he set about the task. Once, when he stood with his razor in the air, I saw the fellow's cheek go white as the lather itself. Perhaps he was thinking of what might happen if Pierre suspected what had really brought him into the shop. A person while being shaved is in an ill position to defend himself if the barber is murderously inclined. For all that, I set the fellow down as a bully and a coward. The change in his face convinced me beyond a doubt that he had come there to spy. It confirmed what Pierre had said a moment before concerning the watchfulness of the Red Band; and it was not to be long before I should have another example of their alert interest in my affairs.

When Pierre had finished shaving his customer, the man arose and adjusted his neckband slowly. Then he tossed a coin into the corner. I soon saw that this was but a ruse to get Pierre out of the way for the visitor had a word to say to me. Pierre went after the coin, which rolled into the farthest corner.

The sailor, as he passed me on the way to the door, said in a low voice,

"The Red Band is not asleep. Beware."

"Ay, beware!" I flung back into his teeth as he went out of the shop.

"I told you it would not do," said Pierre, when I informed him of this little episode. He put the coin into his mouth and bit it. "This is good money. That is more than I expected. Now what do you intend to do?"

I confessed that I was wholly at a loss and should depend upon his judgment this time.

"Then I shall help you out. I have the very thing you want up stairs."

"Why did you not say so at first?"

Pierre laughed. "You said that I must go out and buy it and I wanted to convince you that you were wrong first."

It was now my turn to laugh at Pierre's manner of doing things. I bade him take his own way of procuring what I wanted. He wrapped up some clothes and a couple of pistols in a bundle, telling me that, as a rule, sailors did not wear cutlasses when they came ashore. The custom was falling out of use now that the laws against the buccaneers had become so strict.

"The Red Band always wear swords," added Pierre. "That is another reason why I wouldn't if I were you."

Pierre promised to take the clothes to Marma-

duke Hall within the hour. I left him engaged busily in his shop, and rode forth into the town in order to acquaint myself as perfectly as possible with the crooked streets. I had occupied enough time in this examination of the city when I turned my steps homeward. I was walking my horse slowly up the steep hill of Petticoat Lane when I heard a cry of distress ahead of me. Three men were having a sharp scuffle over the possession of a bundle. One of the men was Pierre, and I knew the bundle must be my disguise. I must protect it at all hazards, for each of the other two wore the red band upon his sleeve. I dashed spurs into my horse's side. In two minutes I had ridden down one of the men, and with a blow of my fist sent the other sprawling in the mud. Pierre caught up the bundle and scuttled away so quickly that I hardly knew which way he had gone. I drew my sword and dismounted.

"Get up," I said sharply to the fellow I had knocked down—the other had already stumbled to his feet, but he was not good for much. "Get up," I repeated, "or someone will think he has found the Red Band asleep." He got upon his legs, grumbling and looking sourly at me. "Beware," I said, as they turned away. "Eat your own word, beware." This fellow was the very one who had defied me in Pierre's shop. "Beware," I called after him again, for they made such good use of their

legs that by this time they were the width of the street away from me.

When they were gone I continued my journey, much impressed by this example of their watchfulness. I was not cast down by it, however, though I mused so deeply on the event that I lost my way. Before I knew it, I found myself again in the center of the town. I took my bearings afresh and started back, this time meeting with no further confusions on the way. While passing the Ferry-House, I remembered that I had not returned there the night before to occupy the room I had engaged. I dismounted and entered the ordinary to find the landlord and settle my score. I was surprised to see Pierre at one of the tables drinking. As soon as I had settled the reckoning I went across the room to speak to him.

"They didn't see it," he said significantly. "It is in your room and you can wear it safely. He told me how he had been surprised and set upon suddenly in the street. "You were just like Lady Marmaduke coming along when I was ducked. That wine! Don't tell me there is no such thing as luck!"

I told Pierre that for the rest of the day he must hold himself in readiness to do my bidding. "Yes," I answered to a question he asked. "Yes, it is against him, and you must keep yourself sober."

Pierre tilted up his tankard and began to pour the beer in a small stream upon the sanded floor.

"I hate to let it go," he said, disconsolately. "But if it is against him, I had rather keep sober."

He looked wistfully at the floor where the beer had drained off into a thick layer of sand, leaving on the surface only a shrunken mass of breaking bubbles.

"Ah me!" sighed Pierre, rising. "I'll wait in the Marmaduke kitchen. I hope they won't offer me wine. It would bring tears to my eyes. But I'll keep sober, never fear."

I was sitting in my little gable room late that afternoon when I received a summons from Lady Marmaduke to attend her. She wanted to know whether I should like to go with her on her daily round of inspection of the offices. I was indeed glad of the opportunity. We visited the kitchens first, which were large and well appointed. Marmaduke Hall, from top to bottom, contained fully two score of people, and all the cooking for this numerous household was done here. Beyond the kitchen, in a bare, clay-floored outbuilding was a row of great iron pots, each one of which was large enough to boil an ox whole. Into one of them, beneath which roared a huge fire of logs, the servants were lowering some bags of food that were to be boiled for the live stock. I watched the process with interest. When the ponderous iron lid, which rose and fell by means of a pulley and chain, was put in place, the steam jetted out on all sides of it, rocking the lid with a loud clatter, and spurt-

ing from under the edge like the spokes of a wheel.

We passed thence to the dairy. Then we examined the stables and various other offices in succession till we reached the kennels. The thirty or more hounds barked and yelped at the appearance of their mistress. She patted them in turn and then we passed on.

"You may wonder at my attending to such things myself," she said to me when we had returned to the Hall. Then she sighed. "I try to do everything myself just as Sir Evelin used to do."

She fell into a reverie and did not seem to notice when I left her. With one thing and another I whiled away the time till dinner was over, and it had fallen quite dark outside. Then, just as I was beginning to grow impatient, came the summons from the Earl. It was but a line and was dated from the fort at half past seven.

"Four suspicious looking sailors have just proceeded to the Ferry-House. I think they are the men we spoke of. You will watch them and report as soon as possible.—Bellamont."

I slipped on my disguise, thrust the two pistols Captain Tew had given me into my belt, and, taking Pierre with me, set out through the dark streets to the tavern.

CHAPTER XI

THE ESCAPE FROM THE RATTLE-WATCH

Within a few minutes after leaving Marmaduke Hall I arrived at the Ferry-House alone, having stationed Pierre in a dark court-yard across the street. I looked in through the door and saw the four sailors huddled close together around one of the tables. They talked in careful whispers with their heads close together as men are wont to do when they are engaged in underhand business. From time to time they glanced uneasily about the room, as if they thought that someone should be watching. When I came near them, they seemed to suspect my presence in the first breath. I tried to draw them into conversation, but succeeded no better than if I had spoken in a foreign tongue. One after another of them, as he could find an opportunity, managed to slip away to some other part of the room; soon I was sitting quite lonely and deserted at the table where I had joined them. They, however, had their heads close together again and were in conversation in another part of the room. I made a feint at yawning, put my feet on the table, folded my hands, and in five minutes, for all they knew, I was fast asleep. In reality, I was listening with both my ears and squinting through my half shut eyes to see what they were doing.

They took care at first that I should not hear a word of what they said; but by degrees, thinking, I suppose, that I was asleep, they grew more careless in their speech. For all that, I could learn only that they were to keep an appointment somewhere at nine o'clock that night. They glanced often and so anxiously at the clock that I knew the meeting must be of considerable importance. Before long they ceased talking altogether; then they fell to dozing in their chairs.

When I saw that they were not likely to notice my absence, I left the room. I walked along Garden Street towards the new Dutch church for the distance of fifty yards; then I crossed to the shadow side of the thoroughfare and retraced my steps. Opposite the Ferry-House is a narrow alley that leads into a court-yard. It was in this passage, dark as pitch, that I had stationed Pierre. I turned in when I reached the entrance along which I groped my way with one hand on the wall and the other raised to shield my face.

"St," I said cautiously. Pierre answered with the same signal. I took two more steps in the dark, and then my outstretched hand touched him.

"Pierre," I said. "They are in there, but I cannot make them say a word. Go quickly and rouse the rattle-watch. These fellows must be taken up. I'll make some sort of disturbance against your coming back to color the arrest with. As soon as the watchmen have started, run as fast as your legs

will carry you and let me know that they are on the way."

When Pierre set out along Broad Street, I returned to my seat in the ordinary where I intended to resume my watch till his return. My absence, I thought, had not been noticed by the sailors. I settled myself quietly, well satisfied with the way things were going. Nothing, however, was further from my intention than my proposal to arrest these men. In fact, I intended to outwit the rattle-watch, notwithstanding the fact that I had summoned it.

By the time Pierre returned all out of breath to announce the approach of the watch, the clock had crept round to half past eight. The officers of the watch, Pierre informed me, were not more than the space of two streets away. I rose instantly and approached the sailors.

"May I speak to you a moment?" I said in feigned excitement to him who seemed to be their leader. He arose, rather fearful, as if he shared my assumed alarm, and stepped with me towards the corner of the room. I said to him: "You come from the ship that anchored in the lower bay yesterday?"

"Who told you?" he blurted out. Then, seeing that he had made a mistake, he blundered still further in his attempt to contradict himself. "No, by God, we don't!"

"I thought so," I answered, for his manner said

"Yes," though his words said "No." I continued: "Is it a free-trader?"

The fellow turned white, his lips quivered, and his hand sought the butt of his pistol.

"Softly, friend, you have no enemy to deal with," I said. "I have been in the jolly trade myself. Look at this."

I threw open my blouse part way and gave him a glimpse of one of the richly mounted pistols that Captain Tew had presented to me.

"Have you ever seen that name before?"

His eyes gleamed recognition as he read the buccaneer's name engraved in big letters on the hilt. "Ay, we sighted him two days ago."

"Quite true. Bound for Martinique. I thought you would know the name. Now will you trust me? You have been suspected and even now the city officers are almost here to arrest you and your companions."

At that moment the shrill rattle of the watchman's whistle sounded from the street outside. The person who blew it may have meant to give them some chance to escape, for the free-booters were prime favorites with all who were not strictly addicted to honorable practices. However good the guard's intention might be, I was not willing to allow my new acquaintances to profit by it. I was bound to have for myself the credit of saving the buccaneers. Their gratitude might be of service to me.

"Hurry," I said. "We must barricade this corner of the room."

Quick as thought I overturned two of the tables. All five of us began to pile up the other furniture. The landlord gaped in open-mouthed amazement at our proceeding. Whatever leniency may have been in the watchman's mind at the moment he blew his warning whistle in the street, it all vanished as soon as he entered the room. For he and his men had no sooner crowded through the door than I hurled a heavy pewter tankard at the leader's portly belly. It struck well and sent him sprawling on the floor.

"Quick," I said to the pirates. "Follow me."

The corner of the room that was enclosed by our barricade contained a door that opened on Garden Street near the church. We made our way out in this way and then set out across the town towards the North River. We had hardly cleared the front of the tavern when we heard the rapid steps of the watchmen coming after us pell-mell. We ran on till the high wall of palisades along the river bank rose in front of us. They seemed to cut off all escape in that direction, and I do not wonder that the sailors thought I had betrayed them.

"You have trapped us," hissed one of them between his teeth. At the same moment he drew his pistol.

"Go on," I shouted. "Turn to the left. There is a gate."

We continued our way along the ditch behind the wall, running at the top of our speed. The steps of the watchmen sounded closer and closer behind us. My companions, being sailors, and consequently poor runners, were continually losing ground. I feared we should be caught up with and I had no mind for a fight. That was more than I had bargained for. But luck favored us. We soon reached the postern that opens through the palisades to the rocky bank of the river. Our pursuers were scarce fifty feet behind us. If the key would not fit we were lost. But all happened to our advantage. In a moment I had thrust in the key that Governor Bellamont had given me. The lock clicked. We sprang through the open gateway and managed to relock the gate just as the officers dashed against it. But the door was of solid oak and held fast.

"That was a good turn," said the leader, mopping his face. "I'm sweating in every inch of me."

"This chill wind will soon stop that," I answered. "Where did you leave your boat?"

Fortunately they had left it afloat in the care of one of their comrades. They whistled to him and in a few minutes I heard the squeaking of oars as the boat approached. The leader of the band put out his hand, saying all sorts of things in gratitude for what I had done. It made me feel ashamed to hear his profuse thanks, for, after all, I had played

him a trick in my own interest; but I steeled my heart by thinking of the patroon.

"I don't know who you are," continued the sailor. "But now that you have done me one good turn perhaps you will do me another. We must be at Wolfert Webber's tavern by nine o'clock tonight. Can we get there?"

It was well for the success of my plans that I had spent a large part of the afternoon studying a map of Manhattan Island.

I knew, therefore, that a stream of water of depth sufficient to float a long-boat connected the small lake known as the Collect with the North River. I told the pirate of this stream and that, after having crossed the lake, a short walk would bring him to Webber's tavern.

Meanwhile the long-boat was approaching the shore. Soon we were all seated—I going along to point out the way—and four of the sailors were pulling sturdily at the oars. We shot quickly over the water. The half moon gleamed in a flickering path behind us. Between the narrow banks of the stream by which we made our way into the Collect scarcely a ray of light could penetrate. We had much ado to evade the overhanging branches, which, in spite of all our care, struck us in the face time and again. Then everything changed like scenery on the stage as we shot into the shadow-rimmed lake, smooth as glass, reflecting the moon

like the half of a broken plate, lying upon the bottom.

"Dip easy, men," whispered the leader, who had seated himself next to me in the stern of the boat. "No need to let anyone know that we are coming."

He and I had fallen into conversation while the others rowed. I tried cautiously to win from him some information as to what his errand was about. I succeeded, however, no better than when I had made the like attempt earlier in the evening. He was as mum as a stone concerning his own business. When we landed on a narrow beach of pebbles, he commanded his followers to remain with the boat while he went forward under my guidance. On the way I was of two minds. At one moment I wanted to strike him down, rob him of his letters, and take to my heels. At the next, I was much ashamed of such a dishonorable impulse. My hesitation, however, was soon overcome in an unexpected way. When I saw the light of Webber's tavern twinkling a hundred yards ahead of us, I informed my companion that his destination was in sight. He put out a great clumsy hand and took mine cordially.

"Thanks, mate, whatever your name is. Here you and I must part company. You've done us a good turn, and I'd do the same by you if I had the chance. But I must go on alone, for what I've got to say is very secret and must be said alone. It ain't as if I had some writing that I could just hand over before your eyes and you none the wiser for

looking at the outside. It doesn't look handsome, does it? But I'm on other people's business, and honor is honor, as you know yourself."

Since there was nothing to be gained by staying with him against his will, I shook hands in a friendly way, saying that I should go back to New York by land, it being nearer for me than the way we had come. The moment he was gone, however, I took after him and set myself to watch the tavern door. The person he had come to meet had evidently arrived before him. In two minutes the sailor came out again, accompanied by a boy. As they passed through a patch of moonlight I caught a glimpse of this second person. He was not a boy at all, but Van Volkenberg's drawf, Louis Van Ramm.

They passed close to me and I followed them a short way into the woods, where they held a long whispered consultation; but I could not catch a word of what they said. At the end of their talk they parted company without returning to the tavern. The pirate went back to the boat the way he had come; the dwarf set out towards Van Volkenberg manor. I had no further interest in the sailor, and, though I expected little gain from following Van Ramm, I resolved to dog his footsteps.

CHAPTER XII

VAN VOLKENBERG'S WINDOW

Louis Van Ramm continued his way towards the manor-house, walking rapidly, I following on the turf at the roadside. Suddenly I came upon the place where I had joined the high road in my retreat from the park the night before. Knowing that the path that led to this point was a short cut through the woods, I ran along it in the hope of finding some place of vantage, whence I could observe what went on outside the manor-house. When I reached the edge of the wood I saw the shadowy building, its front all shot with lighted windows. One of these windows was on the lower floor near the ground. I wondered whether it would offer me any advantage as a means of discovering what was going on inside the building. Some high bushes grew near it and in these I managed to conceal myself so near the window that I could see inside quite well. I presume that the fire of logs within made the room too hot, for the window was open, in spite of the chill wind that bit me to the bone. The patroon was sitting at a table in plain sight of the window. Between him and the door and facing him was the woman I had seen the night before on the terrace, evidently his daughter.

"Go to your room, Miriam," I heard him say to her. "I have no use for you here. As for this man Le Bourse, if you have any dealings with him I shall lock you up. Go. Do you hear me?"

The girl did not move. She folded her arms across her breast, at the same time drawing herself up proudly. She was tall and slender, and of a fine, dignified figure.

"Father," she replied, "there is no use threatening me. You know that I am not a coward. If you do not intend to make some reparation to this man who has come to seek his sister, I shall. You can at least be kind to him. You know only too well that unkindness here hastened, perhaps caused, the poor girl's unhappy death."

She brushed her hand across her eyes. I blessed her in my heart for that little act. The patroon, however, grew angry. He lifted a wine glass from the table and held it in his hand, as if he intended to throw it at her.

"Do not talk to me of her," he burst out. "Not a word of her or you shall repent it. Now go. You have already seen too much of this man. I shall not tolerate it."

The girl bowed with proper dignity, but she did not move. She had still a word of protest that must be said.

"I shall obey you, sir, but I must say what I feel. I shall not act behind your back. You shall know exactly what I intend to do. I shall see him again

and tell him all I can of the miserable fate of his sister and I shall do all in my power to sooth his sorrow. I loved Ruth even if she was but—"

Her words were cut short by the crash of breaking glass. She had sprung to one side just in time to evade the flying goblet which her father hurled at her.

"Will you not obey me? Are you not my daughter?"

"I am you daughter, but for all that, father—"

She stopped speaking and left the room abruptly, for at that moment another door was opened, which I could not see, though I heard the latch click distinctly. Then Louis Van Ramm entered the room and came to his master's side. I heard the patroon say something to him about the "Wench, my daughter." Then he and the dwarf fell to talking in tones so low that I could only hear now and then an excited exclamation of surprise.

I can hardly express the feelings that I experienced at that moment. From where I crouched in the shrubbery, shivering with cold, I could look upon the wide space where I had seen the Red Band drilling the night before, surrounded by the jumping shadows of the torches. The picture of the girl dressed in white, standing upon the platform while the troopers obeyed the commands of their chief, and the impatient gesture with which she had been dismissed by her father, were all clear in my mind's eye. I had not thought then that

within a day I should have found a friend within the walls of the manor. Yet such was the case. The girl was disposed to treat me kindly. I did not care so much for that. My heart was drawn towards her because she had loved Ruth, and because she was now suffering for that affection. I could not but admire her spirit, and the quiet dignity with which she stood to her convictions before the hot anger of her parent; nor could I observe without still greater admiration the noble pride that prompted her to be silent the moment another person entered the room. Of course I did not know then as I knew later how unlike her usual manner this severity towards her father was. But I soon learned that there were moments when his peculiar infirmity demanded such firmness and that this was one of them.

While I mused upon the scene before me and all it stood for, the patroon and his retainer sat at the table in busy conversation. At last Van Volkenberg leaned back in his chair and fitted the palms of his hands together, tapping the finger tips slightly.

"Good news, Louis," he said, for the first time raising his voice so that I could hear him distinctly. "This time we trip the Earl, God's curse upon him."

For a moment they sat silent, the master lost in thought. Evidently the news communicated to Louis in the meeting by Webber's tavern was vitally connected with the welfare of the Earl of Bella-

mont. At last Van Volkenberg was roused by some question from his companion that I could not hear.

"You are right," the patroon answered. "On my life we must not let this chance slip. Before daylight—" I lost what followed, for he bent over the table with a pen in his hand and began to write.

For some time I watched the end of the quill nodding back and forth as he wrote, evidently in great haste and excitement. Twice he tore the paper across several times and began to write upon a new sheet. When he had finished, he rose, folding what he had written carefully as he did so. He took a step or two away from the table towards the window. This movement brought him so close to me that I overheard what followed without difficulty.

"This must be printed and posted before daylight, Louis. Take it to Bradford. Rout him out of bed. Give him good reasons. It must be done at once. Do not take no from him. Hurry, Louis, my gay hawk. We shall peck the fine Earl to the bone by noon to-morrow."

At that both men left the apartment. I set out immediately along the footpath that joined with the road to the city. I had not far to go in order to reach the main road, but the distance was far enough to bring me for a moment in peril of my life. I was still within hail of the house when I heard dull, heavy thuds falling in quick succession

behind me, and growing louder with every step. I turned to look back. A hound was making towards me in great leaps across the moonlight. The next moment he sprang upon me. Though I braced myself for the shock, I fell heavily to the ground. In this moment of danger, I had enough presence of mind to thrust my hand into the brute's mouth and to grip tight hold of his lower jaw. We writhed and twisted about the ground for several minutes. Once I was knocked so violently against the trunk of a tree that it was a miracle that I did not lose my hold. We rolled back together and in some way, I know not how, I fell uppermost with the point of my knee on the dog's side. Quick as a flash, I gripped my free hand on his throat. He gasped for breath till his whole body shook and I with it. But I had won the fall and did not rise till he lay motionless at my feet.

Such an escape as that makes a man sober. I continued along the road, thinking of many things; above all, of how it might have ended. By what a slender thread and how tenaciously we cling to life! Yesterday, when my sorrow first fell upon me with its full weight, there was nothing terrible about the face of death; but to-night, with his grim features close before me, I felt that heedless courage which even the most miserable always feel, though they would thank God for cowardice. With this thought came another: How Ruth must have felt! She had crossed the gulf that I had fought to draw

back from. Not till then did my thoughts return to the work in hand—the paper and the dwarf's errand. Almost immediately I heard the clatter of horse hoofs breaking the silence behind me.

In a moment Louis Van Ramm dashed by me at full gallop, raising a cloud of dust as he rode, and sending a flaw of wind into the roadside bushes where I had concealed myself at the first sound of his approach.

"So you will trap the Earl, will you?" thought I. "Do not reckon without me, Louis Van Ramm."

Then I set out running, and was soon at the fort.

It had been scarce six years since William Bradford had come from Philadelphia to set up his printing press in New York. As I passed the mouth of the street where Bradford lived I could hear Louis kicking and pounding at the printer's door, for what reason beyond his master's hest I was soon to learn.

At the fort I found some difficulty in gaining access to the Earl; but, by means of the password which he had communicated to me, and a little threat and bluster on my own account, I was soon inside the walls. The Earl heard my fragmentary tale with interest.

"I can easily imagine what has been communicated to him," said Bellamont. "But what Bradford has to do with it is beyond my penetration."

He rang a bell upon the table. A man-at-arms

appeared, whom he bade summon the captain of the guard.

"Take a squad of men," commanded the Earl as soon as the man had appeared for duty. "Take a squad of men and arrest William Bradford and anyone else whom you may find at his shop. At once. To your duty."

The Earl at a pinch, as Lady Marmaduke had said, was no man to bandy words, though, to be sure, he said to me as soon as the soldiers had set out that he wished I had got my information in any other way than spying. I did not remind him that he had set me to watch, or that there was no other way on earth by which I could have followed his instructions, for I knew that if I said anything his conscience would suggest some kind of harmless watchfulness from a distance.

"Your Excellency's welfare is always above my own," I said humbly, though I shared none of his scruples.

"Ay, doubtless," he answered musingly. "Well, let us see how it turns out."

Thirty minutes later the prisoner was under arrest in the fort. The Earl's eyes gleamed with satisfaction over the intelligence he had received through the arrest. For the second time he summoned the man-at-arms.

"As soon as it is late enough I want you to dispatch a messenger to Patroon Van Volkenberg, and to the other members of my council, notifying

them individually that there will be a meeting of my privy-council at ten o'clock to-morrow." Then he turned to me. "The clouds are breaking, Le Bourse. I doubt not there will be a flash of light and a clap of thunder hard upon ten o'clock."

CHAPTER XIII

VAN VOLKENBERG IN DISGRACE

At ten o'clock the next morning the governor's privy-council was assembled. The members of the board were seated along both sides of a huge mahogany table, carved around the edges in the old Dutch style. Governor Bellamont sat at one end of the table; on his right hand was Colonel De Peyster, then accorded by everyone the handsomest man in the province. At the end opposite to Nicholas Bayard sat the patroon. He was quiet in his manner and evidently much dejected over the miscarriage of his plan, though, as yet, he could have had no idea as to how it had gone wrong. When the soldiers arrested Bradford, they found him alone, busily engaged in setting up type with which to print the patroon's paper. By the time the arrest was made, Louis Van Ramm had evidently returned to the manor-house to inform his chief that all the arrangements necessary to the plan had been successfully made. The patroon therefore, on his arrival in the town, must have expected to see his posters placed conspicuously in many public places. He found instead, only the locked door of the printing office and no posters. Immediately after this disappointment he presented himself at the council table in the fort.

The Earl of Bellamont informed the members of his privy-council that he had summoned them thus hurriedly in order to communicate to them some important information. Then, drawing towards him a bundle of papers which lay close at hand, he addressed his advisors in these words:

"Gentlemen and Friends: Shortly after his most gracious majesty was pleased to appoint me to the governorship of this province, he called me to a private interview, in which he spoke of certain affairs in New York. He spoke in these words, as nearly as I could remember them when I wrote down the substance of our conversation shortly after our interview.

" 'The buccaneers,' said his majesty, 'have so increased in the East and West Indies, and all along the American coast, that they defiantly sail under their own flag. They penetrate the rivers; land in numbers sufficient to capture cities, robbing palaces and cathedrals, and extorting enormous ransom. Their suppression is vital to commerce. They have possessed themselves of magnificent retreats, in Madagascar and other islands of the Pacific ocean. They have established their seraglios, and are living in fabulous splendor and luxury. Piratic expeditions are fitted out from the colonies of New England and Virginia; and even the Quakers of Pennsylvania afford a market for their robberies. These successful free-booters are making their homes in the Carolinas, in Rhode Island, and along

the south shore of Long Island, where they and their children take positions among the most respectable in the community.

" 'The buccaneers are so audacious that they seek no concealment. Their ships are laden with the spoils of all nations. The richest prizes that can now be taken upon the high seas are the heavily laden ships of the buccaneers. I have resolved, with the aid of others, to fit out a private expedition against them. We have formed a company for the purpose. By attacking the pirates we shall accomplish a double object. We shall, in the first place, check their devastating operations, and we shall also fill our purses with the proceeds of the abundant spoil with which their ships are laden.' "

The Earl laid down the paper from which he had been reading, and, looking directly at Mr. Livingston, who was on his left, bowed. "My trusted friend and councillor, who was in London at the time of my interview with our gracious majesty, was able to recommend to our notice a mariner upon whom we could confidently confer the responsible task of commanding this expedition. You all know him, gentlemen. I refer to the estimable William Kidd, of this city, whose house on Liberty Street we all remember because of the noble tree growing beside the stoop. It was planted to commemorate the arrival of Governor Petrus Stuyvesant, rest his soul, for he was a gallant gentleman and a valiant warrior. In Captain Kidd's hands, with the con-

sent of the Lord Chancellor and the Duke of Shrewsbury, together with the approval of the King, we have placed our frigate, the Adventure.

"Now, gentlemen," continued the Earl, at the same time taking up another paper from the table. "You are aware of the steps I have already taken to diminish the practice of buccaneering in New York. It behooves me to make you acquainted forthwith with the commission the King has granted to Captain Kidd."

Bellamont unfolded the paper in his hand and began to read in a loud, steady voice the King's commission.

" 'William the Third, by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, to our true and well-beloved Captain William Kidd, commander of the Adventure. Whereas, divers wicked persons commit many and great piracies, robberies and depredations on the seas, upon the coasts of America, and other parts, to the hindrance of trade and the danger of our subjects, we have thought fit to give to the said William Kidd full authority to seize all such pirates upon the seas, whether our subjects or the subjects of other nations, with their ships and all merchandise or money which shall be found on board, if they willingly yield themselves. But if they will not yield themselves without fighting, then you are, by force, to compel them to yield. We do also require you to bring, or cause to be brought, such pirates, free-booters, or sea rovers,

as you shall seize, to a legal trial, to the end they may be proceeded against according to the law in such cases.

" 'We enjoin you to keep an exact journal of your proceedings, giving the names of the ships you may capture, the names of their officers and crew, and the value of their cargoes, and stores. And we command you at your peril, that you do not molest our friends or allies under any pretense of authority hereby granted. Given the 26th of January, 169--.' "*

In the discussion of the King's plan which followed the reading of it, every gentleman present, with the one exception of Van Volkenberg, expressed his unqualified approval of what had been done. The patroon, however, sat silent and moody. He was unable to imagine why the Earl had chosen this time to explain in detail a plan that he had heretofore guarded with the utmost secrecy.

"I am glad of your approbation," said the Earl. "I could expect no other reception of this frank expression (touching the King's commission with his forefinger) of the honor and candor of our gracious sovereign and of his confidential advisers. Yet it appears that our colleague, Patroon Van Volkenberg, has not yet expressed his satisfaction in words."

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*For the text of Governor Bellamont's conversation with the King, and of the commission granted to Captain Kidd, the author is indebted to Mr. Abbot's life of William Kidd.

There was a slight smile upon the Earl's face as he made this remark, for the patroon's manner spoke discontent plain enough. As all eyes turned upon him, Van Volkenberg felt the need of saying something.

"Your Excellency, I hope, has always found me quick in the support of all our sovereign's mandates."

More than one of the persons present exchanged intelligent glances with his neighbor when he heard this qualified approval. Each member of the council interpreted it for himself, according as he believed or disbelieved certain vague rumors that had got abroad concerning the patroon's interest in the illicit trade.

"I am glad that we are unanimous," the Earl went on, a bitter smile breaking across his face in spite of his effort to control his features. "I say that I am glad we are unanimous, because I have a question to bring before you for your consideration, which closely concerns the matter in hand."

He glanced at the patroon. Van Volkenberg for the first time seemed to suspect that a trap had been laid for him. His fingers opened and closed with short nervous movements. His face began to grow white; but it was the whiteness of anger, not of fear. At that moment I saw—for I had been stationed where I could both see and hear what was passing in the council chamber—I saw that the Earl had won only a skirmish, not a battle. The

patroon might be defeated for the present, but the spirit that showed in his face was not to be crushed by this blow. Strangely enough, the Earl's next words pointed the anger of the patroon in a new direction, a direction that in the end almost brought the Earl and his followers to their ruin.

"Captain Kidd," the Earl resumed, "is now on his way to New York. His crew, which, at present, is but half made up, is to be completed in this city."

This was the fact that was news to the patroon. He started and turned his face with renewed interest towards the governor, who continued in an unruffled voice.

"A conspiracy has been nipped in the bud, gentlemen—a conspiracy tending to prevent honest men from entering our service and therefore tending to diminish the integrity of Captain Kidd's crew."

He paused, looked slowly over his audience, who were breathless with interest, and let his eyes rest upon Van Volkenberg.

"At midnight last, William Bradford, the printer, was arrested by my order. At the time of his arrest he was engaged in putting into type this paper, which I shall now read aloud and then give into your hands for further examination:

"'CITIZENS OF NEW YORK, BEWARE! Captain William Kidd, famous for his knowledge of the haunts and practices of the buccaneers, will soon arrive in New York to lay in stores and take

commissions for the South Seas. He sails under cover of a patent, granted by the Earl of Bellamont, Governor of His Majesty's province of New York, granting him power to cruise against the buccaneers. This alleged purpose is a trick to deceive the people. Captain Kidd's real purpose is to cooperate with the pirates, to evade the laws of the province, and to enrich the pocket of the governor. Beware how you countenance this betrayal of your laws.' " Then the Earl added: "How inimical the sentiment expressed herein is to the interests and procedure of our royal master is forthwith apparent. Gentlemen, examine the document for yourselves."

He handed it to Mr. Livingstone, who in turn passed it on to Mr. Pinhorne. The paper traveled slowly down the table. Suddenly one of the councillors exclaimed, "By my soul! This is Van Volkenberg's hand."

"And what if it is?" the patroon cried out, at the same time bringing his fist down on the table with an angry blow.

There was the silence of amazement at this sudden explosion.

"Do not deliberate hastily," said the Earl, with a smile. "Let me make clear the manner in which this paper came into my hands." He rang a bell for a servant. "Fetch Monsieur Le Bourse."

I shall never forget the blank expression on the patroon's face at the moment I stepped into the room in obedience to the Earl's command; nor

shall I forget the thrill of joy I experienced when I saw that the patroon knew who had driven him to bay. I related in as few words as possible what had happened during the night, dwelling on the damning evidence which my story furnished of the truth of the rumors that Van Volkenberg had secret dealings with the buccaneers. When I had finished my tale, Mr. Livingstone rose and claimed the floor.

"Your Excellency," he said, "this is worse than I could have imagined. It is enough to justify expulsion from the council."

"I shall not remain to embarrass your consideration," said the patroon.

He got upon his feet, ashy pale, and trembling with suppressed rage, but with a noble dignity in his disgrace withal.

"I acknowledge your accusation," continued the patroon. "If your clemency (bowing to the governor), which is well known to all of us, will permit a fallen man to resign the honor of a seat at your council board before he is deprived of it by force, I shall be everlastingly in your debt."

With that he bowed again, first to the Earl, then to the company, and left the room.

For a moment, I, who was the cause of this disgrace, felt almost as if the victory were the patroon's. Every person present, even the Earl, sat abashed as if he had done something wrong. For a moment I almost agreed with the Earl, and

wished I had not spied through the window. How nobly the patroon had sustained his defeat! There was no storming, no begging; he simply accepted the inevitable and bowed with dignity in his ruin. He was such a man as one would gladly serve if he were only upon the side of right and honor. Sympathy with the manliness of the patroon, however, soon gave way as the consciousness of his treachery and double dealing again grew uppermost in my mind. The only lasting effect of this scene upon me was a deep-seated joy such as a man feels when he meets a worthy foe. My determination was strengthened, not weakened, by this short-lived attack of sympathy for my enemy.

Meantime the patroon mounted his horse at the entrance of the fort. Scarcely was he through the massive stone gateway before a great change came over him. He broke out into loud peals of laughter. He clapped spurs to his horse and rode furiously to the house of Colonel Fletcher. All the way from the fort to the house of his friend he was laughing and calling out at the top of his voice and waving his arms about his head like a man taken in a fit. An hour later he was carried out of the house like a sick man, deposited in a sedan chair, and in this conveyance taken to his home.

CHAPTER XIV

PLOTTING WITHOUT THE EARL

Later in the day of Van Volkenberg's disgrace, Lady Marmaduke and I were talking together in no very pleasant frame of mind. We both knew the far-reaching power of the Red Band, and the extremes to which the patroon would go in order to carry out his designs. He now knew that it was I who had brought his disgrace upon him. People are always likely to suspect and hate those whom they have injured beyond repair. The death of Ruth was enough to account for any blow that the patroon might aim at me. Add to this motive the fact that I had brought humiliation upon him, that I had been the cause of his expulsion from the council, and one can easily imagine how little reason there was to believe that I should be overlooked in his subsequent meditations. The injury I had done to the patroon not only held him up to ridicule and scorn, but also, by removing him from the governor's council, deprived him of his most potent means of plotting against the Earl. Take it all in all, I was treading in dangerous water, and both Lady Marmaduke and I knew it.

"How do you expect to escape his vengeance?" she said in a significantly despondent tone. "How

will you keep your head on your shoulders till to-morrow morning or next day?"

I smiled grimly, but made no reply to her question. In fact, I was all at sea as to what to do, and I knew that she was in the same state of mind. For several minutes there was silence between us; neither of us had a word further to say. Of a sudden my mistress snapped her fingers and a light as of a new idea began to sparkle in her eyes.

"He is a Catholic," she said. "I wish the laws that apply to priests would apply to him." She muttered these words half aloud as if she was talking to herself. But her next sentence was addressed to me. "You know that when a Jesuit priest steps across the boundary of our province we hang him. That is our law." She dropped her eyes again and seemed, as before, to muse aloud. "Poor little Ruth. Such sweet, sweet eyes; so sad. They were not sad at first—they grew sad. Had it been only trouble that won her young life away! But to be robbed of it by a Roman Catholic. If you could have seen her face, so cold and pale when I went to see the mark of the hot iron!" She turned her eyes towards me suddenly. "Have you ever smelt burning flesh?" she demanded.

"For God's sake!" I cried. "You pierce me to the heart."

Words cannot express the agony I felt at this mention of the manner of my sister's death; but,

in spite of my misery, Lady Marmaduke went on without pity.

"He did not brand her, but he did worse. He went to her room at night and murdered her in bed. Why? Because—"

I put out my hand in a gesture of appeal. She left the sentence unfinished and began anew.

"Can you not see, friend Michael, why I twist this knife of recollection till it galls you to the quick? Le Bourse, did you love your sister?"

"What of that?" I answered hoarsely, wondering why she asked me such a question.

"Do you think that you will be able to keep your life in your body for a week now that you have given such offense to the leader of the Red Band? You hesitate. Nay, answer me honestly. Unless you skulk like a coward and hide yourself inside my house, how long will you escape their vengeance?"

I shook my head. Indeed there was no limit of time too brief to suit the truth.

"Did you love your sister?"

"Why do you ask that question as if you doubted it?" I answered petulantly. "Do you not know that—"

"Tut, tut, I do not doubt you, but I wonder whether you will stand the test. This is no common enemy you have to deal with. He is a wily man and wields much power. By your own reckoning your life is not worth that." She snapped her fin-

gers. "You must take the game into your own hands. If you should die, who would avenge Ruth?"

"Or Sir Evelin?" I responded.

Her brows darkened. A flush spread slowly over her swarthy features like a storm cloud. I knew that I was standing before the Black Lady Marmaduke, and from that moment I understood why they had given her that name. She was the very image of deep passion, yet of passion that was under control withal. She was such a leader as a man could trust himself to in full confidence of finding bravery, loyalty and—for I had no doubt of the result—victory.

"Yes," she answered. "Or Sir Evelin! Ruth and Sir Evelin! You and I must keep alive. Will you make a desperate cast for the prize? Will you stake all upon one bold throw?"

The swift nervous clutch of her hand on my shoulder which accompanied her last words, and the sound of her breath, hard and rasping like a person in a trance, told me better than words why she had been probing me to the depths of my misery. I knew that the plan she was about to propose would be full to the brim of peril.

"I'll play it," I answered, responding in every nerve to the spell of her fierce passions. "What is the cast?"

"Your life."

"Explain."

"You cannot live as it is. Assume a disguise. Be someone else."

"That is easy, but to what does it lead?"

"To the house of the Red Band. You have still the silver buttons that the buccaneer gave you. Take them boldly, according to your first intention, and present them to the patroon. Tell him you want to enlist in the Red Band. With you in the very center of the board, we can soon sweep it clean."

She had suggested a desperate enterprise indeed, one that took my breath away. Yet, upon consideration, I found it no more desperate than the situation as it stood at that moment. Of course I should not consent to hide myself away from danger, in which course, according to Lady Marmaduke, lay my only hope of safety. Nor could I expect to escape the patroon's wrath in any other way. The members of the Red Band were not above the secret blow under cover of the night, and I might fall at any moment. Perhaps, after all, it was really safer for me to go boldly into the midst of my enemies than to let them come at me from a distance. Yet I hesitated.

"Are you afraid?" flashed Lady Marmaduke in scornful anger.

"Had I been afraid, madam, I had never hesitated," I replied.

What really troubled me and made it hard for me to decide was not the danger, nor even a doubt

of my success. On the contrary, I hesitated over a point of honor. I knew very well that the Earl would not approve of this. Could I? I had never, save on the night before, played the part of a spy, and my own name was the last thing in the world I should be ashamed to own. I could fight; but no—I could never be capable of this kind of work. Then I glanced at Lady Marmaduke. There were tears in her eyes, and I knew she must be thinking of her husband. Could I desert her now? I had sworn to be her man. Was it honest and just to turn away from her in the critical moment—the first time she had desired my help? My mind was swaying in the opposite direction when the thought of what Ruth would have said clutched my wavering mind back to the side of truth and honor.

Lady Marmaduke must have seen all this passing in my mind or shadowed in my face. It was time for her to put her firm hand upon me and force me the way she would have me go, whether I would or not. It was to my brute passions she appealed, not to my reason.

When I had entered the room ten minutes before, she was writing letters, and the candle she used to soften her wax with was still burning upon the table. She took a step towards me and as she did so I noticed the candle flame wave delicately to one side.

"Michael," she said, putting her hand upon my shoulder. "You hesitate and I am ashamed of

you." Her hand moved along my shoulder till her fingers played upon my neck. "I said that I saw no mark upon her body. What if there were prints upon her neck?" At that instant her iron fingers closed on my throat with a grip that made me cry out.

"Hush, fool," she said fiercely, relaxing her grip. "I am not going to choke you; but her throat was delicate and you know how it feels." Then her manner changed. She spoke quickly and looked towards the candle. "He said he branded her. Perhaps he did. It was night when I looked at her body. One cannot see plain by night. Perhaps he did after all. Did you ever see a person branded? Smell, Michael, smell."

She thrust her left hand into the candle flame.

"For God's sake!" I cried, trying to snatch her hand away.

"Stop," she replied, in her terrible deep voice. At the same moment she caught my rescuing hand and held it in a vise.

"Smell. This is what it is like to be branded."

A spell seemed to take hold of me. I had no power to move, but stood still watching her finger scorch in the tall flame. Once I saw it tremble, but she bit her lip and grew steady again. The flesh began to shrivel and then—my God! I caught that horrible stench of burning flesh.

"Stop," I shrieked.

"Oh Ruth, Ruth, how I pity you in your pain,"

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cried my mistress, who held on, enduring that bitter agony to make me succumb to her will.

Then the sickening smell came again stronger than ever.

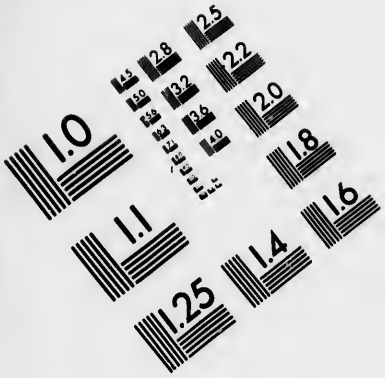
"Ruth, Ruth, Ruth! The bloodhound! Stop. I'll go, I'll go. Oh my God, my God, my God!"

I threw up my hands with a cry of horror shut my eyes upon the terrible suggestion of that cruel sight. Lady Marmaduke bent close to me and spoke in my ear.

"Methinks I can hear her scream in agony. God, how she must have suffered!"

My mistress told me afterwards that I groaned and reeled backward. I should have fallen had she not caught me by the arm. In a moment the passion spent itself and I was sane once more. But the temptation of that smell had prevailed against the prompting of my conscience. I determined to run the risk. My life if it must be! Yes, my life, but his too.

So I resolved to join the Red Band. The elaborate precautions I took before I assumed my disguise were not excessive. There were many accidents to be provided against. In the first place, though Lady Marmaduke would be able to account plausibly for my disappearance from New York, I might be tolerably sure that the patroon would scent danger in the circumstance. I must be doubly careful not to leave any tracks that would



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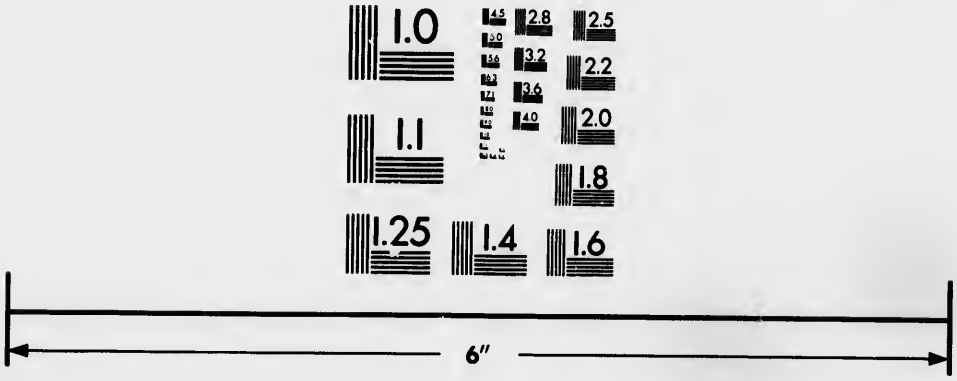

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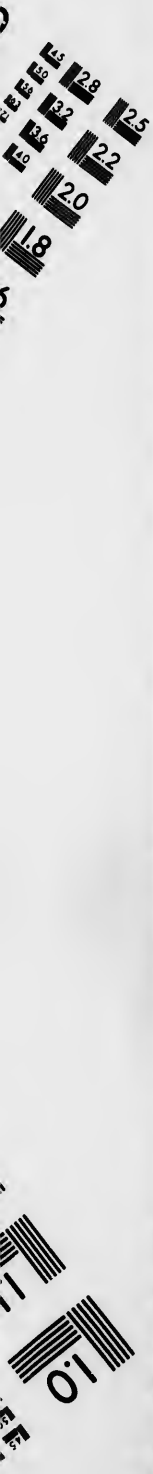
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point either forward or backward from the moment I changed my identity.

Paradoxical as it sounds, I must accomplish my disguise without the help of any disguise at all. If my bold plan succeeded and resulted in my becoming a member of the Red Band, I must be able to strip and wash myself before my fellow members, or to stand a merry bout of leapfrog or wrestling in the servants' quarters. In such a situation I could not guard myself against discovery by means of a painted face that would wash off at the first touch of water, nor rely upon a wig or any other outward changes of my face. I could put on different clothes; I could cut off my beard and moustache; for the rest, I must trust to the very boldness of the deception to bring me through with safety.

When night came I had prepared a plan by which I hoped to annihilate every trace of my presence as completely as if I had flown away on the wings of the wind. In the course of the day it got abroad that I should set out early the next morning for Albany on business of Lady Marmaduke's. In this simple way was my disappearance on the morrow to be accounted for.

About midnight Pierre and I left the city stealthily and paddled in a canoe to the shore of Long Island. Little Pierre, as I have said, was a barber. He had brought his shaving utensils with him, and by the light of the moon he shaved me, lip and

chin. I then put on the one suit of clothes that I had brought with me and which, fortunately, I had not yet worn in public. Pierre made a bundle of my discarded garments and prepared to set out with them to Marmaduke Hall. We shook hands at the edge of the water. Pierre tried once or twice to say something, but he could not find the voice. He seemed to feel the danger of the situation even more than I did. At last he blurted out:

"Well, if we don't see you again, here's luck."

He gave the canoe a prodigious shove. A moment later he was paddling steadily towards the North River. I watched him until he was lost in the darkness; then I set out across the island to Gravesoon, for I intended to repeat the journey that I had formerly made when I first came to New York. If, when I appeared at the manor-house, Van Volkenberg should doubt the truth of the story I was going to tell him, he would be likely to inquire into the circumstances of my arrival. I resolved to let him trace me to the very edge of the broad Atlantic. There he might stare to his heart's content. He would see nothing but the wide blue circle of the sea.

Fortune was on my side that morning. By daylight I was standing on the shore of the cove where I had been set down a few days before by Captain Tew. There was, by accident, at that very moment a great ship hull down in the offing. The

presence of this vessel did me good service. When I approached the ordinary at Gravesoon, in spite of the early hour of the morning, I found a number of people about the door. One of them held a spy-glass in his hand and was trying to make out the identity of the distant ship.

I was much relieved to find, when I came to speak with the landlord, that he had but the vaguest recollection of my former appearance. To be sure, he had seen me only once; yet he had a slight remembrance of the fact. When I hinted pretty plainly that I had come ashore from the ship, which by that time was almost out of sight, he said:

"You are the second man this week. The other fellow came at night and, bless you! not a word would he say of where he came from or where he was going to." This reassured me, for I had inquired after Van Volkenberg, and I was glad that the landlord had forgotten the fact. Then he said abruptly, "Can you [illegible] a shell?"

I assured him that I could.

"Well, he couldn't; he was a poor piece."

That ended our consultation. By noon I had left the ordinary at Gravesoon far behind me and had crossed the East River once more into New York. On different occasions during the day I met both my mistress and the Earl of Bellamont. I smiled to myself to think how I could have astonished them had I wished to speak out. I spent so much of the afternoon bartering for a horse

and attending to other small matters that it was nearly sunset before I was ready to set out for the manor-house. To tell the truth, I had another reason for delay. I was minded to put my disguise to a more thorough test before I threw myself into the power of the patroon. With this end in view. I presented myself at Marmaduke Hall and inquired for the mistress.

I had not forgotten what she had told me about the title to her estate, nor that Van Volkenberg had vowed that he would get possession of it in spite of all law to the contrary. So, when I sent my new name, Henrie St. Vincent, to Lady Marmaduke, I sent word also that I was a messenger from Patroon Van Volkenberg and wished to see her on business concerning her estate. She received me in a high state of dignity, standing erect at one end of the long room with her hand gripped on the collar of a dog.

"Madam," said I, and got no further before she interrupted me.

"Sir," she replied. "I understand that you come from Kilian Van Volkenberg. I can guess your errand. Will you be pleased to follow me."

She was very angry, for which I could see no reason since she had not heard a word of what I had to say. Perhaps it was the mere impudence of a messenger from the patroon. She strode out of the apartment with me trooping behind her, wondering what she was going to do next. She

led the way through the kitchen to the little outbuilding where I had seen the huge iron pots a few days before. Fire raged under three of them. The massive covers tilted and rocked above the steam. Lady Marmaduke signed to the servants to remove one of the lids. They caught hold of the chains and began to pull. As the lid rose a cloud of steam filled the room. I could feel my newly shaved cheeks go damp and moist with the vapor. Lady Marmaduke looked at me, but I could only see her face at times, for the steam came and went in clouds between us.

"Do you see that?" she asked in a high voice, hard with anger. "If you or any other of your accursed Red Band dare to set foot in Marmaduke Hall again, I shall put you in that pot. Ay, if it is old Kilian himself, I shall drop him in. Do you hear me?"

She looked as if she meant what she said; for all that, I could not forbear a smile. She peered into my face for a moment and then her expression seemed to relax a little.

"Why do you laugh?" she asked. "You are impudent like your master. I have a mind to let my dogs loose on you. I understand that that is a favorite trick at the manor-house. But I shall not do it. Come with me. I have a last message to send the honorable patroon."

When we were back in the great room again she closed the door behind her. Then she fell into

a spell of laughter which was so loud and hearty that I thought she was in hysterics. After a moment she stopped as violently as she had begun, though her body still shook with suppressed merriment.

"What would they think," she said as soon as she could get her voice. "What would they think if they could hear me laugh like this with a man of my sworn enemy's at my elbow? But be sure you do not let him send you here. I should put you in the pot if he did and that would be a great pity. Yes, I should put you in the pot, even you, as sure as your name is Michael Le Bourse."

It was now my turn to be amazed. The fact that she had penetrated my disguise was disconcerting in the extreme. She soon set me at ease, however, by telling me that her suspicions were not aroused until I smiled at her fierce threats.

"No one in Yorke laughs in my presence when I am angry," was her explanation. "But then, Michael, I knew you were somewhere about in disguise and I have seen more of you than any one else in the city. I do not think that you need to fear that he will recognize you."

"I hope not," was my answer. Another meeting that I had already had helped to dispel my fears. On my way to Marmaduke Hall I had encountered Pierre. I accosted him boldly and inquired my way. Yet Pierre, who had actually seen me since my change—though, to be sure, he had seen me

only by dim moonlight—even he failed to show the least sign of recognition.

Now that my mistress knew who I was, I broached a subject that had already been matter of conversation between us. It was whether we should let the Earl know of our present undertaking. Lady Marmaduke had already told me that the time would come when we should have to jog our own way if we jogged at all. She seemed to think that that time had come, though I had serious doubts about it.

"No, Michael, we must not tell him now. In fact, I sounded him this afternoon in a roundabout way without mentioning names. What do you think he said? He took up a book from the table. You know he is a great reader and this was one of those ancient history books where he says the old play writers got their stage stories from. He said that it told about once upon a time when Pompey—he was a Roman general, you know—had Caesar and Antony and Lepidus to dinner with him on one of his ships. One of Pompey's officers came to him and said that if he would cut the cables that held his ship he could put out to sea and he would have all his enemies in his power. You see Pompey was at war with the other three and they had met to arrange a peace."

"What did Pompey do?" I inquired of my lady.

"Just what I asked the Earl. Would you believe it? Pompey was too nice for that kind of thing,

and because he felt he could not do it honorably himself, he got mad at his officer and cursed him roundly for not having done it himself, instead of telling him about it. Such a service should have been performed before he was consulted. Then it had been a service indeed. It was very amusing to see the Earl's eyes twinkle as he told this story. I could not resist the temptation to tease him.

"'What if I have acted on Pompey's advice,' said I, 'and have come to tell you that it is already done?'

"That greatly agitated him. 'You cannot. For the world, I would not have you take me seriously. I could not descend to such dishonest practices as that.'

"This made me wince, and I was minded to give him a sharp answer. But I did not. I put him off with excuses and he is none the wiser. You do not still think we had better tell him, do you?"

I certainly did not, but, for all that, I was uneasy in my mind. I was not at all sure but that the Earl was right and my lady wrong. However, it was now too late to mend. That was a great comfort. I put a brave face on the matter and resolved to carry my part through to the end.

But I was to have one more disagreeable reminder of my danger before I set out for Van Volkenberg's. The details of this event do not matter, but the main fact may as well be told.

Pierre, unintelligent as his face had appeared when I met him, had recognized me. He was so proud because he had not betrayed his knowledge that he managed a safe way to let me know about it, bragging at length of his discretion. The only effect of this piece of news upon me was to make me feel still more insecure and doubtful of the reception I should meet with at the manor-house. One thought, however, comforted me. Van Volkenberg had seen me only a few times and then for only a few minutes at a time. I really believed that he would not be able to recognize me after the change wrought by the removal of my heavy beard. Yet I set out not wholly sure. I must confess that my heart was beating a little quicker than usual in anticipation of the result.

CHAPTER XV

THE SILVER BUTTONS

I set out for the manor-house shortly before twilight, taking the Boston post road, which led northward by the patroon's estate. I passed the Kissing Bridge, over which I had seen the patroon and his dwarf ride with a retinue of soldiers behind them; thence along the doubling road for five miles till I came at last to a noble park of elms and beeches. Here the road began to lift, not steeply, but swinging in broad curves among the tree trunks, till at last I came to a pause on the crest of a hill. After breathing my horse for a moment, I continued my way and soon reached a terraced lawn dotted with shrubs, and all of an exquisite softness of color. A fringe of cedars hid the offices and out-buildings, though the side of the manor-house was in plain view. When I reached the front of the rambling stone building, a servant in livery took my horse, and another showed me into a reception room, where I was to wait till he took my name to his master. Soon he returned and desired me to follow him.

I found Van Volkenberg in his study, surrounded by papers and maps; he was evidently deep in the business of his estate.

A dog—it looked like the one I had fought with,

though I thought I had killed him—this dog rose at my entrance and stood by his master's chair, growling sullenly. The patroon looked up with an expression in his face that showed neither irritation at being interrupted nor pleasure at seeing me. He was dressed from head to foot in black except for a dark crimson skull cap that confined his silver gray hair. He was seated by the table when I entered, but rose politely to bid me welcome.

"Monsieur St. Vincent," he said with a dignified inclination of his head. "C'est bien."

I made a low bow, pleased to hear my native tongue. Then I stood erect with one hand on the hilt of my sword, the other resting upon my hip. I threw as much bravado into my appearance as I could, for I was playing a bold game and the patroon did not look like a man who would be taken by a cringing manner.

"Patroon Van Volkenberg," I began, in order to introduce my errand, "I have come to ask a favor of you."

"Ah," he returned pleasantly. "Favors are what I like. Pray be seated. Louis, a chair for Monsieur St. Vincent."

It was the dwarf, Louis Van Ramm, who had escorted me into the presence of the patroon. He now set a chair for me and, at another signal, withdrew. He seemed to obey his orders a little sullenly. I am not sure but that the signal for his

withdrawal was repeated before he noticed it. This behavior surprised me, for I had heard much of the discipline of the Red Band and of the despotic rule of Van Volkenberg.

"Now, sir," continued the patroon as soon as we were alone. "Now, sir, I am at your service."

"It is to be admitted to yours that I have come to you to-day."

"To mine; to my service do you mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"For what reason?" he asked, gazing at me with his keen, penetrating eyes.

"From what I hear of the condition of the city, I am led to believe that you have plenty of work for a soldier who has honorable scars to show."

"You mean, I suppose, that some one has told you that there is fighting to do in the Red Band."

"I was informed, indeed, that there was fighting recently on the Slip."

"No 'indeed' about it! A mere brawl. A street fight among drunkards. Is that the kind of fighting you are anxious for?"

"I shall not choose the quarrels if your honor will let me help to settle them."

"You have a clever way with your tongue, monsieur. But why did you come to me? The Earl of Bellamont is the man of all Yorke whom it is good to fight for at present."

"True, sir. But I came to you for the simplest of reasons. He will have none of me."

"Hush, you brute," he cried to the dog, who had begun to growl again. "So you applied to his Excellency, did you?"

"Assuredly."

"Assuredly! I like your assuredly and your assurance too! Why him before me?"

"You have just spoken it; because he is the man now."

"Zounds! This to my face! And asking a favor of me to boot! Back, you brute. Must you fly at everything I point my finger at?"

The patroon had started up angrily, followed by his dog, which leaped upon me, or had nearly done so, when his master caught him by the collar and dragged him back. The suddenness of the attack gave me no time to reflect, much less to get out of the way. Therefore I made a virtue of necessity and stood my ground with firmness. This apparent fortitude on my part seemed to raise me considerably in the opinion of the patroon.

"You are no coward," he said, at the same time making an effort to pacify the hound. "How am I to know that you are not sent here by my enemies to spy upon me? It is not three days since I found Caesar nearly dead, and the next morning there were footprints under my study window."

Whether it was by mere chance or by intention that he made this allusion to my former escapade, I do not know. However, I met his look bravely and without flinching. For the moment,

he seemed satisfied of my integrity, whatever his inward thoughts may have been.

"Tell your story, St. Vincent. But mark my word, if you play me a trick I shall have you lashed." He hesitated a moment, then added, with his eyes upon me as before: "Ay, or worse than lashed."

"When you find me false, it will be time to talk of punishment," I answered stiffly. "I am no knave, but an honest man."

"Proceed; it is the only way I can get rid of you."

"Pardon me," I retorted, at the same time rising from my chair as if much offended at his rude rejoinder. "I have no desire to serve you. There are some things that become neither a gentleman nor a gentleman's master. I shall rid you of my presence as soon as I have delivered a message that should not have waited on my own concerns."

"You have a message for me?"

"Yes. Captain Tew desired me to inform you that his voyage is prospering well, and that ample return will be made."

"Tew, Tew, who is Captain Tew?"

"Your honor best knows. He bade me tell you that. With your permission I shall seek my horse."

"Be not so quick to take offense. Sit down again and explain your errand."

"My only other purpose was to enter your service, and on that point I have changed my mind."

"Sit down, fool. I take back what I said. Can you not pardon an old man's temper?"

Plainly my allusion to the buccaneer had touched him home. I knew by the look in his face that by that clew I could wind him round my finger; but I saw too that I must be careful not to run my own head into a noose while I made the attempt to snare him. As yet I had succeeded in arousing only his interest and, perhaps, his suspicion. For a moment I stood with my eyes on the ground as if debating with myself. Then I answered:

"You have spoken like a gentleman. I likewise retract my hasty speech."

He gave me his hand.

"We begin to understand each other, Monsieur St. Vincent. I was wrong in my first impression. Frankly, I took you for a spy who would not leave till you had wormed some information out of me. But I am satisfied. You have not the manner of a spy. Now tell your tale."

He fitted the palms of his hands together, idly paddling the tips of his fingers against each other. This was a habit, I afterwards learned, that he often resorted to, especially when he was at a loss to comprehend the situation. I went on to tell the patroon a made-up tale of my adventures with the buccaneer.

"Captain Tew," I said in the course of my narrative, "was for helping me, and, as I was bound for New York, he put me ashore near Gravesoon,

telling me to come to you. He assured me that you and the previous governor, Colonel Fletcher, were well acquainted with him, and that you were always on the lookout for a good blade and a faithful servant."

I paused as if I had said all that I was going to say. The patroon, I thought, did not relish my story. He sat silent, still drumming his finger tips. From time to time he looked sullenly at me, then he would drop his eyes to his pattering fingers again. For several minutes he continued in this state of agitation.

"I admit that I have seen this fellow Tew," he said at last. "I had forgotten the name, but now he comes back to me. His dealings with Fletcher and me were before he took to the seas for a livelihood."

He fell silent. Evidently I had touched him deeply. I could make a fair guess of what was in his mind. Would it be safer for him to let me go free, or to keep me at his side where he could watch me? If I were really a spy, I must possess some dangerous information concerning his dealings with the buccaneers. On the other hand, if I were what I said I was, he could make good use of me in the Red Band. As we sat silent I heard a distant bell toll.

"Our evening service," said the patroon. "Will you attend?"

Patroon Van Volkenberg was a Catholic. At

that moment, when he asked me to attend a Roman service, I had more ado to preserve my self-control than I had had for many a day. So violent was my anger, and so difficult to suppress, that I resolved on the instant to make a desperate move in order to protect myself against similar temptations in the future.

"Mynheer," I said, "I see by your face that you trust me. I must be plain spoken with you if I expect the same from you. I cannot attend your service because I am a Protestant. I am not only that, but a refugee, and I despise—"

"Softly, softly," he returned, lifting his hand as if to calm me. "I understand your feelings, but you will not find them shared. I'll trust a Protestant as well as a Catholic. Curse their religion, but they are honest men. King Louis broke the best bone in his body when he sent you away. But I am not a fool. The devil himself may serve me if he serves me well. I respect you for that."

I rose from my chair and he rose likewise. For a moment we stood fronting each other. I saw by the look of his eye that he was still in doubt. The moment had come for me to play my last card.

"This button," said I, handing it to him. "This button was given me by Captain Tew as an introduction."

While he was examining the button with great

interest, I continued to dwell on what I thought were significant details.

"The jolly captain cut it off his coat," I said. "I remember how he drew his cutlass and cursed it roundly as a clumsy tool for such a service. 'Take the button,' he said. 'It's a high price I pay you, for I value the name that's scratched on the back. By my soul! If Tommy Tew is ever taken, there'll be some damning tales in Yorke about the governor when they come to examine the buttons on his coat.' "

"Fletcher was a fool to send him those buttons," exclaimed Van Volkenberg. "But give me your hand, St. Vincent. You shall be my man. In the morning, if you still desire it, you shall put the red band upon your sleeve."

With that we shook hands.

"What ails the brute?" cried the patroon, for the dog was growling again and walking about me in sidelong circles.

Small wonder that he showed a strong aversion to me! I supposed that I had left him dead from our struggle in the woods. Doubtless his sides and neck still ached from that encounter.

"Perhaps I can quiet him," I said, smiling to myself.

But when I put out my hand towards him he bounded back with a yelp of terror. Then he dashed through the door and was gone.

"Humph!" exclaimed the patroon. "Like his mistress half the time."

"His mistress?" I cried in surprise, for I had thought that the dog belonged to the patroon.

"Yes," he answered, a frown gathering on his face. "Caesar belongs to a crazy old hag who lives in the hills. Meg of the Hills we call her. Poor Meg!"

I thought little of the dog's behavior then, but it was to come home to me before the night was over. Meantime, I felt more or less despondent, though, for the life of me, I could not say why. I had played my hand boldly and I had won. I was now, or should be in the morning, a member of the Red Band. I should be able to ferret out the patroon's secrets. I hoped to be able to trip him up and thus put an end to his evil practices forever. Yet when we clasped hands in final agreement, I felt instinctively that I had met my match. Could it be that there were two play-actors in Van Volkenberg manor that night when I thought that there was but one? Did he see deeper than he pretended to see? Was he, as well as I, playing a part? Time alone could tell. But nothing is ever mended by worry; the thought of this old maxim soon drove away my fears, and my spirits rose in consequence.

CHAPTER XVI

"FIRE AND SLEETE AND CANDLE-LIGHT"

Of all the crises of my life I am accustomed to think of the presentation of my silver button to the patroon as the most important. Nor did I underrate it at the time. On that night, when the manor was settling itself to sleep, I walked restlessly on the wide terrace, taking account of the game as it stood, of the cards in my hand, and reckoning forward on the play of the morrow.

The manor-house was a rambling stone structure of two stories. It abounded in irregular corners, and in long, gloomy corridors which crossed and forked as intricately as the streets of a city. On the north side, the side visible from the window of my room, there was a wide terrace. When I stepped upon it, it was mostly in the deep shadow. Here and there, however, the moonlight broke across it in narrow silver bands.

I was thinking about my new master and about the danger of my situation. Lady Marmaduke and Pierre had both penetrated my disguise. Was the patroon as keen-eyed as they? Had he recognized me also and had he guessed the secret of my presence? I recalled every word he had said, and every expression of his face, even the idle tapping of his finger tips. The more I pondered the

more I was at a loss. I could make nothing of the patroon's action beyond what appeared on the surface. So I gave over thinking of him and thought of pleasanter things.

There are few joys in this world greater than the approach of danger when it courts success. But when the certainty of success is absent one has not far to go to find happier stuff for musing. My mind was soon full of the girl Miriam. Here, in the very bosom of my enemy's house, where I was a spy in constant peril of my life, I had found one who, if not exactly my friend, had, at least, a strong claim upon my gratitude. I had no doubt now that I had met the patroon's daughter when I wandered in my trance, and that she had given me the miniature which I wore about my neck. In my dreams I had thought her an angel. To my waking eyes she appeared no less beautiful. Her tall, graceful figure, her calm eyes and dark hair, above all, her pride and her affection for my sister —all these qualities together won my heart. Though she was a Catholic, I could not cease to think of her as I had seen her when I crouched beneath her father's window, when she stood bravely facing his headlong anger on behalf of the girl whom she must have considered as a common servant. I made up my mind to protect her. I recalled the goblet that I had seen shatter against the wall. The idea of her needing a protector was not an idle dream.

While I was thinking about her she came towards me, walking slowly along the shadowy terrace. I first spied her white dress shimmering in the dark; then she stepped into a band of moonlight and her whole figure became radiant. I took off my hat, but she passed me without a word or even a bow of recognition. She seemed to have come out upon the terrace for no other purpose than to take the air. She continued to traverse it back and forth without paying any attention to me. Only once she seemed to notice me. Then she stopped in front of me, was about to speak, lifted her head proudly, and passed on.

While we were thus, a distant sound broke savagely upon our ears. The night had fallen very still, so still you could count the chirping crickets. A fringe of birches in the moonlight looked like a row of peering ghosts. The sudden sound that broke the stillness seemed at first to be some one calling out. It was coming nearer, though it came and went drearily. At times it was almost like a song. Occasionally it rose to a long mournful wail; after that there would be silence.

Mistress Van Volkenberg stopped to listen. She stood so near me that I could have touched her with my hand. I could hear her breathe in long gasping breaths. "She must not come to-night," I heard her mutter. "If I could only warn her back!"

"I am at your service, madam."

"Hush," she said. She stepped a little closer to me and continued: "It is Meg of the Hills, a poor crazy woman. But I love her. She used to be my mother's servant."

"Is it not safe for her?" I asked.

"Her wild ways anger my father," was her simple answer.

I needed no further explanation to know why she dreaded a meeting between the two. After five minutes, during which we listened in silence, Meg appeared at the edge of the wide stretch of turf that surrounded the house. She was still chanting her wild song, which was unlike any music I had ever fancied. Behind her, nosing her skirts, came the hound, Caesar, who had fled when I offered to touch him. I inquired again whether I should convey a warning message to her.

"No," answered my companion. "That would distress my father also. Let us wait."

The woman and the dog came nearer. They were about to pass us when the latter suddenly stopped and began to growl.

"What is it, Meg?" said my companion in a soothing tone. Then she gripped my arm tight. Her fingers trembled with excitement. I looked around for the cause and saw that her father had stepped upon the terrace. Meantime Meg of the Hills had caught sight of us. She stopped singing. The light fell upon her angular face, full of lines and ridges. Her long white hair streamed like sil-

ver down her back. Suddenly she stretched a long, skinny finger at me. She threw back her head like a baying dog. And she wailed in a grewsome drone:

> "Fire and sleete and candle-light,
> And Christ receive your soul."

"Meg," cried the patroon sharply, and in a moment was by her side.

Mistress Van Volkenberg put her lips close to my ear. "That is a bad omen and they are superstitious here. Be wary of yourself to-night."

I gave full heed to what she said, for the scene was already telling upon my nerves. But what did it mean? My companion would not stop to explain her warning. The patroon disappeared round the corner of the house with his witless charge. I remained alone upon the terrace like a man awakened from a dream. Yet this time I knew that it was no dream.

I did not forget her warning. When I shut the door of my room I looked to the priming of my pistols, drew my sword from its scabbard, and then lay down upon the bed without undressing. Some time later I awakened suddenly with the consciousness that I had been struck in the face; not a heavy blow, but a light one as if by some small object. I sat still, listening. Soon there came a sharp click upon the floor, then another as of something striking against the window frame. Someone was surely

throwing pebbles into my room from the outside. I rose and went to look out of my window, which was on the second floor. Below me in the moonlight stood Meg of the Hills. Her skinny finger was raised to her lips for silence. For a moment her features showed intense—what was it? Hatred, anger, fear—I know not. Then she threw up her hands, her head fell back, and she sang:

> "Fire and sleete and candle-light,
> And Christ receive your soul."

She pointed her hand at me, pronounced the words, "Be wary," and was gone swiftly like a shadow on the water. What struck me most was her changed manner. Early in the evening, I had heard her singing in a wild, harsh screech. Now she spoke under her breath, cunningly, as if in secret. Was she warning me and was there cause?

A narrow balcony ran along one side of the house at the level of the second floor, passing just in front of my window. At that moment I heard a casement open and some one step on this balcony. I drew back into my room, catching up my sword and pistols. I smelt danger in the air, though as yet none was visible. Suddenly I concealed myself behind the hangings on the wall. I did this because I saw some one come cautiously to my window and peer through it into my room. I looked again; I could not be mistaken; the figure,

the white hair; yes, it was Louis Van Ramm, the patroon's dwarf.

The room was too dark for him to see my bed. He listened for a short space of time, during which I thought he would surely hear my breathing. Then he crawled cautiously through the casement into my room. He was followed by a strapping fellow, almost a giant, armed with a huge two-handed sword. They had scarcely entered my room when I saw the patroon behind them upon the balcony just outside the window.

"Be quick," he said in an undertone. "He may wake at any moment."

The giant who had followed Louis stepped forward at this command from his chief. He stopped three feet from the side of the bed. I could see him outlined against the window though it must have been all dark to him. He poised the great clumsy weapon for a minute, and then swung it about his head. The blade sang through the air and fell across my bed with a deep thud. But for Meg I should have been lying there!

"My God!" shrieked the giant; and I never heard such agony in a human voice.

"What is it?" cried the patroon in alarm, at the same time springing into the room.

"There is no one here," answered the man who had made this attack upon my bed.

"So much the worse for you," returned his master. "Quick; we must get out of here. He is

probably down stairs upon the terrace. He may come back."

Then I beheld a scene the meaning of which I could but guess. The fellow who, from his size, could have overmatched both the patroon and the dwarf, cast away his sword, which fell with a loud clash upon the wooden floor. He forgot all caution in his abject terror. He threw himself before the patroon and clung to his knees.

"Mercy, mercy," he pleaded. "Have mercy."

"Hush," answered his master. "I offered you life for life. The man is not here. It cannot be. You are doomed."

"I cannot die, I cannot die, I cannot die," he wailed.

Louis sprang to the fellow's side and clapped his hand over his mouth to smother his cries. Then the three men prepared to leave the room as they had come, by the window. The patroon went first. He walked backward, holding his drawn sword before him. Louis was in the rear, dragging the great weapon that the murderer had cast away. I was soon to behold with horror the sequel to this scene, from which I had so narrowly escaped with my life. As yet, however, I could but guess the meaning of it.

For the benefit of those who are not familiar with the history of those times, I must repeat what I have already hinted in regard to the powers of the patroons. They were much like the barons of

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"I THOUGHT HE WOULD SURELY HEAR MY BREATHING." p. 157

the middle ages. They possessed, among other rights, the right to hold court, to try and condemn the persons who lived on their estate. It was not till later that I learned that Patroon Van Volkenberg had burst all bounds in this respect, and had carried this right so far that only his influence upon the island prevented a direct accusation from Bellamont. The patroons throughout the province saw with chagrin the growing power of the governor. It was their hope to end this for all time by some means, as yet not decided upon. Van Volkenberg alone, among them all, had had the courage to come out boldly and arm his household. This was, to his mind, the only way to advance the power of his class. The Red Band was the result. How it failed we shall learn in the following pages. When the time came for it to fall, it fell completely. Not a blot of it was left to cumber the earth. Even in my own day people have forgotten it. Only now and then do I find anyone who remembers the Red Band, and the rising of the people, and the fate of the patroon. But there are things in that old story of a past time that should be told, and therefore it is that I have set down this narrative to preserve a chronicle that has disappeared from the pages of history so completely that there are some who doubt its very existence.

The patroon, then, carried his fancied powers to the limits of life and death. On the afternoon of my arrival at Van Volkenberg manor, the man

who had visited my room in company with the patroon and his henchman in the dead of night, had been convicted of a misdemeanor worthy of death. He was not tried by a regular court such as the patroon was by law entitled to hold. His offense was a violation of one of the laws of the Red Band; and by the Red Band he was condemned to die. When I understood these facts at a later date, I had little trouble in understanding what had taken place in my room. The patroon had bribed him to kill me. The fellow's reward was freedom, escape from the sentence of the Red Band. How the patroon would have made it right with his followers I do not know; but so much must have been true. However, I am getting ahead of my story. When they left me I knew nothing of this. Nor, for a while, could I even guess at the meaning of what began to take place outside my window in front of the great terrace before the house.

Two men came out bearing upon their shoulders bundles of articles which I did not recognize till they were stuck upright in the ground at regular intervals. They were the cressets which I had seen burning on the first night when I came accidentally upon the Red Band at drill. Soon they were all ablaze. Then members of the Red Band began to gather by twos and threes, walking back and forth within the hollow square of light. Some were

talking; others were singing; all of them seemed to be under some strain that needed shaking off.

At last, when there were so many of them that I lost all count, they began to range themselves in an orderly fashion, facing the house. The lights flared fitfully, showing me how serious every face was. Still I was ignorant of what was going to happen.

I had in the meantime strolled out upon the terrace. It was not long before the patroon came out also. He saw me, nodded pleasantly, and faced the band. What he said to them partially explained the situation.

"Men of the Red Band: By your own decree, Ronald Guy has been adjudged guilty of violation of our laws, and is therefore worthy of death. The hour of execution has come. Let the chosen ten step forward."

Ten men stepped forward from the front rank of the company. Then, as they drew near the terrace, I noticed for the first time that ten muskets were lying there side by side. Each man took up one of the muskets.

"Only one of these weapons is loaded to kill," said the patroon. "The executioner will not know himself. Let each of you aim as if he did."

There was a short silence after that, broken only by the crackling of the fire in the cressets; next the sound of feet coming. A slow, steady tramp sounded along the hall. It came nearer, funereal

in its slowness. It sent the cold streaking down my back and I shuddered at the thought. They were bringing him to his death. He was blindfolded, but I knew him by his size. He had tried to take my life. I do not know what else he had done. Perhaps he merited death. In that dreadful moment I bore him no ill-will for what he had tried to do to me. Death is death, and the cold-blooded savagery of this scene was appalling.

While the condemned man was being brought forward the patroon was stern and silent. There was no token of remorse in his face. He betrayed no embarrassment when our eyes met. His cursed band of troopers was silent and still like so many statues. Now and then I would see an eye blink that was turned just right to reflect the light. I saw no other sign of life, though once I thought the whole band took breath together.

This execution in the dead of night was a cruel scene. The air was still. The wild flames of the sputtering torches was like hell. They sent long shadows leaping into the dark to lose themselves in the forest beyond. Nothing is so mysterious and so ghastly as many human beings crowded close together, and always still, still, still as death. The strain of what I looked upon became almost unendurable. I wanted to cry out. I wanted to say they should not do it. In a moment I should have shrieked. But relief came from an unexpected source.

The prisoner was told to stand still. The patroon made a sign to the chosen ten. They lifted their muskets to fire. I gripped tight hold of the railing in front of me. I shrank back and closed my eyes. The next moment I should hear the quick report of the guns and smell the deadly powder.

Instead, a shrill owl-hoot broke upon the air. It was a common sound in those parts, but it came so unexpectedly, when everyone was so keyed up, that one cry broke from the strained band of troopers. But it was no owl-hoot after all, only an imitation. It was followed immediately by the uncanny voice of crazy Meg:

> "Fire and sleete and candle-light,
> And Christ receive your soul."

"Fire," shouted the patroon.

The rifles crashed on the frosty air. A dull thud followed. When I looked up, Ronald lay huddled in a heap. I put my hand over my eyes to shut out the sight. When I looked again, Meg was at his side singing.

> "Is there ony room at your head, Ronald?
> Is there ony room at your feet?
> Is there ony room at your side, Ronald?
> Where fain, fain I wad sleep?"

I was not the only person who had been strained beyond endurance by the excitement of that mo-

ment. The patroon had lost his wits. He sprang to the old woman's side.

"Stop your nonsense, hag."

Again she threw back her head in that peculiar, dog-like way.

> "Haud your tongue, ye auld-faced knight,
> Some ill death may ye die!
> Father my bairn on whom I will,
> I'll father nane on thee."

He doubled up his fist and struck her square in the mouth. Like a pack of wolves the troopers fell in with their master's lead. They began to howl about her. One gripped her by the hair and pulled her down. Two others caught her by the legs to drag her across the terrace. God forgive them, they hardly knew what they did! I was struck with horror, then with surprise. For Louis Van Ramm sprang like a snake upon his master and caught him by the throat.

"Call off your dogs," he yelled. "Call off your dogs or I'll strangle you."

The patroon obeyed him like a child. It was all he could do to control his followers. It was a grand sight to see the old man plow fearlessly among them, and try to undo what he had done. He battled his way inch by inch to Meg's side. Soon his influence began to tell. The tumult stilled apace. One by one the troopers slunk away. Before long we were all alone.

"Meg," said the patroon with almost a touch of tenderness in his voice. "Meg, are you hurt?"

The prostrate woman raised herself upon her elbow. "And if ye dare to kiss my lips," she sang, "sure of your bodie I will be."

"For God's sake," cried the patroon. "Will she never have done with that?"

He threw up his arms and staggered backward towards the house. His daughter was there to meet him in the doorway. She put her arm about him and supported him away. He seemed to have gone suddenly senseless.

My first care was the old woman. She was unhurt, though overcome by the nervous shock. I carried her to a place of safety, the little dwarf following us like a faithful dog. When we had revived the old woman, he and I returned to bury Ronald Guy. All the other members of the band had disappeared as if they were afraid to remain on the scene of their lawless deed. We had closed the grave and were about to part, when Louis put out his hand.

"I shall not tell you what we have been doing to-night," he said. "But I swear, before God, hereafter to be your good friend."

With that he went back to old Meg, and I returned to my room.

CHAPTER XVII

THE EVENTS OF NEXT DAY

Considering the events of that night, one may be tempted to suppose that I lay awake for a long time in restless anxiety. But I did no such thing. I had had a hard day of it, and, in addition to that, my personal sorrow and the reaction from what I had passed through, so overcame me that I fell into a kind of stupor, and slept without undressing. When I awoke in the morning it was broad day. The room, however, was not bright, for the shutters, which had been open when I went to bed, had blown together during the night. A sheet of dusty sunlight slanted through the room. I lay half awake, half asleep, watching the shadows fold like tapestry in the sunbeams. I tried to see pictures in them as one does in the clouds of a summer's night; and soon I found myself dwelling upon the grotesque features of the dwarf, and on the words he had spoken to me when we parted the night before.

"I shall not tell you what we have been doing," he had said. "But I swear, before God, hereafter to be your true friend."

I knew that he had spoken the truth. A few moments before he had been engaged in an at-

tempt to take my life; yet, when he said these words, his voice rang with unmistakable sincerity. He looked me in the face, which is not the way of a liar, and the expression in his face was the expression of truth itself. Of this fact I was mortally certain. What had I done to make his feeling change towards me? We had had but a small matter of words. I had helped him to carry poor old Meg to a place of safety. What else had I done? "Ha!" thought I. "It was she who first warned me of my danger." Could it be that there was some connection between these two, some unexplained relation that would put a new light upon the small kindness I had shown her? I sprang to my feet. Then I discovered—for I had come fully awake at last—that the door of my room was shut tight and barred on the outside.

I fell into a rage. Had they not done enough the night before? Was this some new trap they had laid for me? I beat and banged upon the floor. I kicked viciously against the door. It did not take much of this to bring a response. There was a clattering of feet in the corridor without, the bolt was quickly drawn back and then the door flew open. In the hallway opposite my door stood the patroon. The white-haired dwarf, peering beneath his arm, was making strange faces at me from his half-sheltered position behind his master's back. Did he mean them for signs of warning? Beyond

these two clustered half a dozen surprised domestics.

Van Volkenberg gazed at me for a moment and then burst into a fit of hearty laughter.

"So they locked you in, did they? Ha, ha, ha! I forgot to tell them that there was a new lodger in the house. We forgot it, eh, Louis?"

He spoke with his usual precision, as if reciting a lesson. There was no light in his eyes and the moment he was done talking his face became stolid and set like one who has said his part and was glad to be done with it. The patroon was a good actor, and yet there were times when a child could see through his artifice. As he turned to the dwarf, Louis' face, which a moment before had been strangely contorted, instantly grew impassive. I conceived the idea that he had been making signs, wishing to convey some secret intelligence to me. Whereupon I resolved to give him a chance to speak to me in private if he chose to do so.

"By my soul, St. Vincent!" exclaimed the patroon. "You have slept late."

"Have I? Indeed, I do not know what time it is," I answered, scarce knowing what to say. The patroon was so ill at ease, so manifestly acting a part, that I knew it behooved me to be careful and not to lose my temper.

"It is hard upon the hour of noon," he continued. "Come, come; you shall break your fast royally despite the hour."

We set out along the corridor, which was dimly lighted and echoed the sound of our footsteps in a gloomy manner. This was the time to test the dwarf, and to find out what he had to communicate to me.

"I have forgotten my sword," I cried to him. "Will you fetch it?"

Without a moment's hesitation the dwarf started back towards my room. I can see him yet, almost running in his quick, mincing steps, his half-bent arms dipping to the same time, and his ill-shaped head and flowing locks of white hair all bobbing together in unison. Yet for all this apparent haste he progressed no faster than an ordinary walk.

I let him proceed but a short distance when I made some excuse to the patroon and followed his henchman to my room. When I got there, Louis was already bending over my bed, where my sword lay. One arm was up and one heel slightly off the ground, as if he had suddenly been arrested in the midst of his capricious way of walking. I touched him on the shoulder and he collapsed with startled fear. Evidently he had not heard me approach.

"Louis," I said, "that was a strange promise you made to me last night. What did you mean by it?"

Suddenly his whole figure was transformed. I saw this change often in the next few weeks, but then it was new to me and almost took my breath

away. When Louis walked he seemed all joints and quivering elastic bands. Now, like a flash, he turned to stone—nay, to steel and iron. Every tremor of his body vanished. Every line in his face, the very droop of his hair made one feel as if the Gorgon's head had been thrust before him. Then he gripped my hand, and I winced inwardly from the pain of it.

"Hush," he whispered. "You can trust me. She is my mother. Hark! The patroon is coming back. Let me warn you hastily. There is distrust here. Do not start whatever you may hear down stairs. Beware, you are treading on a powder mine. Believe me. I am your friend. She is my mother. Let that suffice for reason."

That moment the patroon returned. Louis began helping me to buckle on my sword. In a moment all his rigidity had disappeared and his old manner returned to him. I had no time then to think of the suspicion he had referred to, for the patroon led me down stairs to the dining room at once. As we traversed the corridor for the second time, I could hear Louis' pattering steps behind us like a faithful dog; and in my mind's eye I saw his wagging head and bent arms keeping time to his nimble step.

As I say, we went below, but had hardly entered the dining room when Mistress Miriam darted into it. She was bonneted, dressed in riding clothes, and her cheeks were flushed with exercise.

"Oh, father," she cried passionately, "Monsieur Le Bourse is dead."

"Dead!" echoed the patroon.

At that moment I felt Louis Van Ramm's fingers close on my wrist like a vise. In an instant he relaxed his grip, for the patroon turned to look at me.

"You are pale," he said abruptly. "You should be hungry."

But of the two, he must have been the paler.

However, he would have nothing more to say to me till I had eaten. I was not sorry, for, in very truth, I was as hungry as a bear, and the silence that followed gave me time to think over what had happened.

Evidently Louis's warning and the locking of my door were pieces of the same cloth. No doubt of Louis's honesty came into my mind. I knew by an experience I had had in France that a deformed person like this dwarf was likely, however vicious he might be at heart, to feel a dog-like attachment to any one who had befriended him. The fact that Meg was his mother was enough to justify my belief in his honesty. I felt now that, beyond peradventure, I might trust in him. But the suspicion he had warned me against—what was that? What could it be but that I was discovered? I recalled the fact that both Lady Marmaduke and Pierre had recognized me. Had the patroon? I

confess to trembling at the moment, and I looked up to see if I were noticed.

"Your hand trembles," said the patroon. Trust him for seeing everything that was in sight!

"Trembles," I answered. "Which?"

"Your right," he replied, with a vicious smile on his dark features.

I stretched my right hand out before him as steady as his own.

"Mere accident," I said, careful not to show either too much disregard or too much interest in what he had just said. "What made you think so, or did it really tremble for an instant?"

"I thought it did, Le Bourse, but I may have been mistaken."

I fell to eating savagely. He had called me by my right name! Ah, yes; Louis was right. That was his master's suspicion, was it? But now I was fully warned. He should not catch me napping. I paid no attention to his remark and went on eating. This behavior seemed to reassure the patroon. When I next looked up he wore a more satisfied expression. His elbows were on the edge of the table and his eyes fixed on the tips of his fingers, which were tapping each other softly.

"Now you are done eating," he said at last, "let us hear her story. Miriam, tell us of your visit."

I then learned that, for some reason unknown to herself, Mistress Van Volkenberg had been sent by her father to Lady Marmaduke's, in New York.

Her errand was to inquire my whereabouts. She was told at the hall that I was dead and that my body lay in the small room upstairs, which had been mine.

"Ay, but was he dead?" interrupted her father. "Did you see him, Miriam?"

"Yes," she answered. "I saw him. Oh!" She shuddered and turned to leave the room.

Mistress Van Volkenberg, then almost unknown to me, was a woman who could not pass unnoticed in any place. She was tall and slender, with a high forehead and piercing brown eyes like her father's. What most characterized her, however, was the color in her cheeks. I have seen her since in sickness and in health, and always there was the same color of blooming red, which was the more welcome for the beauty it gave her face. She was flushed, perhaps overflushed, when she left the room, and both the patroon and I noticed it.

"Poor child," he said softly with a yearning look in his eyes. "She has had too much excitement. I should not have sent her."

Van Volkenberg had little to say for a while. He was wholly taken up with the news his daughter had brought. Often he would be in a brown study for minutes at a time. I said nothing to rouse him, for I was bound that he should lead our conversation till I should be less in the dark as to what he knew about me. At last he seemed to notice how evident his moody conduct was.

"This man Le Bourse," he said, at the same time bending his bright eyes upon my face as if he would read me through and through, "this man, Le Bourse, was a man I wished to see. Alas the while! I wish he were yet alive."

"A friend of yours?" I asked, mustering my voice as well as I could. I knew instinctively that I was under examination.

"No, hardly a friend; and yet I owed him some reparation for an injury. I wish he were here."

"There is no fetching dead men back to life," I said. And then I added: "At least in the flesh."

"He will not haunt me, if that is what you mean."

The patroon walked thoughtfully across the room, and stood for some time with his back towards me, looking out of the window across the broad terrace where I had seen Ronald Guy and the execution the night before. I could see his figure relax and droop a little.

"Alas, poor Guy," I heard him mutter. He could afford to pity, now that it was all over.

Then his figure against the lighted window stiffened and he seemed to gather strength again. Two minutes later, when he turned to face us once more, he was quite himself. The night before I had asked myself a question; now I was ready to answer it. Yes, there were two actors in Van Volkenberg manor. I was one. The other was the patroon.

And from that moment I conceived a fair notion

of how the ground lay between us. Perhaps he knew me, perhaps not; but, at any rate, he suspected me, and this was like to prove my ruin. I recalled just then one of the war cries of the English revolution that my father used to talk so much about. The King and the parliament were pitted one against the other till the bitter end. It was the great church hero, Cromwell, so my father used to say, who first foresaw what the end was going to be. Then grew up that motto, "Thy head or my head," which neither Roundhead nor Cavalier forgot for many years.

Thus it was between Van Volkenberg and me. Disclaim superstition as I would, I could not resist the idea that fate had had a hand in our first meeting and had molded subsequent events. Van Volkenberg, as I learned later, regarded me with even greater superstition than I felt towards him. Though I managed to allay his suspicions for a while, he never seemed quite free in my presence, even when he took me into his confidence and made me his right hand man.

As I said, he turned towards us from the window overlooking the terrace, and his manner was quite composed.

"Come to my room," he said cheerily. "I have something of importance to say to you. You may come, too," he added to the dwarf.

We went to the room where he had first received me when I came to the manor-house to present my

silver buttons. I glanced warily around the room. There were the books and the maps on the walls, the table littered with papers, and the windows on one side flooding the center of the room with light. I was with my face to the window and the patroon stood opposite me.

"Sit."

As he jerked out the short monosyllable, he waved his hand to Louis and me. The dwarf climbed into a huge chair and collapsed loosely into a heap till you would hardly have recognized in him a human being.

The patroon, however, made a more striking figure. He was dressed all in black, save for the crimson cap he always wore in the house, and the pale lace about his neck and wrists. His long black coat was trimmed in silver buttons artificially darkened till they were of a deep grey. His knee breeches and hose were also black. His shoes, instead of being fastened with huge silver buttons, as was the custom, were tied with narrow black ribbons. His black robes set off his silvery hair—prematurely white through trouble and disease—with superb effect. The only other bit of color about him was the gold head of his ebony cane, which he held between his thumb and forefinger, as if he were about to lift it lightly from the floor.

But all this description of how the patroon looked is the result of a moment's glance and after recollection. For almost in an instant I forgot every-

thing, and saw only those eagle eyes like jewels gazing at me. Was it the dove and the serpent over again? No, no, Patroon Van Volkenberg. You have a man to deal with this time. "Thy head or my head," saith the King.

At last he spoke to me.

"If you are to cut a figure in the Red Band, you must know somewhat of my affairs. I spoke a while ago of a man Le Bourse." He kept his eyes fiercely on me. "I have cause to hate this dog, for I hold him little better than a dog. If I ever have him in arm's reach—you saw how I dealt with Ronald Guy?"

"Yes, I saw it. What is your grievance against Le Bourse?"

"I have done him wrong."

"Therefore you would do him more?"

"Is not that logic? I would break him upon the rack. Bah, he is no fool. I must watch him close."

"I thought he was dead."

"Ay, dead if not alive. Lately he had the impudence to hang about that very window and spy upon my affairs."

He jerked his thumb over his shoulder, but he kept his eyes on me. I saw through his plot clearly. He did not know that I was Le Bourse, but he thought so, and wanted me to betray myself. I was more than a match for him, however, as events soon proved. He told me briefly what he knew of my escapade of a few nights before and how it led up

to his expulsion from the privy-council. All the while he watched me narrowly, though now and then glancing for a moment at Louis, who seemed more asleep than awake in the great chair. At last the patroon let his cane slip. It came down with a startling rattle upon the floor, and when he picked it up again he leaned back in his chair with a silent, sullen manner. He was evidently at the end of his string for that moment. My first ordeal was over. He had tried me in the balance and found—nothing. Evidently the patroon was not convinced one way or the other.

He did not wait long before he was at me again. This time he took a new tack that was harder to resist ten times over. He began to talk about Ruth. So long as his thrusts were aimed at me alone the game was in my own hands. But he played strong cards when he alluded to my sister. I had much ado to control my feelings. He must have seen me wince more than once. But, besides an angry flush or two, or a sign of sullen humor, I did nothing to increase his suspicions, though, on the other hand, I did nothing to allay them. For my part, I was drawn tight as a harp string. I felt that one more twist of the key would snap me, come what would. Then it all ended suddenly and in a marvelous way. Just as I was at my wit's end for self-control, I heard the patroon gasp and cry out:

"My God, St. Vincent, do you know whom I took you for? I thought you were Le Bourse."

They say it is nearly a hundred years since the English play writer wrote his Hamlet; yet it is so good a play that it can still be seen upon the London stage. I well remember a scene in it where Hamlet is laying what he calls a mouse-trap to catch his uncle Claudius. Hamlet has the players play something like the murder of his father before the King. Hamlet thought that if the King were guilty he would betray himself by some sign. Once in dumb show and once in real acting the murder was performed before the King, who remained calm and silent, betraying no sign of guilt. This failure of his plan so exasperated Hamlet that he broke down himself and flew into hysterics singing little nonsense songs. In the confusion, the King called for a light and took his leave. But I could see from the expression of his face that another moment would have broken him.

This was the situation of the patroon. While he had been piercing me with one prong of the fork the other turned and twisted among his own nerves. It was when my calm behavior became too much for him that he broke down pitifully, crying that he took me for Le Bourse. Hardly had he said it than he repented; but it was too late. For very shame he had to disguise his suspicion now. So he carried on his play-acting; but I was well aware that the confidence he now pretended to show in me was acting like the rest.

"Well, well, well. I'll just tell you all. Henrie—

I'll first name you now because you are in the Red Band—Henric, do you know how near you were to following Ronald Guy? Ronald was a good man in his way, but there was no obedience in his bones. Louis, whom did we take St. Vincent for?"

The dwarf looked at me for a full minute before he said a word. Then he replied:

"We took you for Michael Le Bourse."

"Ay, that we did," continued Van Volkenberg. "Do you remember Caesar? We set him on your track last night. Where do you think he went? Straight for my study window on the outside. Perhaps you don't know that this Michael Le Bourse stood out there the other night—well, if he were not dead he should feel my hand." The patroon's face clouded for an instant; then he continued: "When the dog went there I thought that you were Le Bourse in disguise, for there is a familiar look about your eyes, and I only half believed your story. But Ronald's business pressed, and after that Louis held out that it was all a mistake."

"It was," mumbled the dwarf.

"Yes, yes, stick to it. Louis is a bulldog to his belief. Nothing would suit him but to try the hound again. This time he led us a long chase to a place where Louis had met some friends of his by Webber's tavern—never mind who they were. Do what we could, the hound would not take another scent. So Louis stuck out that there was no meaning in it at all, and I had to give in to him.

But fast on that came a report that you—I mean, Le Bourse—had gone post for Albany. I'm quick at putting two and two together, and I said to Louis: 'Not at all. He's gone post to the Hanging Rock.' It came close to going hard with you then."

"How did it come to pass otherwise?" I managed to say in a tolerably firm voice.

"Let Louis tell. It was his doing. Speak up my little hawk."

He lifted his impassive face slowly. "It is my habit to make sure. The master could not go. The young mistress was the only other one who had seen you. I said, 'Send her.' "

"And she found you dead." The patroon laughed loudly at his joke. "Yes, she found you dead. So that settled my doubts. Here is my hand. Welcome to the Red Band."

After a few more words he dismissed the dwarf in order to talk to me alone.

"St. Vincent," he began, "I have a delicate task for you to undertake. Doubtless you know that I and my household are in bad repute in Yorke. You see, this putting arms into the hands of my retainers is a new custom in the province. We patroons are bound to get the power, but I am the only one who has had the courage to begin in the proper way. The gossips tell strange stories about me and mine. I keep them away from the ears of Miriam; but—God bless her!—she loves to see the gay

sights of the town. I shall let her ride to Yorke this afternoon and you shall ride with her. Mind you keep her ears stuffed with wax against the common murmur. That is your task."

Towards three o'clock I stood before the terrace beside our horses awaiting Mistress Miriam's coming out. Soon she came. The blood mantled in her cheek and she drew back when her eyes fell upon me.

"I thought I should go alone or with Annetje," she said to her father.

"I think that Monsieur St. Vincent will be better company. Pretty maids like you should not ride alone nowadays."

Whether she objected to riding with me, or whether she suspected that I was set as a spy upon her, one could not have told from anything she said or did. She thanked me kindly, so kindly for my trouble, that I did not feel the pain of her refusal. She bade me lead her horse back to the stable and then re-entered the house.

I had hardly taken the saddle off when Louis came in all apant with running.

"Put it on again," he cried. "She has changed her mind."

I resaddled the horse. Five minutes later Mistress Van Volkenberg stepped upon the terrace. She wore the same riding habit as before, but this time she wore a mask that concealed her features. When I helped her to mount, she bowed her thanks,

but did not speak to me. Soon we were riding at a rapid pace through the park towards New York.

I rode behind as fitted a man in my position. When we neared the Kissing Bridge she reined in her horse slowly till we rode side by side. I wondered at her action. Something little Pierre had said about Annetje and the way she always made him go before when they crossed the Kissing Bridge caused a shadow to fill my heart. Was my young mistress—? I did not have time to follow the thought further before she laid her hand upon my bridle. Both horses stopped with their front feet upon the bridge. I could see her eyes twinkling through the holes in her mask.

"Why do we stop?" I asked.

"Why do we stop? Why don't you—" She laid her hand lightly upon my shoulder. "Why don't you kiss me?"

I started back suddenly. My companion burst into the happiest, merriest peal of laughter I ever heard.

"What a coward. I shall tell Pierre."

With that she snatched off her mask. To my astonishment, I saw the dancing black eyes of my mistress' maid, Annetje Dorn.

CHAPTER XVIII

ANOTHER SECRET BURIAL

My astonishment was so complete that several minutes passed before I could find voice enough to ask what this deception meant. Annetje soon quieted her laughter and was ready to explain.

"My dear mistress," she began, "is an angel out of heaven. She is always making chances for me to see Pierre. To-day, when she would not go to Yorke with you, I begged her to let me go in her place. She is so sweet. She can never bear to say 'no' to anything unless someone does wrong."

Annetje indicated what would happen then by a disconsolate shrug of her shoulders.

"I don't know why she should have taken such a liking to you. I dare say now, if you had been here longer—oh, I don't mean that at all. I think you are very—very— Shall we ride towards Yorke?"

I could not help laughing a little at Annetje's embarrassment.

"Mistress Annetje," I said.

"I'm a bond-servant, sir. Plain Annetje, if you please."

"Plain Annetje, then, what is your purpose now?"

"To put on my mask again. Now, I have it

placed; will you tie it in the back? Look, here in my face; is it right? Do my ears show under the bottom?"

All this occurred on the Kissing Bridge. I made sure as I tied Annetje's ribbons that she was still chuckling behind her mask, though she spoke like a Puritan.

"If you had kissed me I should have told my mistress. No I should not, neither. We never do anything she does not like. Do you know how you touched her heart by crying over that dear little Ruth we all loved so much? There you go again. You must be soft indeed. Mistress was telling me all about it. But here comes Pierre; I knew we should meet him."

Sure enough, my friend Pierre was riding on the road ahead of us, and would meet us in a moment.

"I am going to play the mistress," continued Annetje. "You two must ride behind me just the same."

I did not know what to make of this meeting with Pierre. It was not his custom, as I knew very well, to ride a good horse. He could not be here by appointment or Annetje would not try to fool him as to who she really was. Perhaps he had ridden out in the mere hope of stumbling across me. He was on a horse I had seen in the Marmaduke stables, which fact confirmed me in this opinion. Perhaps he had matters of importance for my ear.

"Ha, Pierre," I heard his sweetheart say in a high

unnatural voice as they passed. "You see I ride in disguise now. Will you turn and accompany us? I have a new groom. Monsieur St. Vincent, this is Pierre, the barber."

Pierre looked surprised. Evidently Annetje was not copying with success her gentle mistress' manner. She seemed to know this fact, for her next words contained a half apology for her behavior.

"Don't look amazed, my little friend. You see I have a disguise to keep up now, and I practice by the way. I should have brought Annetje to accompany me—ah, you wish I had? My father could not spare us both. You waste too much time on the little flirt, Pierre."

"She is severe at times," he answered mournfully. "I sometimes grow so weary waiting for her to come round."

"Bah! You are a milky lover to say so. I'd wait a life-time if I were you. Alas, all men are alike! She is right when she says that you are a white-livered, chicken-hearted snip of a coward not worth the cheese in a mousetrap. Pooh, you are a fine lover. Good Lord deliver me!"

"Oh, Mistress Miriam, does she say all that? If you only knew how I do everything she tells me, and stand on my toes from morning till night when she is around, and I have corns to boot, and fetch her ribbons, and she won't even cross the Kissing Bridge, where everybody does if they are no nearer than half a mile."

"To the kennels with your love if that is all it's worth."

In her last exclamation Annetje had dropped into her natural voice. Pierre was so down-hearted that he did not notice the change; but Annetje, fearing to expose herself further, galloped ahead and Pierre took his place by my side. As for me, I had little enough of sympathy for him, and felt more in a mood for laughing. If there is anything on this earth I cannot abide it is a whiny lover. I remember once a fellow whose opinion of himself was better than most folks' and he used to go about from morning to night with his face as long as a cucumber thinking all the while of what he might have been doing while another fellow came in and ran off with the prize before his eyes. I was minded to tell Pierre the story of this fellow and how he went into a decline and died without as much sympathy as would go to make an ordinary case of the blues, but he got so quick to work upon his other concerns that I forgot all about it till the time was past.

"This is an odd manner for the young mistress," he said. "But I suppose she is glad to get out again. Annetje says that the patroon keeps her close. I told her that I should ride along the road here every day. I did not know when I should meet you, but I knew that you would come along some day. I wish Annetje had come."

"There were strange happenings at the manor-house to-day, Pierre."

"So there were at Marmaduke Hall. I was walking in the crowd on the Slip when someone put his hand into my pocket. There were so many people that I could not make out who it was, but I found that he had left your letter in my pocket."

"My letter! In your pocket!"

"Yes, the letter you wrote last night."

"I wrote no letter."

"Yes you did. I received it."

"Not from me. What was it like?"

"It was very short and said that the excuse of going to Albany would not do; that a messenger was coming from the manor-house to inquire after you and must find you dead. We thought it a piece of foolery at first, though who but you knew enough to write the letter. But first thing we knew, Mistress Miriam rode up to ask where you were. Lady Marmaduke saw her coming and suspected that the letter was true. So she rubbed my face with flour, found me a false beard that they used to act with when they gave plays there, and made me into your corpse in the twinkling of an eye. If the tender-hearted mistress had not been full of tears, she would never have taken me for you, nor for a corpse either, for I jumped when one of her tears fell plump into my eye. She just turned away, saying something about your sister had she been alive."

I stifled a sob at this. Everyone but me was free to mourn aloud for Ruth.

"I sent no such letter, Pierre. What do you suppose it means?"

He had no explanation to give and I offered none of my own. But I knew beyond a doubt that Louis was true to his word. Who but Louis could have warned the Marmadukes in this way? If he had done so, then he must know who I was. Verily I was on slippery ground, but there I was, and there was neither drawing back nor going forward beyond a certain pace, and that pace was not in my own ruling. I began to think that the patroon had an enemy besides myself in the bosom of his household. Perhaps, after all, it would be through Louis that I should win out in the end; but I little foresaw the truth, or the trouble that was to come before the end, when the clouds should clear above the band of fallen troopers.

"Yonder is the city wall," said Pierre. "I had best not go into town by your side. We should not be seen together, so I will just take my leave."

He left me abruptly and turned down a side lane almost before I knew that he was gone; then I galloped ahead to overtake Annetje Dorn. We entered the city, riding one abreast the other. We had no sooner reached the open space before the Stadt Huys than a new adventure presented itself, an adventure which tested my companion's nerve to the utmost.

"There is the Earl of Bellamont," she said. "He will take me for my mistress and speak to me. What shall I do?"

"You must stick it out," I answered. "Look sharp now. This must be gone through with."

When we first spied the Earl we were in the midst of a large open place near the fort. Even at that distance I could mark the easy, erect bearing that made him the envy of all the horseback riders in the province. He was bowing right and left to the many persons he met on every hand, and so did not see us until we were quite upon him. When he did see us, however, he bowed low as if he had met a queen. He was much different in this respect from his wife. The Earl, in fact, was free with the ladies and cordial to everyone, but it was a well-known piece of gossip that he would not let his wife stir from the fort without a watch. She had been wild in her youth, and had married him when she was but a child. Now he was jealous as a woman about her, but with himself it was a different matter altogether.

"A welcome greeting, Mistress Van Volkenberg." He knew her well enough by the trappings of her horse, and by the red band on my arm. "I must tell my Lady Bellamont that you ride now with a mask. It has always been her wish, you know, that the maidens of the province should not be so free with their pretty faces."

"Your Excellency speaks sweet flattery," an-

swered Annetje. The bridle trembled in her hand, but her voice rang like metal.

"And your father—is the patroon well?"

His face clouded a bit, I thought, as he said this; but there were gentlemen in Yorke in those days that have passed away, and the Earl of Bellamont never failed in courtesy to a woman.

"My father is well, your Excellency. This is a new retainer of his—Monsieur St. Vincent."

"Ah, Monsieur St. Vincent, you are welcome to the province. It is always our wish to obtain such men as you. Broad shoulders and a true heart, they are the strength of Yorke." He turned to Annetje. "We must see your pretty face unmasked at the Assembly Ball—and Monsieur St. Vincent also," bowing to me.

He would have invited the devil himself if he had come in company with a lady; but had he known what a revelation I should bring to that public ball the color would have left his cheeks. But that is to come. A few more commonplace remarks passed between us and then we parted.

"I can understand it now," said Annetje as we rode towards home. "I often wonder how he keeps it all away from our sweet mistress; but if all the men are like that—no wonder. Who would have thought that he was talking to the daughter of his worst enemy? Yet she—God bless her innocent heart—she does not even know that her father is in disgrace with the privy-council."

"But you seem to."

"Ay, Pierre," she answered, indicating the source of her information.

She turned towards me, taking off her mask as she did so. We were out in the country again, following a by-path north of the city where there was no longer any danger of meeting folk to recognize us. I had been used to see in her a merry face sparkling with humor. Now, when she unmasked, her brows were puckered up, and her childish face wore a sober, puzzled look.

"Ay, Pierre. I love him if I do tease him. What is more, I trust him, too. He knows me well. Your secret is safe with me, Monsieur Le Bourse. You see that I know all about you. I brought you out this afternoon because I knew that we should meet Pierre. I dare say you had something for his ear if he had none for yours. I do not know why you are here. I do not even ask. Pierre is your safety and I am satisfied. But beware; I am a watchdog to my mistress. If you do anything against her I'll cut your throat."

"Annetje," I cried. "You can trust me there. I shall protect her with my life for the love she bore my sister. Tell me one thing. How is it that she can stand what is going on at Hanging Rock?"

"She does not know it."

"How can she help knowing it?"

"Because we all love her. Even the patroon would lay down his life for her. Do you suppose

he is afraid to have her know the truth? It is because he loves her and would save her pain."

"I have seen him try to strike her with a glass."

"It was in anger. He has a strange infirmity that comes upon him suddenly. He does not know what he is doing when it has got hold of him. She forgives all that, her heart is so big."

"But last night—the death of Ronald Guy?"

"Hush, not a word of that before her. She knows nothing of all that."

"But she does know it. She was on the terrace. I saw her with my own eyes."

"Yet she does not know it. We are used to the Red Band drilling at night. I knew what was coming yesterday, and at night I drew her curtains close so she could not see what was going on. When the guns went off she sprang out of bed. She heard her father's cry. I could not stop her before she threw on a cloak and ran down stairs in her bare feet. She met her father in the doorway taken with one of his strange fits. She had no eyes for anything but him. She did not see poor Ronald lying in a heap, nor Meg."

"She cannot be kept in ignorance forever. How long has this thing been going on?"

"Not long. The Red Band is a new thing. It will bring ruin upon the house. My poor mistress, when she learns the truth! The truth will break her heart, she is so strong for right." The tears

were streaming out of the poor girl's eyes. "Promise me you will do nothing to harm my mistress."

"I swear before God I shall protect her."

Then we fell to musing and rode for half an hour before Annetje asked me to tie her mask again.

"It is time we were going home," she said. "There is some distance yet, for I have led you round about and we are scarcely a quarter of a mile from the city wall."

A hundred yards brought us to the Post Road, along which we turned to the left, galloping rapidly northward towards the Hanging Rock. On our right, not more than a mile from the town was, and is for aught I know to the contrary, an old tumble-down tannery. We were approaching this ramshackle building when five men suddenly dashed out on us. They were all rough looking fellows, and each one of them wore a black mask over his face. In spite of this disguise, I recognized the hindmost man. The jumbled figure like a mass of jelly in the saddle—so unlike the stiffness with which he sometimes rode—proclaimed him to be Louis Van Ramm. Because of his presence I could hardly believe this sortie to be an attack upon me till I heard the cry of the foremost rider caught up and repeated by the others.

"Down with him. Down with the Red Band. Fire."

Four of their muskets rang out at once. I heard Annetje scream, and expected to fall dead, but I

was not even hurt. The fifth man had got so close to me that he shot off his gun at my very breast. Then Louis raised the butt end of his musket and struck me on the head. All this happened so suddenly that I had not had time even to draw my sword. When Louis's gun fell, I reeled. I just remember Annetje's shriek, and the hoofbeats of her horse like a great echoing drum. Next I felt myself sliding from the saddle, and then all is a blank to this day.

My grandfather used to say, "Telling dreams is but another name for lying;" so I shall not speak of the glorious visions of war and battle that thronged through my brain before I came to myself again. But regain consciousness I did, and in the following manner.

I remembered the drumbeats of Annetje's horse as I reeled from the saddle, and when I came to myself again the first sound that fell on my ear was the sound of a hammer. I was lying on my back on the floor of a dimly lit outhouse. Ten feet away from me two men were making a box.

Luckily I had come to my senses quietly and had made no noise to attract their attention. For all the two workmen knew I might be still asleep—or dead, as they doubtless supposed. I made haste to stretch myself in that half sort of way which is as good as none, for I did not really move a muscle;

I only strained a little here and there to make sure I was still alive.

The effect of the blow that had rendered me unconscious had passed away. Save for the ringing in my ears and the dull heavy pain in the crown of my head, I was all right and my wit was as clear as ever. So soon as I ascertained this fact, and had recollected the fight on the road, I set myself to unravel the present situation.

It must have been about sundown, and I soon discovered that the place where I lay was the old disused tannery. One of the two workmen I did not know; the other was Louis Van Ramm. Now for the first time I had a chance to think what his presence here meant. Evidently this attack had been instigated by the patroon—how otherwise could the dwarf be mixed up in it? But what part was he really playing? Were all his protestations of the morning false, or had he joined them only to hinder the execution of their plans? Then I remembered that it was his blow that had struck me down. I cursed him in my heart for it; but I was soon to learn that I was unjust in this suspicion.

However, despite my efforts to be still, I soon made a slight noise.

"My God!" cried the workman. "Was that him?"

"Couldn't be," replied Louis. "But I'll look again and make sure."

He dropped his hammer and came mincing to

my side. As he bent over me I opened my eyes and looked square into his face. He hissed between his teeth for silence and laid his clumsy hand over my mouth for an instant. Then he got up and rejoined his companion.

"He's as dead as a rock, and getting stiff. No fear of him, Barker."

"If he's dead," returned Barker, "devil a fear have I. I'll risk his ghost." Then he added after a pause: "I hope we shall get out of here before night."

"Little chance of that," said Louis. "This is not a job the patroon will have finished in daylight."

"Is he coming himself to see us bury him?"

"Yes. Get to work. This isn't much of a coffin; but, such as it is, it must be finished against his coming back."

So they were making my coffin and were going to bury me. "If they could," I thought. But perhaps they had reckoned without me. If I made a sudden spring I could easily master Barker, or both of them if Louis proved my enemy. But Louis knew not only that I was alive, but also that I was conscious. Had he been playing me false he would not have deceived his partner. So I observed his warning to be silent, and lay perfectly still for some time.

Soon they finished their job, and Barker suggested that they box me up. Louis assented, and they came over to my side. I squinted between my

lids and awaited some sign from the dwarf. I felt sure that he had planned something and that it was my cue to wait. Barker took hold of my hand.

"Why, he's warm, Van Ramm."

"Warm," said Louis. "Nonsense; feel his heart."

The fellow bent over me. At the very instant, Louis gave him a prodigious shove from behind that tumbled him down across my chest.

"Grip him, Vincent," cried the dwarf. "Grip him tight."

I threw up my arms and locked them round the fellow's back. Then I felt a sharp twinge of pain, for Louis had driven his dagger clean through my enemy's back and half an inch into my own flesh. Barker gave a convulsive sob and was dead almost before I knew that he had been struck.

"Get up, get up," cried the dwarf, who was tugging at the body. "Give him a push; I cannot lift the wretch. There—now get up."

With that I got up. Louis grasped my hand and spoke of my narrow escape.

"But we must be quick," he went on. "Take off that boot while I do the other. Good. Now for his coat and waistcoat."

In five minutes we had the dead man stripped of his outer clothes. I hardly understood what we were doing till Louis told me to take off my own clothes and dress myself in the others. This I did in a moment, but it was slower work putting my garments on the body of the dead man. We suc-

ceeded, however, and soon Barker lay in the coffin and the lid was nailed down. I sat safe and sound.

"Now put on his mask," said Louis, "and we can talk till the hell-cat comes. What, you tremble! On my life, your hands are cold. Take this."

He put a flask of whisky to my mouth and I gulped down a stifling draught. It was well I did so, for my spirit was weak and we were not done with this adventure by more than half. It is a hard thing to strike a man down like that, even to save one's life. I could not reconcile myself to the shame of having struck him from the back and while he was defenceless. But Louis had saved my life and I did not upbraid him with the way he had chosen to do it.

"Louis," I said—we were sitting side by side on the coffin. "What does all this mean? Why did you call your master a hell-cat?"

"He gave orders for us to lie in wait and kill you. He thought you were Le Bourse."

"Thought, or thinks?"

"Thought. He thinks you are the devil now."

"Wherefore that compliment?"

"Five muskets discharged at short range, one in your very face; none of them brought you down. I had to club you with the butt end of my musket."

"Strange how they came to miss me."

"Not strange at all. I unloaded them. Hush, don't stop to thank me now. They are coming. I hope he will not want to look into the box."

A moment later the patroon and one of his men entered.

"Is your work done, Louis?"

"Yes, sir; your orders are always obeyed, though Barker and I had to sweat for it."

"Good. You shall have your reward." (This to me.) "Now help us carry this out. We have got the grave all ready."

The four of us took up the box and marched slowly out with it. We crossed a courtyard into another shed. It was dusk outside, but quite dark where we were going. I could see piles of lumber, boxes and barrels on either side; and, at the far end, a couple of disused vats. Everything was gloomy and still and solemn. Beyond the vats a light was burning, and here we found the fifth man sitting beside my—nay, Barker's grave. The patroon urged speed, and we were not long in burying the coffin. Then we covered it with boards and debris so as to obliterate all traces of our presence and the grave. When we paused at the end to survey our work, I heard Louis mutter to the patroon:

" 'Tis not the first time we have done a piece of work like this."

There came into Van Volkenberg's face that dogged look of hate that I had seen in the council chamber the day I had humbled him in the presence of his peers. Had I known nothing about him but that look, I should have known that a day of reckoning was at hand for the henchman. Van

Volkenberg's only reply, however, was: "Remember Ronald Guy."

We were now ready to go out. As soon as we were on our journey homeward, the patroon touched me on the arm and motioned me silently to drop back with him.

"You have done well, Barker. You have obeyed orders without asking questions. Do you feel no curiosity to know why he died?"

"It is not my place to observe that men are much like women in the matter of trifles."

"Trifles! Do you call the death of a living man a trifle! Bah; but 'tis a shrewd hint, my honest man. I shall reward you with my confidence. I shall not honor the others so. Even Louis does not know what I am going to tell you. That man was Bellamont's spy."

"Spy," I cried.

"Yes, my trusty Barker. A spy sent by the enemy of the Red Band."

"So perish all her enemies."

"Do you think so?" asked the patroon in a tone of condescension, as if he really wanted my corroboration. "If you really believe that, heart and soul, I have some work for you that will raise you high as an officer of mine. There is still another spy in the very bosom of the Red Band."

"Another! Two of them! Who is he?"

"That prancing ape ahead."

"Louis Van Ramm?"

"Louis Van Ramm."

"I am astonished. We all thought he was our master's dearest man."

"So he has been. I have found him out at last. He is paid by the Governor-Earl to betray us, and he must die for it. If you will kill him you shall have his place. Will you do it?"

"You have but to command. Shall I ahead and do it now?"

"No, no," he said quickly, laying his hand on my arm. "There are three of them; besides, this must be done secretly. To-morrow, at nine o'clock exactly, Louis and I shall set out for the Hanging Rock. Be there to meet us. When we are done with him I have a secret to introduce you to in the chamber beneath the rock."

"I shall be there in waiting, master."

"Good. Be punctual. Now drop back and do not show yourself in the meantime. I shall join those ahead."

With that he quickened his step and was soon swallowed in the darkness, while I stood counting his dwindling footsteps.

CHAPTER XIX

I MEET THE PATROON AGAIN

It is pleasant to indulge the habit of speculation, and to this day I never weary of wondering how it is that a person can perform acts in a moment of excitement that he could do at no other time; or why it is that one often collapses with fear the moment all cause for anxiety is gone.

The latter was my case when the patroon left me to rejoin his companions. Ever since my arrival at the manor-house, I had known myself in great danger. The alertness required, the readiness to defend my life at a moment's notice had caused an almost continuous strain upon my nerves that was well nigh unendurable. But, in spite of the two bold attempts on my life, I had borne up bravely and had not flinched.

The moment the patroon left me, however, I felt my courage slipping after him. As I counted his footsteps, as they became fainter and fainter in the distance, I began to fear that he would return. Instead of joy at my narrow escape, I feared lest it should not prove an escape at all. Suppose Louis should tell him who I was. I had every reason in the world to believe in the dwarf's honesty; the very fact that I began to suspect him at the moment he had delivered me from such imminent danger

shows the power of the reaction that had taken hold of me.

My one idea was to get away. But at the first step my knees doubled under me and I stumbled on the ground, weak and exhausted. The grass was wet with dew and when my face and hands touched it I felt somewhat refreshed. I rolled over on my back and lay for some time looking up at the stars. There was one cold star just overhead which I kept watching as it crept across a narrow gap in the foliage above me. The stars move so slowly, and I thought afterwards what a long time I must have lain there noting nothing but that slow-paced point of light.

After a while I began to feel ashamed of my feebleness of mind and body. I recalled how I had once berated a man for cowardice who was in much the same plight on that flight from Paris years before when my sister was a child and in my care. I began to apply the same words to myself that I had applied to him then, and presently my spirit was returning to me. With the change came, fiercer than ever, my hatred for my enemy. This slaying a man in the dark and by traps was more than I could stand. What infuriated me most was the presence of Annetje in the fray. Of course the patroon thought that it was his daughter who had ridden out with me, yet he led the attack in spite of her presence. Though he knew she would sustain no bodily harm, he should have remembered the

terrible shock it must have given her. This brutality to her was the match that kindled me into countenance again. With the thought of it I was on my feet, with my hand upon my sword hilt, ready to keep my promise to Annetje Dorn.

But as yet I had no plan. I set out, however, towards the tannery, resolved to get back my own clothes. I had no difficulty in finding the way, but I had no light and it was slow work unloading the debris we had piled upon the grave. It was done at last, however, and when I reached the coffin I pried off the cover with the blade of my sword.

It made me shudder to put on the clothes that the dead man had worn for so many hours, but I forced myself to do it and felt the better when it was done. It was about dawn by this time, and after I had hidden Barker's clothes—for I might need them as a disguise—I occupied an hour, restoring the corner to its former appearance of undisturbed disorder.

As it was now broad daylight I set out for the manor-house, minded to stay about till shortly before nine o'clock, for at that time I knew the patroon intended to set out with Louis for the Hanging Rock. I sat down to wait, but soon an incident occurred that spoiled all the plans I had been forming in the last hour.

I had taken a seat at the foot of a tree in the park, merely to wait till later. Soon I heard footsteps,

and then saw the young mistress coming with a basket in her hand. I rose to my feet.

"Mistress Van Volkenberg," I said.

She gave a scream and dropped her basket. I was by her side instantly.

"What is the matter?" I asked, excitedly, never thinking that it was the sight of me which had caused her to cry out and drop her basket.

"Matter! We thought you were dead. The utmost search, my father says, revealed no trace of the ruffians who attacked you. How did you escape?"

For a moment I was in doubt as to whether to tell her the truth or not. Then we sat down on the grass and I related the whole adventure to her from the beginning to the end, keeping back only the names of the persons who had been involved. Of the fact that her father had been privy to it, I gave not the least hint.

How truly Shakespeare knew the innermost heart of woman when he wrote: "She thank'd me, And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her, I should but teach him how to tell my story, And that would woo her." As I told my tale her eyes opened wider and wider. I seemed to stand in her simple imagination like one of the heroes of old time. She did not realize that I had done nothing to help myself, that my escape had all been arranged for me. Her cheeks glowed with interest and sympathy. I think it must have been at that

moment that the feeling for me was born which led her to so many kind acts in the next few days.

"Oh," she cried with a little gasp of breath. "I am so glad. You are so brave. Let me tell my father all about it."

"Mistress Van Volkenberg," I replied, "will you grant me a favor?"

"Anything, Monsieur St. Vincent."

"It is this. Do not tell your father. Do not tell anyone. Your father is often ill, and if I told him all it might excite him. Will you leave this to me?"

"Yes, if you wish it."

"I do. You are very kind. Where were you going when I alarmed you so?"

"I was going to the woods with a basket of flowers. Will you carry them for me?"

We picked up the basket she had dropped and rearranged the flowers that had fallen upon the ground. Then we set out, taking a footpath through the woods, which brought us quickly to a little summer house perched high upon a jutting cliff.

"This is the Hanging Rock, Monsieur St. Vincent. It is what gives the name to our estate. It was called so even before my father got possession of the rock itself. This is one of the last grants we received from Governor Fletcher. Governor Bellamont shows small favor to us."

Her sweet voice and innocent manner took my breath away. The relations between her father and

the government were what I should hardly expect her to speak to me about; yet she did speak of them without the least hesitation or embarrassment. Could it be that she was innocent of all knowledge of what went on within the boundary of her father's manor? It was an impossible thought at first, yet I could not associate a knowledge of such things with the expression of her face at that moment. Her features were lit up with a gentle sadness, such as one sees in the pictures of the saints. I could believe no wrong of her, yet how could I explain it? Did she not know that her sire had been expelled in disgrace from the governor's council? Was her only knowledge of her father's faults drawn from his unkindness to herself? She cut my meditations short by an abrupt question:

"Will you carry my basket for me? I cut all the flowers in my garden yesterday and brought them here."

She pointed to a large basket and asked me again to take it up and follow her. I soon knew where we were going. The vaguely familiar scene grew more and more distinct as I trudged silently at her back. I knew instinctively that we were passing through the same wood where I had wandered in my trance, where I had met her when she gave me the miniature of my dead sister. We were going to my sister's grave. Yes, I knew the place instantly. I saw her lift the piece of loose sod which covered the stone marked with Ruth's name.

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"SOON I CAME UPON A WOMAN KNEELING IN THE GRASS." *p. 103*

Mistress Miriam sat on the grass by the side of the grave, binding the flowers into wreaths and bunches which she laid about. When she placed the last she knelt and clasped her hands in prayer. Her lips murmured and the tears followed one another down her cheeks and fell among the flowers.

I turned away, a great pain in my heart. Here was I by my sister's grave, yet I could not throw myself upon it and weep out my sorrow. Her only mourner was a Roman Catholic. O God, it is not for me to question the mystery of Thy ways! Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

On our way home I found it necessary to exert my full power of self-control lest I betray my secret.

"You are affected," she said. "It shows that you have a warm heart."

"Will you tell me more about her?" I asked.

Mistress Van Volkenberg related how Ruth had come to New York, and how she had suffered longing and sorrowful suspense for the brother who did not come to her. Then she took service. The young mistress of the manor-house fell in love with Ruth, as everyone did who knew her. Even the hard patroon at times seemed to feel her sweetness.

"But he should be forgiven. My father has strange seizures. He is good to me when his infirmity is not upon him." She stopped suddenly. "I ought not to be talking like this to you who are a stranger."

I did not feel that we were strangers, but I could not tell her so. On the way back to the manor-house a chance word recalled to me her innocence of her father's crimes. I followed this clew and directed the conversation towards a revelation of herself.

Mistress Van Volkenberg was a woman of high spirit. Had I not seen her stand out against her angry parent in defense of Ruth? Yet she was gentle withal. In our conversation, she showed no bitterness against her father, who had so little claim to the honor which she bore him. He must have been dull indeed not to see his daughter's worth; yet I wondered how she could be so blind to his defects. She soon told me more of his dealings with her.

"Father does not like to have me go to the city," she said. "I wish he did not care, for I love to go. Yesterday morning was the first time for so long, and he bade me not to tarry. The merry scenes on market day before the fort, and the ships coming and going with all the strange new faces of their crews—one loves to watch such things. Ah, you should have been here in the old days when the pirates came freely into the port. I have seen old Blackbeard and the Painted Dwarf strutting along the Battery in silk and cloth of gold like any king. But the Earl has stopped all that."

Her face had lighted up with innocent enthusiasm as she recalled the sights of the gorgeously

appareled buccaneers; but the lightness died away with her last words, and she ended with a sigh.

We had nearly reached the manor when Mistress Van Volkenberg darted from my side. Almost in a moment she was some distance away, and kneeling in the grass.

"Poor little thing," I heard her croon gently.

When I came to her she was stroking an unfortunate bird that had broken its wing and lay helpless on the ground. The kind-hearted girl nursed it tenderly till its little heart ceased to beat with fear, and it snuggled safely in her hand. As she carried it into the house, I could not help but think how little fit such a place was for the scenes I had witnessed in the last hour. The house where Ronald Guy had died, where they had stolen upon me in the dead of night to take my life, the house which sheltered the man who was responsible for my adventure at the tannery seemed no place for an innocent girl like Miriam, whose tender heart was all alive with sympathy at the sufferings of the poor bird she had found in the grass.

"Yes, yes," she said, stroking it and talking gently as we walked along. "I shall take it home and nurse it till it can fly away. I cannot fly away either, so we shall play together."

By this time we had nearly reached the house. For some moments I had been afraid lest this trip should occupy so much time that I should arrive at the manor-house after nine o'clock, the hour at

which the patroon and Louis were to set out for the rock. As we neared the house, I espied a man who was leading their two saddle horses.

"Your father is about to ride," I said.

"Yes," answered Miriam. "He and Louis are going to the Hanging Rock. At least they intended to last night; I set out too early this morning to see anyone before I left."

"Remember what you promised me," I said. "My adventure is to be secret. Now, if you will let me, I shall go ahead and meet your father before he leaves the house.

A few minutes later when I stood by the door of the patroon's private room, I heard the voices of him and his curious henchman.

"That Barker is a good fellow," Van Volkenberg was saying. "I have a notion to promote him to some trust."

"He may be worth it," answered Louis. "But no one has seen him since last night. Perhaps he has run away and will not return."

"One thing is sure," replied his master. "St. Vincent will not return."

Instantly I drew aside the curtain and stood in the doorway.

"Patroon Van Volkenberg."

He started violently at the sound of my voice, and turned towards me. Then his hands flew up before his eyes and he uttered a scream.

"My God, my God, it is his ghost. Go back, go

back! Louis, try if it be real. Get your sword. Give me mine. Stop it. Hold, hold; stop it. For God's sake, Louis, get between."

I had come two steps forward, and my approach seemed to drive him crazy. He backed off, holding one hand over his eyes, and waving his sword with the other.

"Can you speak? Why are you so silent? Who are you? What is your name?"

"Henrie St. Vincent."

"You are dead. Have you come to call me hence? Begone. I am not ready yet. I have accounts still to settle. Away, Sir Evelin. Help me, help; call my daughter, call Miriam."

He caught himself up at the last word and stopped. He was gasping for breath, clutching his hands tight together in the vain attempt to force upon himself the mastery of his passion. Suddenly he called out again.

"Bring my daughter; fetch Miriam or I shall die."

While Louis went in search of her I remained at his side. He was moaning pitifully and calling upon his daughter. Now and then he uttered disjointed sentences. "I must not let her know—the Marmadukes—do not look at me with those fearful eyes—I did not kill you—the pretty Ruth—she knew my secret."

And so he raved. Remorse—ah, I too know its bitter taste—remorse was conquering where no other foe could conquer. I bowed my head in

silence and departed; this was no place for me. I left him with his daughter.

With this sudden visitation all my plans had vanished. I had sought his room intending to defy him to the utmost and to make him fight, and thus it had all ended. Yet I have not told you half, nor half of half. I cannot till this day forget the look of fear and horror on his face when he saw me, whom he thought dead, standing before him like a spirit from another world. No, I could not wish even my worst enemy the anguish he felt at that moment.

Then, as Miriam bent over him, with her sweet pleading face I realized that it was her father I was hounding to his death. That was a deeper cut than all. I knew that a man cannot serve two masters. Could I serve two mistresses—or three? Could I avenge Ruth, serve Lady Marmaduke, and protect Miriam all at the same time? How had I kept my promise to Annetje? I was in this sullen humor when I met the dwarf in the hall.

"What did you come back for?" he cried angrily. "I saved your life and now you have lost me mine. Do you think life is sweet only to you? Does my ill-shaped figure, think you, have no love of the green earth? Ungrateful!"

"What do you mean?"

"I chose the men who were to kill you. I prepared the weapons that were to shoot you. I watched by your dead body all the time—at least, so I swore. Now he has seen you alive and well.

Do you suppose the little dwarf will live long after that? You know his practices on yourself, and I am not half your size. God's curse upon you."

"Louis," I said, "I had forgot—"

"Forgot what I did for you?"

"No, I shall never forget that. You have a right to be angry with me. But I have done it; it cannot be helped. Is there no way I can undo my mistake?"

"None."

"Think. There must be."

"There is none."

"Does the patroon remember what happens during his attacks?"

"No, it is all a blank."

"Then let me disappear. You can easily make him believe that this meeting existed only in his fevered imagination. I shall go away and not come back."

All this while Louis had been sitting a limp heap at the bottom of the great staircase. Now he rose and stood on the second step, which brought his face almost on a level with mine.

"Do you mean that?" he asked, putting both his hands firmly on my shoulders. "Can you really do that?"

"I can and I will do it."

"Then why did you come here?"

"Why?"

"Ah, no, 'twill never do. You could never, never

keep yourself away. Besides, I need you here. We have more in common than you think. I need you here. Sit down by me on the step. We must form some other plan."

And another plan we did form, and that most quickly. I proposed it and Louis confirmed my suggestion though, for the moment, I was myself the more doubtful of its success. When the patroon regained consciousness, Louis was to relate my story just as I had told it to Miriam. The patroon's own recollection of the events was to be attributed to some hallucination during his attack.

I had hardly suggested the plan before an objection occurred to me. Could he ever be made to believe all this? Louis, however, combated my fears. He had a bit of information that he had not yet communicated to me. He had chosen the men who were to take part in the attack. They had all come to the meeting place masked, and the patroon had not stopped to ask who his henchman had selected for the task. So, except in the case of Barker, whom he had brought himself, the patroon was ignorant of the men who had helped him. It was impossible, therefore, for him to make inquiries among his men in case he suspected the truth of Louis's tale.

There was still another point in our favor. Miriam had not forgot her promise to me, but her father asked her such shrewd questions as to what had happened that she fully believed I had already

told him my adventure. Upon that, with no intention but to emphasize what she supposed I had already said, she talked over all she knew about me. Louis's account, coming after this, seemed mere corroboration. The dwarf had a cunning tongue, and at last succeeded in allaying all his master's suspicions. Then I was sent for.

"Ah, Vincent," said the patroon when I entered, "I have been ill since yesterday, and Louis tells me that you have been hard used yourself. Tell me all about it."

He made me go through with every detail from the beginning to the end. I could see the nervous anxiety in his face, and I could guess the drift of his thoughts when he questioned me concerning the appearance of my assailants.

He was utterly confused by the discrepancy between what he remembered and what he had been told. Yet he often recovered from these attacks with wild memories in his mind, and he could not tell whether this was one of them or not. To tell his suspicions truly, would be to say that he had meditated my murder. Patroon Van Volkenberg was too wary a man to disclose his inmost thoughts.

I knew all this was passing in his mind, and that in my replies about the appearance of my assailants, he hoped to recognize himself or Louis. But I took care of that and managed to allay his suspicions for the moment, though what his future plans were I never knew.

"We must complain of this treatment to the Earl," he said. "Now, tell me what happened before, when you rode to the city with my daughter. How did you fare? What did you hear? Did she learn anything of what is said of me in Yorke?"

I told him many of the details of our ride, especially about the meeting with the Earl, but he was not satisfied.

"Did you hear nothing as you rode along? Nothing of what is said of me?"

"Yes, something," I answered slowly. "But it was not about you. I heard rumors, but they seemed to have slight significance. While we were standing on the Slip, two of the gray coated soldiers—"

"Ay, the governor's guard; what did they say?"

"There is a fear in the city that something is going to happen. Omens have been observed. A wall fell towards the north against a high wind. A bright light was seen in the northern sky three nights ago. These things are causing much excitement."

"Excitement at what? What conclusions do they draw?"

"I could not hear; someone spoke of an invasion."

"Fools! It will not come from the north. Pardon my heat. The County Frontenac is no such fool. He has tried the wilderness before and failed. No, it will not come from the north."

"Yet," said I, "if the French count has tried the wilderness before, why may he not try it again? If I were the Earl of Bellamont, I should look to the defense of Albany."

"Albany! Why yes, Albany to be sure; Albany is the thing. I should defend Albany at all hazards. By my faith, that is an idea, my Vincent. I should advise the Earl myself, but I am not in the council now. God's curse upon that man Le Bourse."

I wished to change the subject, now that it drew so near myself, and I wished also to say a word for Miriam. So I spoke of the Red Band.

"Your instructions to guard your daughter's ears make me wonder that you do not see that she must learn all this some day."

"All this? What do you mean by that?"

"Your expulsion from the council, the liberties of the Red Band, the ruin of your house."

I expected an outbreak of anger in return for these plain words, but none came. Instead, the patroon looked at me with eyes brimful of tears.

"You are right. The ruin of my house. If only I could put it off, but I cannot. Miriam, my Miriam, it will fall like death upon you; it is coming, it is coming like a storm."

"But you can stop it. It is not too late."

"It is too late. How can I stop it? I expected the support of my class. They have drawn back. I stand alone. I cannot go back. Where will my honor be if I desert my men? I have led them

on in defiance of the law. Can I give them up to justice now? Would you have me play the coward to save myself? The die is cast. The Red Band cannot draw back. I must lead them on. I have no more the power to stop this that I have set my hand to than you have to stop the sun. Can I not see the end? I and the Earl! Who am I? And he has the whole power of England at his back; but I'll play the bull-dog till I die. I'll set the horseback rider by the ears. The Red Band is not asleep. Beware, Earl Bellamont, beware. No maid is playing with you now. Do I not see the end? Do you think a man stares ruin in the face and strikes a feeble blow?"

His excitement had led him on; but he was showing me a deal more of confidence than he thought wise. He became suddenly more reserved, and then dismissed me abruptly, as if he repented what he had said, and did not know how to get rid of me in any more delicate manner. He gave me a command to wait upon him later in the day. With that I left the room.

And so this chapter of my adventure ended; I had been in deadly peril, and I had escaped; but I was in the same uncertain state as before. What would yet come of it? That was my thought, and only time could tell.

CHAPTER XX

THE SKELETON IN THE PATROON'S CLOSET

As I glance over the pages I have just written I wonder whether anyone will believe the record I have set down. So much happened during the first three days of my residence at the manor-house that the recollection of it seems to me now more like some romance of the old time than of life here in New York within the memory of people now alive. Yet these are events not soon forgotten, and every detail clings in my memory as fresh today as on the day it happened.

When the patroon dismissed me there was a strange, half-convinced look about him which augured further trouble. His state of mind was peculiar, and later events enable me to say pretty surely what it was. Though I was fairly free from superstition myself, that was a time when it ran riot. In that respect, Van Volkenberg was the creature of his day. He felt many a secret dread that could never have taken hold of me. Once he had tried my life at night; and Louis subsequently told me that my opportune absence when they came inspired the patroon with the unrighteousness of his act. He never guessed, nor did I at the time, that Meg's warning to me had been due to the prompting of her son. Again he had tripped, captured

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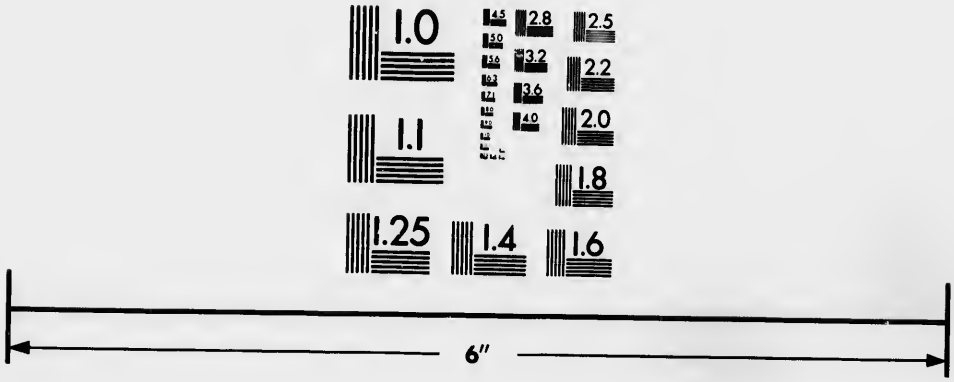

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and buried me, as he firmly believed, only to find me in his house the next morning as hearty as ever. And so I became, to him, an invulnerable foe; I bore a charmed life. The swift and deadly blows that made such short work of his other enemies, had, to all appearance, scarcely a finger's weight with me. I grew vaguely conscious of this superstitious attitude on the part of the patroon towards me, though not until afterwards did I learn how heavily the burden weighed upon his spirit.

There was not much difficulty in persuading the patroon of the truth of the story we had put upon him to account for my second escape. To him it was a fearful dream, which pointed yet more clearly to the fact that I was not the man for him to meddle with. This fact almost turned the balance permanently in my favor, though he still had a lingering suspicion that I was some sort of spy, and I was to feel still more of his ill-humor on this score.

I heard no more of him that day. But the next he set me to some dirty work which was quite beneath the position in the household that he had at first accorded me. On the second day he forbade me to eat at the family table, and banished me to the servants' hall. In a thousand ways, he did all in his power to make my position as uncomfortable as he could. I resented it much at the time, and was continually on the point of an angry outbreak of temper. One fact, however, more than anything

else, deterred me. That was my duty to Lady Marmaduke.

I was heartily sick of the part I was playing. I had never been ashamed to own my name before, and, day by day, the sound of my false name covered me with more confusion. I felt like a coward, and that is a hard thought to one who prides himself on his courage. It was about this time that I began to doubt the leadership of my stern mistress. A man, however, cannot betray others to set himself right in his own eyes. I had done wrong to be led into this duplicity; but I had accepted a trust, and I should consider myself doubly wrong to betray my mistress now. I resolved to get out of it as soon as I could, but not by means of a second act of dishonor.

Meanwhile, the patroon's ill-treatment of me continued. Yet it had its good side, as I can see now. I had already gained Miriam's attention in the recital of my adventure at the tannery. She did not share her father's prejudices against me. The patroon had said nothing openly, except to Louis, about his suspicions of my identity with Le Bourse. In Miriam's presence, he had been especially careful to express himself in a way different from what he really felt. Doubtless he thought she would repeat his compliments to me, thus throwing me quite off my guard. In this way, without suspecting it, he pleaded my cause to Miriam long before it had taken shape in my own

mind. Her sympathies were already enlisted in my behalf when I told her of my narrow escape. Her father's present treatment of me was so at variance with what he had formerly said to her, that she was utterly at a loss to understand it. "It must be a mere whim," she would say; or, "He is ill. He does not feel so, let me tell you." Then she would repeat, just as the patroon had expected, what he had said to her. Thus, I and my affairs were constantly in her mind, as if it was her duty to settle them and restore peace.

"It will wear off," she said soothingly, just after he had brought me up sharp with an insulting answer. "He has not been well lately. I know he does not mean it. Come, take a walk with me."

So, twenty times a day, she would speak to me kindly and do some little act to soothe a reproach from him. At last she went to him direct to appeal for me. She has told me many a time since how she talked him out of a sullen humor. He told her flatly that he thought I was Le Bourse. Dear girl! She vouched for my honesty, and defended me so stoutly that he gave in at last.

"It is fate, Miriam," he said. "It is fate. Let us cast lots. Cry as I toss. Crown or shield?"

He took a coin from his pocket and spun it on the table.

"Crown!" cried Miriam.

"It is so," said the patroon as the coin flattened

down with a jarring ring. "Fate says that I shall trust him. Call the man in."

From that moment I stood in the better graces of the master. There were times, to be sure, when I thought that he still shared his old suspicions. But for the most part he seemed to trust me. After all, the silver buttons were a good introduction. I had to thank them for much.

I now quite supplanted Louis. He did not seem to resent the change, but followed or stayed at home as he was bid. Time went on in this way for several days, during which my own feelings toward the master began somewhat to change. He seemed in a way to charm me. One who looks too long on an uncomfortable color will grow used to it at last. This fact and the presence of Miriam did much to account for this spleen of toleration. Many a time I had wondered how a man of his wicked practices could rise to such a height of influence and power. Little by little I came to comprehend the secret of his hold over the affections of his retainers. He was their lord and master and they loved him as their lives. I was soon to learn of this at first hand.

A few days after he had taken me into his confidence, the patroon set out for a ride about his estate. He chose me instead of Louis to go with him. His new confidence in me must have been increased by the growing distrust of Louis; yet he continued to treat the dwarf with kindness; nor was

Louis the least jealous of me, who was fast taking his place in the affairs of his master.

The patroon and I set out on horseback. It was a bright day full of the sombre autumn color. As we rode about we met many persons, all of whom were known to the patroon. He had a word and a smile for each of them; of every one he had some kind inquiry to make of mother, brother, or sister; sometimes he would crack a merry joke, or indulge in some quiet chaff that did not hurt. Frequently on that ride I heard the "Good Patroon" blessed for some little act of interest, or for a bit of money bestowed without the air of righteous charity.

We had been riding for an hour in parts unknown to me, when we came out upon a cliff where we could look out over the bay and catch a faraway glimpse across Long Island to the turquoise sea beyond. My companion lifted his arm and swept it slowly along the horizon. I was surprised to see the grim, set expression of seriousness that came into his face. For the last hour he had been entertaining me with merry tales of his childhood, and of his adventures aboard ship when he was a young man. But now all that was gone. Was it the vast presence of the distant ocean that put a curb on his jolly spirits? Or was there some nearer motive close at hand, whose presence I could not see?

We sat side by side for twenty minutes. Neither

of us spoke a word all this time. Only now and then was the silence broken when one of the horses stamped impatiently on the ground. The patroon's face grew more stern and lowering. His fingers doubled tight around the bridle. Once or twice his lips moved, as if he were talking to himself. Then he struck his breast fiercely and pointed to the blue ocean.

"There, Vincent, there lies the fortune of the Red Band. By the sea we live or perish."

I did not know what he meant, nor did I have a chance to ask him, for he turned quickly and galloped away, with me hard at his heels. It was some time before I was able to come abreast of him again, but when I did so, he opened the conversation.

"A man who would be great must keep his own secrets. I know that fact to my cost. I shall not tell you this, at least not for the present; but there will come a meeting soon and I shall need you then."

He fell silent and musing. Evidently he was much tossed about in his own mind over something. I could see by his face that he was on the point of saying something to me a dozen times, and that he checked himself in the effort again and again. Suddenly these words burst from him in a sharp tone.

"Van Ramm knows too many of my secrets. I want him killed. Will you do it?"

I was thunderstruck at the proposal. I looked at him to see if he was in earnest. His face was set and rigid, full of heavy lines, and the corners of his mouth were drawn down in an evil fashion. My ears had certainly made no mistake. He was in earnest. It was a long moment before I found my voice.

"Must everyone who knows your secrets die?"

"God damn you, no!"

This was no ribald oath, but uttered from the very depths of his soul. I knew as well as I knew my name that I had alluded unknowingly to some secret of his, perhaps the very one for which he sought the life of his henchman, for a sudden gust of terror seemed to leap into his face at my words. He gazed at me for a moment speechless, his jaw dropped and there was a gurgling rattle in his throat. Then the mood seemed to pass slowly, and he became himself again.

"Do not say that word again, Vincent. It cuts me like a knife. There are sins upon my soul you cannot know. My God, if I were only what I used to be. But that day is long, long passed. Sometimes I think that I am possessed by a devil. I have gone wrong so long that I cannot stop now if I would. I have resolved against it, but I have no power. I can see my ruin close before my eyes. Do you think there is no terror in it? My God! Yet I cannot haste enough to meet it. It is like the dizziness that takes you on a cliff. I

cannot keep back my mad desire to leap. You are my man. Answer me yes or no. Will you kill the dwarf?"

"No."

"Then let it be. I respect you all the more for it. I wish I had had men like you about me from the first. Then I should not see the gallows in my dreams. But I have done my wicked work myself before. Let this pass."

There were drops of sweat upon his forehead as he galloped ahead. But in a short time he had thrown off all trace of this behavior, and what was in his mind then seemed to be quite forgotten now. His merry tales returned. A beggar we met was well rewarded for his humble plea for alms. So we continued, just as if nothing had happened, as if we had not for a moment been at swords points, almost ready to fight over a question of honor. And in this way we rode till we came into the hills that sheltered the cottage of Meg.

"Poor old Meg," said the patroon gently. "She has been ill since yonder night of Ronald's death. I must stop and see her."

The cottage of the old woman was a tumble-down affair, with doors and windows all awry, and the thatch hanging loose and all but off in many places. We dismounted and met the dwarf in the doorway.

"Hist," he said, cautioning silence with his raised finger.

"Has he come?" asked a feeble voice from inside.

"The noise of the horses must have waked her," explained Louis. "Come in."

We entered the low, desolate looking room. On a pallet in one corner lay Meg of the Hills. The patroon went to her and took her hand with something like affection in his manner.

"How is the day with you, my Meg?"

"My Meg," she repeated plaintively. "It is a long time since you have called me that."

"Hist, Meg, not so loud," said the patroon in a half-whisper.

"Why should I hist?" she cried with a tinge of anger in her tone. "Are you ashamed of me?"

The patroon made no reply, and in a moment she repeated her question.

"Answer me, ye auld jade, be ye ashamed of me?"

"Hush, Meg. Don't fall into that ballad-singing habit of yours. I can stand anything but that."

"You stand! What have you to stand compared to me? It was not always so. I was fair to see in the old days long gone by. Was I not a bonny lass then, Kilian?"

"Ay, you were so, Meg; but that is long gone by."

The old woman moaned. She had regular features and may have been a beauty once; but, as the patroon said, it was long ago. How wistfully she

must have looked back upon what would never come again. There was a pause, and Meg was the first to break it.

"What did you come for?"

"To see how you were; to see what I could do for you."

The last word seemed to rouse her evil demon. She sat bolt up in bed and clasped her hands tight together; then she doubled her fists and shook them in his face like a mad woman.

"To do what you can for me, you brat of hell. Have you not had half a life for that? What have you done for me? You have kept me, you would say. Ay, you have kept me like the old toothless bitch I am. But you did not keep me where I should have been. And I could have hanged you any time these twenty years. But I loved you. My God, what will a woman not do for the man she loves!"

Meg fell back upon the pillow in exhaustion.

"So, so," said the patroon, trying to soothe her. He only made her worse. In a moment she had risen again and was glowering at him through fierce flashing eyes.

"What have you done?" she cried in a frenzy, snapping and wringing her long, bony fingers. "What have you done for me and mine these twenty years, since you had your fill of pleasure out of me?"

"Tut, tut, Meg, you are wild to-day."

"Wild I have ever been since you cast me adrift

like a gutter drab of Yorke. Tell me what you have done for me and mine."

Her face grew dark and sullen like an animal's at bay. The patroon glanced about him and half rose to go; but she clutched his wrist and repeated persistently:

"What have you done? What have you done? What have you done?"

"You know well enough what I have done, my Meg," said the patroon. He spoke quietly, but I could see that he was in the grip of fear. Was the woman going to make a disclosure? I half expected what it would be, but I did not guess the half.

"But what have you done?" she went on, sticking to her one idea.

"I have done my best, Meg. You know that I could not do it openly, but I have kept him near me; he wants for nothing."

"Ay, he wants for nothing but his life."

"Life?" cried the patroon. "What do you mean?"

She looked at him in contempt and rage.

"Who is it that you say wants for nothing?"

"Louis, you hag," he hissed between his teeth. "Louis Van Ramm."

She fell into a mocking laugh that was terrible to hear.

"You thought it was Louis, did you? He was my son well enough, born in lawful wedlock; but he was no son of yours. Did you think I told the

truth when I came back to live on you? Ha, ha, I was a bonny lass then. Do you remember how you pleaded for my life and the use of my shapely body? 'I'll marry you, Meg, if anything goes wrong.' Those were your very words and everything went wrong and—"

Here the patroon caught her by the shoulder and shook her violently.

"Stop. If Louis is not our child, who is?"

"Ha, ha, ha! You dolt! You idiot! You liar, thief—" She paused for a moment and then almost shrieked out the word "Murderer."

"Murderer!"

"Ay, murderer. Louis is my child but none of yours. Our boy is dead. His name was Ronald Guy."

Then she fell to singing that weird scrap of an old ballad that I had heard once before:

> Is there ony room at your head, Ronald?
> Is there ony room at your feet?
> Is there ony room at your side, Ronald,
> Where fain, fain I wad sleep?

The patroon sprang up from where he had been sitting on her bedside. He covered his face with his hands, and, for a moment, swayed back and forth, but he was not taken with one of his seizures as I feared. In a moment more he started for the door.

"Follow me, St. Vincent," he said, and nothing more.

In silence he mounted his horse and spurred desperately away. I rode at his stirrup, awestruck and wondering what would happen next. He remained silent so far as words went, though sometimes he was muttering to himself. We had nearly reached the manor-house when he spoke briefly in cold tones, like a man asleep.

"I have killed my son. The day of reckoning has come."

A horror of this man took hold of me and I turned to bait him as I would a dog.

"You thought Louis was your son and you wanted me to kill him."

The patroon stopped his horse; I, also, full in front of him. He stared me in the face.

"Don't try me," he said doggedly, "or I'll kill you. Had I not thought he was my son he should have paid the penalty of what he knows any day these ten years past. When all's said, I thought him but a bastard. Ride after me in silence."

I did as I was bid. For the one time in my life I felt completely cowed. I did not know what to do, and before the reaction came, we had reached the house and Van Volkenberg had disappeared in his study.

CHAPTER XXI

MEG'S PLEADING

Four days later news came to the manor-house that Meg of the Hills was dying. Since our visit to Meg's cottage I had seen little of the patroon. This particular afternoon I had spent in my own room in no amiable frame of mind. In fact, I had begun to ask myself why I was at the manor-house at all. I had come to trap the patroon, yet what had I done? I had seen crimes committed before my eyes, and I had been asked to be privy to yet another—the cold-blooded murder of the dwarf. Why did I not go direct to the Earl at New York and expose my new master? In truth, I do not know, yet there were many reasons. In the first place, I still hoped in a vague way to learn more about the circumstances of my sister's death. I held on, waiting for some bit of evidence that would convict the patroon of her murder. I had not the least doubt that he had murdered her, and the desire for revenge was too sweet to waste upon other crimes. He must meet his punishment for that one and I must be the one to bring him to it.

Yet, as I look back upon these events, I know that there was still a stronger reason than this which stayed my hand, though I did not realize it at the time. Every additional bit of confidence

that the patroon put in me made it harder for me to think of betraying my new trust. At times I caught the wild feverish desire of everyone about the manor-house to keep it all away from the knowledge of his daughter. At those times I would be almost willing to draw my sword in defense of the wicked practices of the Red Band rather than have it go to wreck and ruin over the young mistress' head.

But all these thoughts were cut short by the sound of the patroon's cane tapping in the corridor towards my door. It was not often that he honored me with a personal visit like this and I rose to receive him.

"Get on your traps," he said abruptly. "They say that Meg is dying, and, before I could stop her Miriam hurried off to the cottage. Quick man, quick; you must stop her ears again. What if my child should hear what you heard the other night? Hurry, man, would you have me shamed before my daughter?"

"For her sake I'll go," I answered; but I muttered between my teeth that it was for none of him I went.

I did not stop to saddle a horse, but went directly on foot. It was a mile or more to the cottage, and when I set out it was about twilight. Before I reached my destination, darkness had closed in. I heard the low sound of a single voice as I drew near the cottage, and when I came to

the threshold the sight I saw within made me stop.

The moon was full and the bright light fell across the floor in a wide band. Meg's face was in the shadow, but the lower half of the cot on which she lay was shrouded in the light. Mistress Miriam was kneeling at the foot of the bed, in the full glow of the light. She was praying, and her hands were clasped with her silver beaded rosary hanging across them. Since the first night of my arrival at the manor-house, I had not often come in contact with the religion I had so often cursed. Now a pang shot through my heart and I turned away. But at that moment long forgotten words came into my mind like a voice from the dead. "No, no, brother," Ruth had said to me. "Vincent, turn the word of God into your own dull heart before you judge your neighbor."

So Ruth, my sister, had said to me. I looked in again at this young woman praying in the moonlight and my heart softened. From her beautiful face I looked into the shadow where lay the woman with the memory of her sin.

I could not help but listen. Miriam's voice was soft and pleading. It fell upon Meg's ear like a promise of better things. She stopped moaning and her fingers, which were nervously twitching at the bedclothes, grew still and sank restfully by her side.

All this time I had been standing on the step

outside, unknown to those within. I had been sent to watch the young mistress and to keep her from hearing what she should not. But I had no strength of will to interrupt this scene. I was about to turn away when my attention was attracted by some words of Miriam's prayer.

"Holy Mother, help this poor woman. Make her happy in the life to come. In the name of Christ who died let not her death be upon our head. O God, what I have heard, let it not be true."

My first thought was that the old woman had told her everything; but I was soon undeceived. An interruption came from the shadow.

"What have you heard, my lass?"

Miriam sprang up in excitement; as she did so her rosary fell from her hands to the floor near the door, where I was standing.

"O Meg," she cried joyfully. "Can you speak again?"

"Ay, my dear, my head feels clearer now. But what have you heard?"

"Nothing, Meg, nothing at all."

"Tut, tut, do you think it will worry the life out of me? Tell me what it is you have heard?"

"No, no, I must not."

"Miriam," cried the old woman, "I've loved you all my life, never ask why. There is something on my mind now. I shall die easy if you will tell me what you have heard."

"O Meg, how can I? Such tales of my father."

"What are they? I've got but a few minutes left to give you comfort in. Tell me, my lass, what you have heard that troubles you."

I had already had experience of Meg's devotion to one idea. I thought that now the disclosure would come and that it was time for me to step in and prevent it. Yet I stood immovable as a statue on the outside, against my will.

"I have heard that he was to blame for your illness, and that——"

"It is a lie," she cried fiercely, rousing herself with some of her old-time spirit. "My little lass, they lie who say such things as that."

Then, to my astonishment, fell rapidly the old woman's tale. In quick, passionate words she pleaded on behalf of the patroon. She forestalled every bit of information that might by accident get to Miriam's ears. She denied the truth of what the patroon had really done. She put good motives where he had acted from bad. Was it her old love returning at the last moment to act in behalf of the man who had ruined her? Or was she, too, like the rest of us trying merely to shield the young mistress? Everyone seemed to love her; everyone tried to save her from the ruin that we all foresaw. I stepped back and retraced my way to the manor-house.

All the way home my mind was occupied with a new thought. I flew backward in imagination to that scene on the Royal Lion when Ruth taught

me my duty in words I had forgotten. From the time of our second separation, I had been growing still harder on the Catholics. My heart had leaped with joy when I knew that I had the patroon nearly in my grasp, and that it was a Catholic I was hounding to his ruin. Yet Ruth had taught me to be tolerant. How had I followed her instructions? Should I not be ashamed of myself? Then like a revelation it all came over me; why I had done nothing for so many weeks, why I could not play false to the patroon, why I stood spellbound on the cottage steps when Miriam was praying at the old woman's bedside. When I left the cottage I held something in my hand. Now I looked at it passionately for a moment and put it in my bosom.

When I reached home I told the patroon what I had overheard, and that there was no danger of his daughter hearing anything he did not wish her to hear. I thought the tears came into his eyes when I told him this.

"It is for love of her," he said in a low voice. "But not for me. God help her."

The patroon had nothing for me to do, so I returned to my room. But I could not rest. After a while—it must have been towards midnight—I rose and went outside for a breath of air. I hardly knew where to walk. Then I bethought myself of Miriam alone in the cottage among the hills. I was just turning in that direction when I heard footsteps in the gravel path behind me. I drew back into

the shadow to conceal myself till I knew who besides myself was stirring at this hour of the night. I soon recognized Louis Van Ramm coming towards me slowly. He paused near where I was hiding and looked about him.

"Where are you?" he asked in a guarded whisper.

"Here," I answered.

"Ah, I thought I saw you. Let us walk farther from the house." When we had gone a short distance he continued abruptly, "My mother is dead. The young mistress will stay there till I come. I told the patroon and he was glad that she was dead. Curse his soul! Now that he knows Ronald and not I was his son I shall go like the rest."

"Why should he want your life?" I asked.

"I know his secrets. Do you know why Le Bourse died; and who warned the Marmadukes?"

"Was it you?"

"Who else would it be? I knew you from the start. It was I blinded the old fool, for I saw that you brought me a chance of revenge. He killed Ronald. He killed my mother. But that is not all. Do you ever wonder why your sister died?"

"For God's sake what of that?"

"Not much. She stumbled on one of his secrets and when she would not refuse to tell she was murdered in her bed."

"Merciful God, shall I stand this? I'll back and defy him to his face."

The dwarf caught me by the arm. "Not yet.

What proof have you except my word? And any morning may find me dead. We have no fool to deal with unless it is you."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You are a Huguenot; Mistress Miriam is a Catholic."

"What of that?"

"You would not have asked that question three months ago. What did you say to the patroon the night you came, when he asked you to go into service? Yet—what is that?"

He leaned forward and placed his hand upon my breast. This action threw me into a fury.

"Hands off, you dog," I cried. "Stand back or take the consequences."

"It is clear enough," he replied. "She is the witch. You cannot be trusted. But you are all I have. Listen to my story. When your sister was murdered I got word secretly to Lady Marmaduke. The grave was opened in her presence. She knew that his story about branding her was a lie. Yet she would not act. She would not do what I wanted her to. If she had, I should have told her the great secret. But I did not and that must wait." He turned on me sharply. "Will you kill the patroon?"

"He asked me to do the same by you."

"Me? When?"

"Four days ago."

"The day he learned who Ronald was. I knew it would be so. Why did you refuse?"

"I am not a murderer."

"A spy?"

"No!"

"What then?"

I could not say. I stood in silent shame.

"Well," continued the dwarf. "You are not ripe for the great secret yet. But remember one thing. Back of the old oven there are some loose bricks. If I die by violence, look there. You may do my bidding yet."

By this time we had reached his mother's cottage. Miriam was seated by the bed near which she had placed lighted candles. At our entrance she rose and said that she would go home if I would take her. We set out alone. The air blew very keen and chill in our faces as we passed among the trees of the park. Little was said by either of us till the first cold from leaving the house began to wear away by our brisk walking. Then she began to speak of Meg and of how she seemed happier before she died.

"She said that it was I who made her happier. In truth, I was so happy myself. I had heard some soldiers talking about my father and saying what I could never believe; though it distressed me so. Meg told me how it was, and made me feel ashamed of myself. I had heard that he was expelled in disgrace from the governor's council. But it cannot be so. Have you heard anything of it?"

"I know," said I with hesitation, "that he is no

longer a member of the council. I have heard that when he left it he behaved with a dignity that carried the day for honor."

"How could it be otherwise? The Earl deals with doubtful means. My father must have become disgusted with his dishonest practices and resigned."

I said nothing to contradict her, nor had I said aught but what was strictly true. I remembered well the day we had baited him before the great carved table in the fort, and how much dignity he had shown at the end. Even then, for the moment, I had felt sorry for what I had done. By my good impulses were short-lived; I had much to lead me astray in those days.

"Mistress Van Volkenberg," I said after a pause, "there is something on my mind to say to you. You know that I am a Protestant. I have had bitter feelings towards people of your faith and bitter treatment from them for many years. But it has been my lot to meet only the worst. I had a sister once"—here my voice trembled and I was fain to stop for a moment—"I had a sister once who tried to teach me better things. I was slow to profit by what she said. But of late your example has made me see the wickedness of my ways."

"Do not follow me," she replied. "I am so sinful; but I pray to the blessed Virgin every night, and she sends me strength. I know that she will give me heart to do my duty."

"Do you really believe that?" I asked.

"Of course, if I pray. I shall get everything I pray for if I ought to have it."

She spoke with a simpleness of faith that I had never felt in spite of my confident pretensions.

"I wish that I could share your belief. But there are things I have prayed so for without result."

"You must continue. I confess every night upon my knees. I wish I could have a priest. I used to be afraid to confess my sins to a real person, and that kept me good often when I should otherwise have done wrong. Ah, me, there are no priests in the province now. The new laws punish a priest with death if he come to us. I suppose they will shut us out next."

This injustice made my blood boil. I had been driven out of France because our church had desired freedom to worship God in our own way. Here the tables were completely turned and I could sympathize with her.

When we arrived at the manor-house she told me that she was going into the little chapel room to pray. Would I go with her? I said "yes," and was surprised at my answer. I stood near the door while she knelt at the foot of the crucifix. When she arose I noticed that there were two stools to kneel upon.

"Yes," she said, observing the direction of my glance. "Little Ruth and I used to kneel there side by side. She was of your faith, too. Often

she would put her arm about me and pray in her faith while I prayed in mine. Holy Mother, rest her soul."

She crossed herself devoutly and then we parted. In my own room that night, or rather, morning, for it was nearly dawn when I reached it, I fell to sobbing in great misery. I began to see the error of my ways. I remembered Ruth's words: "What shall I say at the great day if they charge 'Your brother did this or that wrong in your name? Answer me, Vincent, what shall I say?' "

I could do nothing but fall on my knees and cry, God be merciful to me a sinner. After that I rose with more peace of mind. I put my hand upon my bosom where Louis had laid his upon me, and drew out the rosary which I had picked up when Miriam dropped it on the floor of Meg's cottage. I held it before me for a moment, then I put it to my lips and kissed it as a sacred thing.

CHAPTER XXII

A FRUITLESS RESOLUTION

This scene with Miriam put me in a state of bad humor, for all there was in it to make me glad. It is seldom that sweet recollections come unmixed with sour, and then the sour bite into our thoughts and the sweet are clean forgotten. I ought to have been happy over the dear picture of my sister and her friend praying together, each in her own faith, as Miriam said. But I could think only of my own loss in Ruth's death, and of what wicked ways I had fallen into without her to keep me free of pitfalls. It was useless to argue with myself that I had been driven against my will; that, through my late career, I had chosen what seemed to be the right path, or, at least, the lesser of two evils. Such meditations gave me no comfort.

Here I actually was in the household of the patroon, a spy not even owning my name. My present safety was due mainly to Miriam's intercession on my behalf. She had denied that I was a spy and had vouched for my honesty. This added new weight to my burden of remorse. I tossed wakefully on my bed at night, wondering what would happen if she knew the truth. How she would hate me and despise me when she found out who I was. I was not only deceiving the patroon, acting a lie

day by day; I was also deceiving her, she who had been so kind to my sister, and whose coveted belief in me had become more than I could contemplate.

So, when I rose in the morning after Meg's death, I was full of a new idea. Come what would of it, I should seek Lady Marmaduke that very day and demand my release. I had gone to the manor-house at her instigation and felt myself bound to her service; but I would soon end that. Just how to accomplish the meeting had not occurred to me as yet, but I could not fail to make a chance before the day was over.

For an hour in the morning I was busy in my mind going over the situation and trying to read the signs of the times. I knew well enough that Van Volkenberg's expulsion from the council was not the end of his account with the governor. It was but one successful blow from his enemy and was sure to be returned. Theirs was a bitter struggle that I knew would end only with the utter annihilation of one or the other of them.

Could Van Volkenberg possibly succeed? He was nearer to success than I had any idea of at the time. There were many points in his favor. Captain Kidd was about to arrive—in fact, he had arrived during the night, but we did not know it then. His mission was now familiar to everyone, and the fact that he would recruit his crew in New York was also public. There were so many merchants in the city whose trade would be hurt by the suppression

of the buccaneers, that ill-feeling against the Earl was running high. The patroon made the most of this, coaxing here, explaining there, till all the discontented faction began to look to him more than ever as their leader against the Earl.

Had the patroon been ready to strike his blow a few days earlier, I ween he had overturned the city.

Bellamont, on the other hand, was likely to suffer from too much security, or fancied security. He was an easy-going man most of the time; one who prided himself on his knowledge of the character of men—a knowledge which he really did not possess at all. Through me he had detected the plotting of the patroon. Governor Bellamont thought that the retirement of his enemy from the council in disgrace removed him altogether from the sphere of troublesome elements that beset the King's processes in the province. There was one person, however, at his very right hand who realized the danger. Hardly a day passed that Lady Marmaduke did not warn the Earl, did not beseech him to use more care and watchfulness.

"No, no," Bellamont would answer in his easy-going way. "I have killed him now. I'll get the Assembly to reverse his grant and we shall hear no more of him."

But Lady Marmaduke knew better. If the Earl would not keep an eye on the enemy she would. She had plotted without the Earl before, and was

willing to do so again. She had already communicated once or twice with me. Through Annetje and Pierre, all the doings at the manor-house were reported to her promptly. She was ever watchful and employed half a dozen men to seek out bits of gossip and trace home the vague rumors that were constantly gaining ground—rumors of some mysterious danger that was about to overwhelm the city.

I, too, was on the alert. I had been deeply fired at the patroon's part, whatever it was, in the death of my sister. Lady Marmaduke had put her own burning spirit into my blood that time she pleaded with me in her own house, that time she thrust her finger into the candle and I smelled the burning flesh. But Miriam had come between us and had dashed all our plans. In her presence I could see nothing but my own shameless duplicity and the effect it would have on her when she discovered my dishonesty.

In the manor-house itself all was at sixes and sevens. Though the patroon seemed much relieved over the death of Meg, I could plainly see that something was on his mind. On the day we had ridden together about his estate he had pointed to the ocean and said that the fortunes of the Red Band lay in that direction. One of the recent rumors concerned the coming of a French fleet. Could he be involved in that? I knew that there had been mysterious comings and goings about the

manor-house that I had no share in. Were there other seamen to be met with at Wolfert Webber's tavern? Now that I look back upon these events, I wonder that I did not see the danger that threatened us. But one who is in the midst of things is ever blind.

Louis Van Ramm really held the key to everything, for he shared his master's most important secrets. It was not till later, however, that I fully understood his character, or why he held back so long. He hated his master and had hated him for years; but Louis had not the power of action. Courage was not wanting in his makeup, but he lacked that power of self-reliance that would enable him to take the initiative in overthrowing the patroon. He knew that I was set on the ruin of Van Volkenberg, and hoped to put the proper cards in my hand, thinking that I would play them freely without let or hindrance.

Such was the confused state of affairs at the time I made my resolution to go to Lady Marmaduke and assert my independence of her service. I should have set off alone for the city that morning had not the patroon sent for me to accompany him to Yorke about ten o'clock in the morning.

I said that Captain Kidd had arrived in the night, though we did not know the fact when we set out. The wind was southerly that morning, and we had not gone far, when it brought us the sound of a gun.

"Ha," said the patroon. "Doubtless that is to welcome the Adventure."

And sure enough it was. Kidd's ship had been in the bay all night and, as we soon found, was coming up to the town. It had been some hour anchored when the patroon and I rode up to the Slip to look at it.

"A tidy ship," said the patroon after examining it as thoroughly as he could from the shore. "One that could sail far with a safe crew. New York must furnish him good recruits, St. Vincent." He laughed in a low, satisfied way, as if at some joke of his own. "Ay, we must serve him with a good crew."

I had thought that he had ridden to the city on business, but such seemed not to be the case. We set out on our return immediately. To be sure, we did not go directly home, but rode about in a wandering way from street to street, like strangers viewing the town for the first time. All the while my master glanced from side to side, eyeing every person who passed as if he were in search of someone. Suddenly I heard an exclamation. Van Volkenberg drew in his horse just as a stranger stepped out from the stream of passengers at the side of the street. This person was dressed in ordinary clothes, but I knew from his walk that he was a seaman.

"Well, William," said the patroon, as soon as they had greeted each other, which they did

warmly, as if they were old friends long parted. "How does New York look to you now?"

"Much as usual. But I see that the privy-council is changed a bit."

"Ay, changed for the worst." They both laughed good humoredly. "What else do you notice?"

"Your French County seems to be on the war-path again."

"Yes, there are rumors to that effect; but I put no faith in them. Still, everyone believes them here. It would be a good thing for the governor to garrison Fort Orange, if only to allay public excitement. It would be easier to stop him at Albany than at any other place."

At that moment one of Van Volkenberg's clerks came up and put a paper into his master's hand.

"I have been looking everywhere for you."

"Yes," answered the patroon. "This needs my attention." Then, turning to the stranger, he continued: "I must back to the warehouse, William. Remember our appointment; midnight on the river."

We rode off directly to the patroon's warehouse on the Slip. Before we had gone far the patroon put the letter into my hand. It was but a line and signed by one of the confidential clerks. It read:

"Lady Marmaduke is about to appeal to the Assembly to stop the troops."

"It is Greek to me," I answered. "What does it mean?"

"You suggested it yourself. Bellamont has decided to fortify Albany, and is going to send off three of the city companies to-morrow or next day."

"What has Lady Marmaduke to do with it? Why does she want the troops stopped?"

"Have you not heard the rumors? Some people here in the city believe that there is danger from a French fleet. They have not forgotten how helpless Stuyvesant was in '64. I tell you, St. Vincent, there is no danger from the sea. Frontenac is the man to fear. I would wager my estate he is coming through the wilderness, and has set these notions in the air himself to keep attention off from Albany. He is a shrewd old fox, and if the troops are stopped we shall get a message down the river soon: likely as not the county's greeting and news that Fort Orange is taken."

"If all this is true why should Lady Marmaduke oppose it?"

"Because she is a fool. She believes the gossip of the street. She has already tried to convince the Earl. But he has more sense. I hate him, but, I declare, he demands respect in this."

We had reached the patroon's door by this time, and the clerk who had signed the note came out to meet him.

"When does the Assembly adjourn?" asked the patroon aloud, after a short whispered consultation.

"They have moved to adjourn for a week at noon to-day."

"Can Lady Marmaduke sway them to her wishes?"

"There is little doubt of it."

"Then she must be kept away. St. Vincent, ride to Marmaduke Hall. Keep the mistress in conversation for an hour and a half. Ask her what became of Le Bourse. Tell her I shall oust her from her estate, break her title, anything you please. Stay there till noon and occupy her time. She must not stop the troops. Go; instantly!"

There was no resisting the patroon's haste. In the next breath I was galloping at breakneck speed to my lady's house. What a coincidence! All the forenoon I had been racking my brain to find a way to meet her and withdraw from my task of spy. Now the chance was made. It filled my mind. Before I turned the first corner the Earl, the troops, and Albany were quite forgotten. I could think only of the stormy meeting before me and how I had best carry it through.

I banged the brass knocker with a will, and was shown into the receiving room. The name I sent to the mistress was Henrie St. Vincent, of the Hanging Rock. She knew it and came in a trice.

"What news do you bring?" she cried, sweeping into the room like a blast of wind. "How do you come so openly, Le Bourse?"

"St. Vincent."

"Tush! There is no one to hear. What is your news. What have you learned?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing? Then why do you come here?"

"I am tired of my work. I want to give it up."

"Give up? You coward!"

"I knew you would say that."

"Then you deserve it."

"I do not."

"Explain yourself."

I told her briefly the confidence that the patroon had placed in me and the way the deception gnawed my conscience. I did not move her in the least. Her lips curled in scorn and she gripped her hands together till they were all mottled red and white with the pressure.

"Sit down," she said in a tone so cold and biting that it made me shiver. "If you are going to leave my service I shall dismiss you like a man."

She strode haughtily across the room and poured out two glasses of wine. She came back and handed one of them to me.

"My dear Michael," she began. "I am a stormy woman. I repent of what I said to you. Here we part. Rise and lift your glass. We shall drink a toast before you go."

I stood up. This was easier than I had expected. I had counted on more of a scene and could almost smile at the ease of my achievement.

"You do me honor, Lady Marmaduke. I hardly hoped that you would sympathize with my conscience. Propose your toast."

"Can you guess who it is?"

"The Earl?"

"No."

I laughed. "Our friend, the patroon?"

"The patroon of Hanging Rock? Yes, but by a different title. Drink, Michael. Long life and happiness to the seducer of your sister."

"My God!" I cried, dashing glass and all upon the floor. "What do you mean?"

"You know well enough. I told you long ago that he visited her room that night she died. We of the aristocracy here think little of our bond-slaves. They are mere chattels to our lust. Why should they not minister to our pleasure. Why should not Ruth—"

"Stop! You are baiting me. You do not know this. Louis said that she was murdered, but not that she was—"

"You know that? You will not strike her murderer? You craven coward! And I know why you halt. You love the Catholic woman."

"What if I do? She loved my sister."

"Ah, she loved your sister and you love her; he killed your sister and you love him."

"What can I do? He is her father."

"Do you remember a masterless man who once

came into this very room to smell the smell of burning flesh?"

"Don't, don't."

"Why don't? What do you care now? Your sister's agony, the tortured flesh quivering under the iron's heat—why, man, you should thank God for that. How else would you have gone to the house at Hanging Rock? How else would you have met your wonderful, adorable, queen of your heart, the Catholic Miriam? How Ruth loved Catholics! Get down on your knees, man. Your sister's martyrdom has brought you a love. It brings you a home, position, with the name of coward and of traitor to my trust. Thank God, I say; thank God."

"You are unjust, Lady Marmaduke. You do not understand me."

"My dearest Michael, I understand you perfectly. It was in the beginning that I made the mistake. I took you for a man. I supposed flesh and blood could not forget the debt you owe the patroon. But 'twas a small debt after all. What is a sister ruined and murdered to a father-in-law who ruined her? Ha, ha, ha, Michael; do you think I misunderstand you now?"

This was hard treatment and it took my resolution as the summer dries a stream. I could stand ridicule—though that hurt me more than most things—but the worst was that the picture she drew was true. I had never admitted to myself that I

felt more than mere respect for Miriam. At that moment I believe I hated her.

"I took you in," continued my tormenter. "Now you may go. Perhaps he will murder you." How this struck home in the light of what he had already done. "Perhaps he will give you his daughter in marriage."

"I don't want his daughter."

"Hoity toity, child. Don't break your china doll now it is in your hands. What will you have in exchange for your peerless sister?"

"I want revenge."

"And refuse to take it! Bah, you talk like a fool."

"I have talked like a fool. But now I swear to hound this hell-cat to his death."

"And Miriam?"

"As we sow, so must we reap. Let us spare her if we can, but—"

"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, my Michael. I come not to bring peace into the world, but a sword. This is the word of God, my child."

She had slipped her arm about me and was talking in the gentler manner in which she had comforted me the time I first learned the news of my sister's fate.

Half an hour later I left the hall, sullen, resolved and conquered. Yes; once more the strength of her spirit had proved greater than the strength of mine. I must see more and be tried again before the final

break should come. And when it came, like a flash, like a thief in the night, some who were upon the housetop came not down, but were taken in their sins. And others like myself were spared to learn the glory of God through goodness and mercy in return for sin and evil.

CHAPTER XXIII

VAN VOLKENBERG AND THE EARL

The next day was the beginning of that period that led rapidly to the end. A few days later and all was over; there was no Red Band left to threaten New York, and I—I had suffered untold remorse for my cunning and deceit.

Meantime the uncertain breath of rumor that I had heard upon the Slip had grown into a gale of certainty. People stopped at corners in a frightened sort of way to discuss the former invasions of the French. The Coffee-House was full to overflowing, and the conversation always turned upon the last invasion of the County Frontenac, or upon our long immunity from northward danger. But at last, we all thought, peace was at an end. Certainty of the coming of danger was quickly followed by fear of what would follow in case of a descent from the Canadian frontier. It was a long way to Albany, to be sure, but the fort at Albany was weak. If that were once taken the enemy would have a free path to our very doors.

So the people fell to work in haste to repair the wall which toppled across the island in a miserable state of repair. The trench on the inside was cleaned out and deepened. New palisades were put in to replace some of the old ones that had

rotted through and were ready to fall from their own weight. The gates were hung anew and a guard stationed at them. Sunrise and sunset saw them securely locked. While the gates were locked no one was allowed to leave the city without a pass signed by the governor and stamped with the great seal of the province.

Often by day you would see great swarms of people clustered about upon the ledge of rocks west of the city just at the foot of the stockade, with their eyes turned up river, as if they expected to see a French flotilla appear in sight at any moment. The little wicket gate through which I had fled with the suspicious sailors the night before Van Volkenberg's disgrace was now seldom closed in the daytime. Through it staggered a stream of fearful people, ever on the lookout for the invader.

The excitement was no less on the island north of the city wall. All the little hamlets between New York and Harlem were making preparations for defense, drilling and mustering men into companies to meet the stranger. Every afternoon and evening the Red Band assembled on the terrace to practice the use of arms, marching and countermarching, and all things needful for the little army of the patroon. They moved like clockwork. There were no soldiers like them in the whole province; even the governor's guard was not so well trained by half. Still there was no visible sign of danger. A post came in from Albany and reported that all

was peaceful in the neighborhood of Fort Orange.

This ferment had grown to a head while our attention at the manor-house was attracted to other things. It was on the night after the death of Meg —or, was it the next night? I forget, but it makes no difference—that I sat in my room reading the little Bible that I had carried ever since the old days in France. Suddenly I was startled by a sharp scraping sound apparently in my own room. I listened a moment attentively and placed the sound low down near the door. There was a pause; then, after a moment's silence, the scraping began again.

"Begone," I cried, with a loud stamp of my foot, supposing, of course, that rats were gnawing in the wainscot.

At the sound of my voice there was a rustle like skirts in the hall, and then I was sure I heard light footsteps running away from my door. I rose quickly and opened it. All was dark in the hall, and there was no sign of any visitor. I sat down again, wondering who it was and whether the visitor would return. Perhaps ten minutes passed, during which I heard nothing, though I listened with both my ears. Then of a sudden, without any foresounds, the scratching began again. I rose very quietly with my candle in my hand, and tip-toed across the room. I took care to make no noise this time, for I wanted to surprise my visitor, and find out who she was. I turned the knob softly without letting the door give an inch, paused a moment to

get my weight right, and then flung the door wide open with my candle held high above my head.

There stood Annetje Dorn, with her fingers to her lips for silence.

"Follow me," she whispered. "But don't make the least noise."

She led me a long way till we came out after many wanderings upon a little balcony on the outside of the house under the eaves. In the shadow before us I could just make out the vague form of a man who was awaiting us.

"It is Pierre," she whispered; and the next moment we were talking in guarded whispers. She had smuggled him into the house and up here so that he could deliver his message to me without danger of being overheard by stray persons about the house. But after all, his message to me was small enough, if it was worth being called a message at all. But I learned something of importance from him, for all that.

"Lady Marmaduke is getting so anxious that she would have it that I come and speak with you, danger or no danger," said Pierre. "Have you any word to send her?"

I told him briefly that nothing of importance had happened. Then I asked him what news he could give me from the city. Matters were in a much worse state there than I had thought.

"The citizens," said Pierre, "are like chicks without their mother."

"They'd duck you if they heard that," put in Annetje, who always enjoyed a fling at Pierre for his former escapade. "It is just the thing for people who talk too much. Now there was Long Mary once—"

"Never mind Long Mary or you'll get ducked yourself. Monsieur Le Bourse, they are just as I said, like chicks without their mother. They run here and there and everywhere, chirping for the governor to do something. There is nothing he can do unless he loads up the guns on the Battery and shoots them at the bay. I wish he would. It would make safer ducking, which I should like in case Annetje—"

Her hand smothered the rest of this, whatever it was.

"If I were the governor," broke in Annetje, trying to keep her muzzling hand over her sweetheart's mouth. "I should do something. I am sure I don't know what there is to be done. But look how the patroon always does something right away. He always knows that something is to be done and just what it is. He never waits a minute. The governor always puts things off."

"So, ho," retorted Pierre, getting free at last. "What do you know about it? Have you ever heard the saying: Gray heads on green shoulders?"

"Ay, ay, and green heads on gray shoulders."

"Bah, I am only a year older than you. But gray

heads can hide their green shoulders by holding their tongues."

"Try it then and see. Now, Monsieur St. Vincent, if you please, what is there to be done? Pierre told me before I fetched you up that if something were not done before to-morrow three companies of the guard would be sent up the river to protect Fort Orange."

"That's what Lady Marmaduke is afraid of," broke in Pierre. "With only one company left in the fort and the Red Band gathering—that looks like trouble. There are seven of the patroon's ships in the harbor at this blessed moment, and that is more than there has been at any one time these ten years past. Some of them have been here a month. Why does he not fill 'em up and let 'em go their way a-trading?"

I had already noticed that more and more men came to the drill as each day went by, but, before this, I had not known the cause. However, I had no intelligence to send on that score; Pierre seemed to know more about it than I did, and so he went back to the city with nothing of account to relate to his mistress for all the danger of his errand.

Since the day on which the patroon had been dismissed in disgrace from the privy-council he had not visited the city in state; not since that first day when Pierre and I had wandered out north of the city by the Collect, where he told me of my sister's

fate. On our return that day, we had nearly reached the Kissing Bridge when the trampling of horses sent us to the bushes for concealment. I remember to this hour how the patroon looked as he rode by with Louis by his side and the Red Band two and two at his heels. They made a brave sight, but since his disgrace, the patroon had not ridden in that way. When his affairs called him to town he went alone or with only Louis or me to accompany him.

But to-day, he resolved to ride in state. An early summons came to wait upon the master. By ten o'clock a splendid retinue was ready to set out for New York. Van Volkenberg was at the head with Louis upon one side and me upon the other. Behind us, in rows of four, came one hundred and fifty chosen men in the full livery of the Red Band. They wore cloth of a dark olive green, and on the left arm the band of brilliant red, which was their distinctive badge of service. The English flag and the patroon's banner flapped merrily as we galloped over the half-frozen ground. This was the very road over which I had followed Louis to the printing shop of Bradford. I compared that night to this day and wondered what was the meaning of all this display of force. Could it be that the wheel had come full circle? Was it the patroon's turn now? He had often told me that it was dangerous to drive a sullen foe to bay.

Meantime the patroon rode proudly at the head

of his company. We were half way to the city when he motioned me to ride a little closer, and Louis to fall back out of earshot.

"St. Vincent," he said, "do you remember the conversation we had a few days ago? Well, I am going to take your advice. I am an old man, most too old to begin, and it is ill work to teach an old dog new tricks, as the proverb says; but I shall do it, by the grace of God, I'll do it." He broke into a boisterous laugh. "Oh, it makes me feel young again. I've been like one gone mad, many a time of late. Somehow I feel free again. Your rough words the other day put new life into me. Thank you, Vincent, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Perhaps you do not remember what you said. That is often the case with people who do more good by their stray acts than they know at the time. Ah, Vincent, you don't know how far a little word sometimes reaches. Maybe it was only your tone at the time. At any rate, I have turned over a new leaf. Can you guess what I am going to do?"

"No," I answered. "I cannot."

"'Tis this: I am going to offer my household to the Earl in defense of the city."

He jerked this out in quick sudden breaths as if it hurt him to say it, and there was a tightening about his lips that seemed to indicate the struggle it had taken and was still taking to keep him up to this honorable resolution. But there was a doubt

in my mind, however glad I was to see this change in a man whom I had given up as almost altogether bad.

"Do you think he will accept your help?" I asked, putting my doubt into words.

A shadow crossed his face.

"I have thought of that. I know that my motives are likely to be misunderstood in the light of my past actions. But I must put up with that. A man can do no better than his best."

He made the sign of the cross and then sat square in the saddle again. We were now hard upon the Landport where workmen were still busy hanging the clumsy gates that had for so long a time been out of use. We rode through the open way and into the crooked streets of the city. In a moment they were swarming with people, come out to see the Red Band go by. Never before had it made such a fine appearance. Never before had the people tossed up their caps like one man and cried: "God save the good patroon, the defender of the city." For rumor had gone hotfoot ahead of us and, somehow, the people were aware of the errand which had brought us to the city. They knew that the Red Band had come to fight for the town. Old hate was forgotten. The frequent brawls with the patroon's sailors were not called to mind. And all went as merry as the bells of Trinity on a wedding day.

The patroon was proud of his display, and took

a roundabout way to reach the fort. When we drew near, all the neighborhood was in confusion. A great crowd blocked the street from one side to another. Everyone's attention was fixed on the stone gateway and the massive gates that barred it. When I saw that the gates were closed, I wondered whether there had been an alarm. My thought was soon answered. A bugle from within the walls rang out clear on the frosty air. The notes, beautiful as they were, fell on my ears with a chill foreboding sound. The murmur of the people softened. The great iron-bound gates swung back. There was the throbbing sound of a drum and the dull tramp of soldiers marching. Three of the four garrison companies passed out in a long narrow line, down to the river, and embarked to Albany. This is what Pierre had foretold. The soldiers were gone. The city was now almost defenseless. But its only other danger, the patroon, had espoused its cause. No wonder the people shouted: "God save the good patroon, the defender of the city."

When the Earl's troops were gone, followed by many of the spectators, I glanced through the gate into the courtyard of the fort. The Earl of Bellamont, surrounded by most of the members of his council, were still seated upon their horses in front of the executive mansion. Patroon Van Volkenberg gave orders for his troops to remain drawn up in the street; then he rode into the paved courtyard of the fort, accompanied by Louis and myself. After

he had saluted the governor and his associates, the patroon cleared his throat a little and began to speak.

"Your Excellency," he said, "I come to beg no favors, to make no excuses. I have been guilty of many acts which I performed with my eyes wide open, knowing what the consequences would be, and I have likewise suffered the consequences as I should. But that is not what I came to talk about. By the grace of God, I have suffered a change of heart. If it is not too late I should like to make amends for my past acts. Vincent, present this paper to the Earl."

I handed the document which he had withdrawn from his pocket to the Earl. Bellamont's face took on an expression of surprise as he read. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"Why, this is the title to your estate of Hanging Rock."

"Yes, it is that," answered the patroon. "I know that it is your desire to recall the lavish grants of your predecessor; and I have come to see, in spite of my former acts, that they are a danger to the safety of the province. Therefore I have brought myself to the point of resigning my claim into your hands, hoping thereby to make some amends for what I have done in the past times to oppose the purpose of your administration. I have brought my household with me, armed and at your service, and I pray that you will receive them into the fort,

subject them to your own officers, and let me repair to my home until you have disposed of my title as the welfare of the province prompts you."

Van Volkenberg had spoken with calmness and respect; but for the moment I was in doubt whether the governor with his strong prejudices would trust him. He did not know, of course, as I did, what had prompted the patroon to this act of humility and grace. However, after a few minutes' hesitation, the Earl thanked him cordially. He consulted with his advisers and they came to the conclusion that it would be best to accept the offer of the patroon. The fact that he himself would return to his manor-house for the time being and leave the command of the troops wholly to the governor won them over. They all shook hands with him, and Bellamont thanked him again for the way in which he had come to the rescue of the city.

"We shall let bygones be bygones," he said. "We have had our quarrel. To-morrow there will be a meeting of my council at the usual hour, at which I hope you will be present."

For just a moment there seemed likely to be an interruption in store for us. Louis, who had not shared my conversation with the Earl, seemed amazed. His eyes stood out like knobs. His great misshapen mouth opened. He threw back his head with that weird contortion of his face that preceded his peculiar, ghastly laugh. I caught in my reins lest my horse should startle at the sound. But

Louis subsided slowly without a laugh and took on again that solemn look of acquiescence.

"A mere freak of his," said the patroon in explanation. "A curiosity of mine, but he means no harm."

With that they parted harmoniously and we three, the patroon, Louis and I, rode back to the manor-house. We who had gone into town in such pomp returned alone without a man to bear us company. And a hundred and fifty of the best troops of the province were in the fort, ready to guard it against attack.

Later that evening, Louis Van Ramm was nowhere to be found. The patroon seemed alarmed at his henchman's absence.

"He has never left me without permission before, St. Vincent. Did he say anything to you?"

He had said nothing to me. No one else had any notion of the dwarf's whereabouts. We went out upon the terrace in the vague hope of seeing or hearing something of him. Suddenly the distinct sound of clattering horse hoofs fell upon the night. The wind blew in gusts and, in a moment, the sound had vanished. But the wind came again in a moment and the hoof beats with it, louder than before. And then, fast and clear, the triple ring of a horse at full gallop along the frozen highway to the north.

"Someone is abroad to-night," said the patroon.

"Yes, a horseman," I replied.

We both spoke calmly. An observer might have

wondered why we had not cried out, for the sound came suddenly like one speaking in the dark. For my part, I suspected Louis, though how or what I did not know. The patroon may have thought likewise, for he asked:

"Who is that, do you suppose?"

"A horseman," I replied again.

There was no other answer to be had. The rider passed the park without stopping or slackening his speed, which we could now tell was breakneck and wild to the extreme. Where he was going and for what purpose we could not tell. Gradually the sound died away and left us gaping at the blank dark. After that we went back into the house, the patroon muttering curses upon the dwarf for his absence.

CHAPTER XXIV

CAPTAIN WILLIAM KIDD

Though we sat together for some time after that, little enough passed between us. I had my own thoughts and so had the patroon. Whatever was in his mind I could not tell, but I thought that it was Louis. For if there was the least sound outside he would start up expectantly; and when, as always happened, Louis did not appear, his face would grow black, and the corners of his mouth would drop down, as they did in his worst moments. I hardly wonder, considering what followed later, that he was ill at ease. In all likelihood, he suspected the real cause of Louis's absence and knew much better than I did in what danger it would involve himself.

However, the whole evening was not to be given up to hopeless grumbling after the lost henchman. I had first come to New York in August, as you will remember, and it was now late in November. The roads were still hard, witness the sharp clattering ring of the horseman who had ridden by shortly before on the frozen ground; but at any day now we might expect the bad weather to set in and difficult roads to follow.

We had heard the horseman ride by about nine o'clock. For two hours the patroon fussed and

fumed and visited the clock in the hall so often that it scarce seemed to leave time for him to do anything else. I wondered why he should be so anxious about the clock, when he explained the motive all of a sudden.

"Get on your cloak. It is time for us to go. This is the errand I spoke to you about this morning."

I asked no questions—no one ever did of the patroon, especially when he was in a bad humor. No one ever dared to approach him on a forbidden subject, and I knew enough to know my place if I knew nothing else. So I wrapped myself up warm and the two of us set out on foot. We followed the narrow path that led down to the river. It was steep walking part of the way, but we managed to stumble to the end of it in safety. At the landing we found the patroon's barge waiting for us. Eight negro slaves were at the oars and an overseer held the tiller.

"Have you seen the signal?" asked Van Volkenberg.

"Yes, about ten minutes ago for the first time, and twice since. He seems to be in a hurry."

"Very well. Let him know that we are coming. Get in, St. Vincent."

As soon as we were seated, word was given to the slaves, and the barge shot out into the current, turning southward towards the town.

"I do not like this disappearance of Louis," said the patroon in a low voice to me. "I have expected

him to turn against me for a long time, but I was hardly prepared for it just at this moment. If he comes back he shall feel the lash on his bare back for the fright he has given me."

"Poor Louis; I hope we shall not find him now."

"No, this meeting is with someone else. You'll know who shortly."

Soon after this the slaves left off rowing and we drifted with the tide. We had come to a place just opposite the fields north of the city wall.

"Show the light," said the patroon.

A dark lantern held by the steersman was made to flash three times; it was answered close at hand. Five minutes later a boat glided up out of the darkness, from which a stranger stepped aboard us. Then we set out for home.

The stranger, so far as I could see in the dim light, was a strong-built man, not over large in stature. He wore a seaman's great coat and carried his cutlas in his hand. He swore fearfully in his speech and the patroon was constantly warning him to lower his gruff voice.

"I tell you, William," he said after their conversation had gone on for some time, "it will never do. I have had a change of heart. It will never do. I have surely suffered a change of heart."

"Well," returned the stranger with a large accompaniment of oaths, "if that's the fact, what's the use o' lugging Willie Kidd all the way to Hanging Rock?"

"Tut, tut, man, we shall have a glass of old Madeira and talk of bygone days."

"Ah," muttered Kidd, smacking his lips in anticipation, "that is another matter."

So this was Captain William Kidd, merchant, of New York. This was the man to whom had been entrusted the King's ship that was to prey upon the buccaneers and to put the booty into the pocket of the sovereign and his co-adventurers. This was the man about whom the patroon had got himself into disgrace with the governor's council. I tried to make out the expression on Van Volkenberg's face, but the night was too dark for that. I could only fancy how this appointment had been brought about. Then I remembered the seaman we had met in the city the day before, and the patroon's parting injunction: "At midnight on the river." He must have been Captain Kidd—at least his name was William, for I had heard my master call him so. They went on talking in low voices, although not so low but that I could catch the drift of their talk.

I soon learned that the troops had been dispatched to Albany mainly upon Kidd's representation. He had urged Bellamont to protect the colony at all hazards against an invasion from the north; and such was the faith of Bellamont and Livingstone in the advice of the commander of the Adventure that he tipped the scale of a hesitating executive, and the troops were sent.

I also learned that, whereas Bellamont had taken

the advice of Kidd, Kidd had received his cue from Van Volkenberg. So it was the patroon after all who had emptied the fort of its regular guard. But I had no time then to think of what motive he had for doing so, for we were fast nearing the landing at Hanging Rock. Several times during this conversation Van Volkenberg had spoken again of his change of heart. Often a low chuckle escaped him on the occasion of such a reference. His spirits were evidently rising, and, for the present, all thoughts of Louis and his absence must have been forgotten.

When we arrived at the manor-house, the patroon led his guest to the door of the dining room.

"St. Vincent," he said, "stand here on guard. No one is to come in or to interrupt us in any way till we come out again."

With that he opened the door and motioned Captain Kidd to enter. I could only see a part of the room from where I stood. What mainly occupied the vista disclosed by the open door was the great mahogany sideboard, which stood against the wall at the farther end of the room. On the upper part of it were plenty of glass vessels and blue china pieces from Delft and heavy articles of silver plate; the lower part was a huge cupboard used to store less showy articles of furniture. I used to wonder at the bigness of this enclosure and thought what a place it would be to play hide and seek in if there

were only children about the house. Then the door closed and I saw no more of the sideboard or of the visitor for a while. But I heard a laugh; it was loud and uproarious, and I thought he would never have done. But he subsided at last; then I could hear the muffle of low voices, but never a word reached my ears that I could understand.

I walked up and down the hall for a long time. The minutes merged into an hour and then two hours. I grew tired with nothing to occupy my mind but the continual mumble of low voices. I fell to wondering where Louis was and what he was up to. More than once I had suspected the patroon's motive in garrisoning the fort with his own men. I was so sure that his action was a mere trick, though I was taken in by it at the time, that I intended to slip from my window that very night and go to the Earl with a warning. Then it flashed upon me that perhaps Louis had already done this. Could the horseman we had heard be a messenger to recall the troops that had been dispatched to Albany? The idea seemed possible. The more I thought of it the more certain I became. I can remember to this day the thrill of satisfaction that I felt when I understood that the patroon was within one of checkmating himself. My imagination ran riot there in the silence before the door I was guarding. I began to fancy that the patroon meant to get possession of the city. I had noticed that day that his seven ships were so drawn up in the harbor

as to command the whole front of the city. But in spite of everything I was satisfied with the situation. If the Earl had received warning, the patroon, after all. might succeed only in trapping himself.

Then I felt a pang at heart—he was Miriam's father. I could no longer hide from myself the fact that I was in love with the patroon's daughter. From the moment when I first felt the charm of her attractiveness, I had fought hard against it. She was a Catholic and, worse than that, she was his daughter. But she had been good to Ruth. I recalled how earnestly my sister had tried to break down my unreasoning hatred of the Catholics. I thought, too, of Miriam's kindness to old Meg; and of her love and belief in her father; and of her simple purity of faith. These were qualities I had not looked for in the Roman church. Then came that sweet picture of her and Ruth kneeling side by side in the little oratory, each praying in her own faith.

This very evening I had begged Miriam for a keepsake. She had been with us during a part of the time when her father was so upset by Louis's absence. She had tried to coax him into a better humor, but he told her sharply to leave the room and go to bed. I followed her into the hall and when, a moment later, I picked up a handkerchief which she had dropped on the floor, I begged her to let me keep it. It was a mere bit of sentiment on

my part, I confess, but it would have been a treasure to me and I wanted it with all my heart.

But Miriam thought differently. She protested against the gift in such a vigorous manner that I could think nothing less than that she would not have me wear a favor of hers. This dashed my spirits and she saw accordingly how seriously I took the matter.

"Pooh, you are foolish," she cried, laughing. "This is why I won't let you have it."

She shook out the handkerchief and thrust her finger through a tiny hole in one corner. In vain I told her it was all the better for that. She only brushed me lightly in the face with it and ran up stairs laughing.

All this and many other things were in my head as I walked back and forth like a sentinel before the door of the dining room. Soon the sound of other voices besides those of my master and Captain Kidd became audible. They were above stairs and seemed to come from the upper landing. One I recognized immediately as Annetje's. The other person could be none but her mistress; though I heard but little that she said, who else would be with Annetje at this hour of the night?

There was a lamp burning in the hall whose light fell dimly upon the foot of the stairs, but all above the fifth or sixth step was as dark as the pit.

"Look on the bottom step, Monsieur St. Vincent," I heard Annetje whisper.

I glanced at the door of the dining room and then walked sideways towards the stairs, so that I could keep my eyes cast backward and attend to my duty at the same time. On the bottom step lay a patch of white which I caught up eagerly, for it was the very handkerchief I wanted, hole, wrinkles and all.

"It is for you," said Annetje from the dark above. "She sends it with her—"

A hand must have been clapped over her mouth, she stopped so suddenly. I hardly dared to hope for that last word. No matter; I had the handkerchief safe, at least. I called up my thanks, though I could not see either of them and was soon back at my post.

When Van Volkenberg and Kidd came out, we retraced the journey of two hours previous, dropping down river and transferring Kidd to his own boat. And with this one appearance he vanishes from these pages.

During those two hours when they were closeted in the dining room, he and the patroon hatched a plan which indirectly affected us mightily, but whose ultimate success transpired too late to influence the fortunes of the patroon.

As everyone knows, Captain Kidd sailed from New York an honorable merchant and well trusted by the government. When he was next heard of he was a jolly pirate on the high seas, flying the black flag. But he was only an amateur buccaneer after all, and found pirating less to his mind than

he had hoped for. So he sat in his cabin till he had fashioned a whole book full of lies to explain how he had been made the victim of his crew and how he had meant to deal honestly with the King's commission. Thus armed he sailed boldly into Boston harbor, where he was promptly arrested to answer for his crimes.

For a time it looked as if his treachery would stain the honor of his patron. But at length Bellamont was cleared beyond a doubt of all complicity, and Kidd was sentenced to hang by the neck till he was dead.

But all this happened afterwards and is beyond the limits of this story. Kidd played a losing game, in which he staked his life and reputation. What right have we to heap calumny upon his memory? Let him wend his own wicked way alone, while we return to the fortunes of the Red Band.

CHAPTER XXV

THE EFFECT OF KIDD'S VISIT

During the next forenoon I had no opportunity to go to Yorke. Nor did I feel the duty quite so necessary now that I thought Louis had been beforehand in the matter of warning the governor. For a long time that morning the patroon and I were closeted together. He had begun to suspect the dwarf himself and the suspicion irritated him beyond measure. At last he suggested plainly that Louis must be aware of his motive in garrisoning the fort.

"But," said I, sure at last that my own suspicions were correct, "why should a knowledge of your motives take him to Yorke?"

The patroon flushed with anger when he discovered how carelessly he had disclosed his secret. There seemed to be a moment's hesitation in his mind as to what to do, but he saw plainly that I now understood the whole situation clearly. Patroon Van Volkenberg was a man who always acted with decision and at once. He saw that there was no use to brazen it out, and so he made a clean avowal.

"I took you for a man of sense, but I see that you are a fool."

I had had too long a time of training in keeping

cool under adverse circumstances to mind a little fling like this.

"Your words to me yesterday on the way," I said.

He snapped his fingers. "Mere practice. I wanted someone to practice on, otherwise I should have laughed in Bellamont's face."

This taunt was a home thrust, the more so since I had been completely taken in at the time.

"Well," said I, with a hint of sarcasm in my voice, in spite of my desire not to rouse him yet. "If Louis knows this I should say that you—"

"What of me?"

"That you are in a bad way."

"True," he answered, totally unmoved. "I have been in a bad way for a long time; but I have the Earl on the hip now."

"He has the deed to your estate."

"I shall get it back. I gave him that to win his confidence. I never thought he would swallow such an open bait. I took so many men with me because I thought he would order my arrest. If I had known what a gull he would prove I should have got inside the fort with half the number. But the best is yet to come. Be ready to-night to go with me to Webber's tavern. I expect great news, glorious news; news that will shake Yorke to its foundation. In the meantime I must look for Louis."

At that moment the door opened without a warning knock and Louis Van Ramm stepped

across the threshold. For a moment the master and servant remained where they were without moving. The patroon sat in his great leather chair. In front of him was a table strewn with papers. A decanter of wine with a tray of glasses stood in the center, and lying close at hand, his long, sharp pointed sword. Within a yard of the door, glowering across the intervening table, was the sullen figure of the white-haired dwarf.

"Well," said the patroon viciously after two minutes of this strained silence.

"Well," echoed the dwarf.

"What do you come here for?"

"Money."

"State your errand," he cried, starting up in anger.

"That is easily done," answered the dwarf, doggedly, at the same time taking a cautious step or two forward. "Do not get impetuous," he continued with a sneer. "I have written out all that I know and have left the writing with my friends. I have come to ask what you will give me not to have the seals broken."

If Louis had expected to find his master a prey to one of his usual fits of rage, he was disappointed. In a moment the patroon had overcome his first outbreak and smiled, leaning back upon the arm of his chair; then he dropped his hand cautiously on the table near the hilt of his sword.

"Now hearken, Kilian Van Volkenberg," Louis

began in an insolent tone. "I know why the Red Band is in the fort, and I know why William Kidd came here last night."

The patroon had shown no emotion at the mention of the first of these facts, but the second seemed to startle him.

"So you were somewhere near about after all, were you?"

"I was in the bottom of the sideboard last night, and heard you discuss all your plans."

"You lie," said the patroon, yet he was calm withal. I could see the shadow of fear in his face, but he gave no sign of it by word or act. "Louis Van Ramm, you lie in your throat."

"Perhaps, but I have written out the full account of all I heard, and my friends will break the seals at noon unless—"

"Unless what?" for Louis paused.

"Unless you pay me a thousand pounds."

"I could pay that, you fool, but I know you lie." The master's voice was wavering and I knew he believed what he denied with so much confidence. "This tale does not take me in. It is impossible. You could not have overheard, and if you did there is nothing I would not be willing to have published."

The dwarf looked at him in contempt. For a moment I doubted whether he really had any proof. It might all be a skilful lie to blackmail the patroon. But not so! Louis raised his finger slowly, point-

ing at his master. His mouth opened, but he waited maliciously before he spoke, as if he knew well the fatal result of his next word. Then he snapped out suddenly, "Jacques."

The effect was instantaneous. With a sharp cry of rage the patroon caught up his sword. He lunged forward before either of us had a moment to think what he was doing, and passed the sharp blade clean through the body of the dwarf. Louis toppled forward across the table without uttering a sound. The glasses shattered with a crash, and the wine from the decanter trickled out and mingled with the blood which I can hear to this day, as it rattled with a sharp sound on the papers which were everywhere about. The patroon stood mopping the sweat from his brow and looking down on the body of his henchman.

"Come with me, Vincent, come with me. If what this fellow said is true, I am in a trap indeed. Perhaps the papers are in his room, perhaps he did not write them, but let us see."

We went to Louis's room and ransacked every corner for some sign of the papers. We sounded the floor for loose boards. We tore open the bedding. We let no nook or cranny escape our vigilance. But nothing rewarded our search.

"Well," muttered Van Volkenberg moodily, "he must have told the truth. Someone else has the papers if they were ever written at all. Who had he for friends?" Then he swore a fearful oath, for

he had thought of the Marmadukes. "If she comes against me—" He doubled his fists, but did not finish the sentence.

We went back to dispose of the body of Louis. When this was done the patroon prepared to summon the remaining members of the Red Band. I did not know what he wanted of his retainers, nor did I care. I remembered what Louis had said to me about the loose bricks by the oven and that I should look there in case of his death by violence. I resolved to do a little hunting on my own account and, sure enough, when I reached the place, I found two small packets, which I hastily concealed about me and retired to my room. One of the packets was marked "The Great Secret." The other bore the date of that very day. I tore it open. Here is what I read:

"I heard the whole conversation between Van Volkenberg and Captain Kidd. The latter has come here to recruit the crew which is to take the Adventure out to sea to capture pirate ships. Van Volkenberg has agreed to furnish the eighty men needed to complete the crew. The agreement is that as soon as they are well at sea these men are to mutiny. Kidd is to give in without resistance. Then they are all to turn pirates. Van Volkenberg is to get a share of the booty and to start the rumor that this was Bellamont's intention from the first. There was another plan disclosed"

The account stopped abruptly, without even the

formality of a period. Louis may have been interrupted in his writing and found no chance to finish, or he may have thought better and decided not to tell all he knew. Of this fact, of course, no one will ever know. I was about to break the seal of the second packet and read the Great Secret, when I heard steps in the corridor on the way to my door. The next moment there was a knock.

"Patroon Van Volkenberg wishes your presence in the hall," said the messenger.

Five minutes later I was at the door of the assembly room where the remainder of the Red Band had already gathered and seemed to be waiting for my appearance. This was the first time I had seen them together by daylight, and as I glanced round upon their faces, several questions that I had often asked myself were partly answered. The lower class I had seen everywhere so far in and about Yorke were men whose independence of spirit and ability to think for themselves would not have countenanced such blind obedience to a leader as was shown by these men of the Red Band. But as I looked upon them now I saw the reason. Most of them were foreigners, all of them weather-beaten soldiers or sailors, who may have seen as many campaigns or more than I had seen myself. As soldiers they had had obedience drilled into their very bones. But there was another reason yet. Three of the men who stood nearest to me had each but one ear. Several more had letters branded upon their

foreheads or upon their hands. I knew well enough what that meant. In a time when, on the continent, as well as in the colonies, mutilation was so common, I needed no one to tell me how many of the members of the Red Band had served their time in prison. Surely this was a lawless set of men. They spared no one, and every man's hand was against them. The newness of the patroon's attempt to assume rights that were no longer his may have been all that accounted for his criminal deeds being kept a secret thus far; but I thought, as I looked at these men, to whom could they turn if they once deserted their present master?

Van Volkenberg had drawn largely upon his followers when he garrisoned the fort. All of those who were left behind were now gathered in the hall before me. I had not long to wait to learn the purpose of the meeting. The patroon commanded silence. In a few words he reminded his followers of the oaths of service they had all taken to him. Then he explained that Captain William Kidd was about to set out on an expedition for the welfare of the province.

"My men," continued the patroon, "a task is expected of you. I cannot now make known to you all the particulars of your new duty. I shall entrust my plans to Edward Baine and Harold Bromm. You know and respect both of these men. You must obey them as if I were there myself to give orders. Each man shall receive at the outset twenty

pounds. The money has already been sent aboard ship. You must follow yourselves as secretly as possible before night. At midnight the anchors will be lifted and by sunrise you will be far from shore."

He looked about him as if to note the temper of his audience. There was no dissatisfaction. Most of the men were already tired of the quiet times since the elections, and welcomed this chance of action. No question of its propriety seemed to enter their heads. They acted like machines, ready to come and go as their master sent them.

"Now," continued the patroon. "In accordance with our general custom we shall take the oath of service together.

"Edward Baine, stand forth. Do you solemnly swear to remain true to the brotherhood of the Red Band, to advance its interests with your life, so help you God?"

"I do, Amen."

The oath was next administered to Harold Bromm. After that a clause was inserted binding the men to obey the orders of these two ringleaders. One after another the members of the band bound themselves to this new venture. At last there were but three left, myself and two others. I wondered whether the patroon intended to send me along with the rest on this mutinous expedition.

"Dick Ramsey, do you solemnly swear—"

The oath was duly sworn to.

"Barnard Lee—"

He likewise assented to the oath.

All eyes turned upon me. The others looked expectant as if they too had thought of the same question that I had just put to myself. Perhaps even the patroon did not know what he would do till the moment came. He looked at me as if in deliberation with himself. There was a long pause, then I heard my name.

"Henrie St. Vincent, do you solemnly swear to remain true to the brotherhood of the Red Band, to advance its interest with your life, to obey Edward Baine and Harold Bromm in all things as they may command, so help you God?"

"I do not."

The silence of amazement followed. I could not forbear to smile at the look on every face. Only the patroon appeared as if he had expected my answer. He was angry rather than surprised.

"Why not?" he cried petulantly. "Why not, St. Vincent?"

"I do not care to leave Yorke," I answered. "This duty is not within my understanding of what I promised when I took service. If you wish it, I will withdraw from the Red Band, but—"

"Withdraw! Such a thing was never heard of."

There was a murmur of discontent throughout the room. Some spoke openly and bade me remember Ronald Guy. Disobedience had been a part of his offense.

I was standing close to the patroon and spoke to him so that no one else could hear what I said. "Do you intend to treat me as you treated your—" I was on the point of saying "your son," but he cut me short.

"No, no, if you don't want to go you need not. No one shall go against his will. Neve- mind, my men; you will lose a good blade, but I shall gain one. I really need him here after all. It cost me an effort to make up my mind to let him go."

The patroon whispered to someone next him and after that two or three men left the hall. We were detained but a few moments longer. Then the men began to say good-by to their master. Only about one in ten of them lived on the estate. Some of these came to take his hand and even wept at parting. "You have been a good master. I'll never forget when the old woman was sick," said one. And another, "I'll do my best for you. . ve not forgot when my little boy died." Truly this master was good to his own, save only when his malady was upon him.

I was much touched by what I had just witnessed. From the assembly room I went to my own. I was anxious to read the secret contained in the second packet which Louis had hidden in the oven. But I was to be interrupted once again. I had hardly closed the door behind me when I discovered that I was not alone in the room. A tall figure, completely robed in a black mantle, stood

in one corner. When I closed the door she stepped forward.

"Mistress Van Volkenberg," I exclaimed, "what has brought you here?"

It took me several minutes to recover my self-possession. Miriam meantime dropped her cloak and stood blushing before me. Her voice trembled with confusion and she could hardly speak.

"Oh, what will you think of me?" she broke out after one or two attempts to speak. "But I could not help it. Listen to me and let me go. What have you done? My father has given orders to have you watched. In a few minutes you will not be able to get away; you must go at once."

When she bade me go away and leave her there alone, I recalled a former occasion when I had resolved to protect this girl if need be against her father.

"Shall I leave you here?" I asked.

"Me? What have I to do with it? Go, go; do not stay; you must, you must." She laid hold of my arm and tried to push me towards the door.

"Why do you want me to go?"

She became silent and the bright color came into her cheeks.

"You must go. I want you to save yourself."

"I cannot go," I answered.

"Why?"

"Because I love you."

She stepped backward as if frightened at my simple words.

"Mistress Van Volkenberg," I continued, "I am a plain woer. I do not know how to tell you what I feel. My heart tells me that I love you, but how shall I make you know it? Bid me to do something. Prove my love. Do you care nothing for how I feel?"

She came a step closer. "I am a Catholic."

"Does not that prove my love? You know what I have had to suffer from your church."

"Yes, you have told me a little," she answered. "But—"

I would have no buts. I caught both her hands in mine and gazed into her eyes wondering what she would say if she knew who I really was. For a moment she held away from me. Then I felt her sway gently forward.

"Do you love me, Miriam?"

"Yes."

For a moment I held her in my arms. Her face lay close upon my shoulder. I could feel her heart beating quickly, and there was a sweet smell about her hair like fresh flowers. Then she whispered softly:

"Call me Miriam again."

"My sweet Miriam."

"Ah, Henrie—why do you start?"

She lifted her face to mine. I kissed her forehead before I answered.

"I started because you did not call me by my name. My name is Michael Le Bourse."

She looked at me with growing wonder in her eyes. "Michael Le Bourse? Ruth's brother? He is dead."

"No, he is not dead. You did not see his body at Marmaduke's. You were deceived. He is alive and well, and I am he."

As she gazed confusedly at me the wonder faded from her face. Then in a flash she seemed to comprehend it all. She broke from me and stood in the center of the room, burning with shame and anger.

"If you are Michael Le Bourse, what are you doing here?"

Oh, the sight was pitiful, both for her and for me. She stamped her foot madly.

"What are you doing here? Are you a spy in my father's house? You wretch, I see it now. You came here to avenge your sister. You tricked me into loving you. I hate you. I thought you were an honest man. The shame, oh the shame to have touched you. Is this your just religion? Where is your justice? In lying, in deceit, in being false to women? All, all to gain your own selfish ends. The dogs in my father's kennels would hold better faith than that. Yet you judge others. You say we Catholics are untrue. God shield us, we are not ashamed to own our names."

I tried to interrupt her. She only drew her skirts about her and edged off as if I were diseased.

"Don't speak to me. Your poor sister! If she were alive it would break her heart to hear of this. She used to talk about you. I have heard her speak so often of your honor. This would break her heart. Stand by and let me go."

She moved towards the door, going by the edge of the room, so as to keep as far away from me as possible.

"Mistress Van Volkenberg," I said when she was near the threshold, "there is much justice in what you say."

"Of course there is much justice in what I say."

"But you are not right in all. I cannot explain everything now, but let me tell you my resolution. I am willing to make amends."

"Amends! You cannot. You are false to perdition."

"I can confess myself and give myself up to justice."

"Yes, your justice. Go to your sweet Earl and say, 'Faith, I've been a naughty boy, forgive me.' And he will say, 'Yes.' I know him. My father would not stand his evil practice and that is why he left the council. So your horseback-riding governor is your amends, is it? I see you are a coward as well as a villain. O God, can such men live and look like other men?"

"No, mistress, this is not what I intended to do. I intended to go to your father."

"You dare not."

"That will be seen."

She opened the door and was on the point of going out when she turned back.

"I believe you dare," she muttered.

Then she came quickly to my side.

"Do not do it. It will do no good. It will throw him into a passion and he might—might—oh, fly, fly before it is too late."

She spoke beseechingly and the anger in her voice was fading like the twilight.

"But what interest," I asked, "can you have in a villain and a coward?"

"None, none," she replied, "but that such a worm should linger in our house."

She swept haughtily from the room without so much as a glance behind her. Indeed I was rightly punished. My ungenerous answer had but trampled on her sweet good will. When she went out I felt as if all the light in my life went with her. Bitterly I reproached myself for my folly—nay, worse than folly. But it was now too late to mend. I could, however, carry out my resolution. I could prove that I was not a coward. It was the more easy to do because I had already considered the question of making myself known to the patroon, be the consequences what they might. So, in this state of mind, fresh from the sting of her contempt and full of despair at my own foolishness, I sought the master of the house.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE GREAT SECRET

I found the patroon in much the same position as Louis had found him earlier that day. A few red drops showed on the scattered papers; otherwise all signs of the henchman's death had disappeared. The patroon was seated in his leather chair with his sword in his hand when I entered.

"Close the door, Vincent," he said.

I turned to do so, and almost immediately I heard a quick step behind me. A mirror on the wall warned me of my danger. I sprang aside just in time to avoid a vicious thrust of the patroon's sword.

"Coward!" I cried. "From behind."

"What have you to say of 'from behind?' I strike cowards and dogs from behind when they won't show their faces—why not spies as well? Answer me that, Michael Le Bourse."

So he, too, had found me out. I dare say he had overheard my conversation with his daughter from some secret passage. He stood before me now, glaring at me with pent up passion.

"Draw your sword, Mike. You have an Irish name, but a fool's wit. Don't you see the humor of it? The Earl and I must wait a while. But you

and I, our time has come. You shall never have my daughter while I live. Draw, man, draw, or I'll spit you like a dog."

Our swords were out and crossed in the twinkle of an eye. He fought wildly, bent upon taking my life, and careless of his own. His all depended on it, yet he was man enough not to call for help. I meanwhile stood upon the defensive and nothing more.

Had we both been in earnest it would have been short shrift for the patroon. I had the advantage, both in years and strength, as well as in skill with my weapon. From the first I was as cool as if drilling on parade. My very coolness seemed to exasperate him further. After a few passes his manner began to change. I saw the scared look in his face and the flush of blood that always came before one of his mad seizures. Then he began to grow unsteady. The swiftness of his blows redoubled. He left his body unguarded twenty times. I could, had I been so minded, have run him through with my eyes shut. Still he fought on with blind desperation.

Then we heard someone coming down the hall. There was a woman's cry of terror. The next moment Miriam, unmindful of her own danger, dashed between us and caught her father in her arms.

She gave me one glance of withering contempt.

"On top of all you would murder him before my eyes. Be gone."

I went out and down the corridor, minded to go back to Yorke. At the door two guards stopped me and turned me back. Miriam had told me that I was a prisoner in the house; this confirmed what she had said and showed that my chance of escape was gone.

"We have strict orders," said one of the guards who turned me back, "No one is to pass out."

I tried both of the other doors with the same ill success. But I did not care much, I was so miserable. I felt that the end had come, and that it mattered little how the blow fell. I went to my room—that was not guarded away from me. As I closed the door I bethought me of the second of Louis's packets, which was still in my pocket unopened. I took it out and broke the seal. As my eyes fell upon the writing, I could not repress a cry at the startling news that was contained in the first line.

"Sir Evelin Marmaduke is starving to death in the cave beneath the Hanging Rock."

Sir Evelin Marmaduke, he whom all the city mourned as dead? Could he be still alive? Louis's narrative was short and clear.

"Colonel Fletcher granted the Marmaduke estate to Patroon Van Volkenberg upon the death of Sir Evelin. One day his boat was caught in the tide about Hell Gate. The patroon and I discovered him, half drowned and unconscious, upon the shore. The patroon wanted to let him die, but I insisted otherwise. So he was imprisoned in the

cave beneath the rock. By accident Ruth Le Bourse discovered our secret. We tried to keep her silent. But she would not consent. I repent now that we handled her so roughly, but she is better off."

Brief as the narrative was, how clear it made everything. I remembered the many tales I had heard from Annetje Dorn of victuals disappearing from the larder at the dead of night; and of comings and goings from the patroon's part of the house in the small hours. But what could I do? He was starving to death and must be rescued at once. The doors below were all shut tight to me. I fell to cursing my luck and the villainy of the patroon. I raged back and forth like a tiger in a cage. What could be done? Suddenly the answer came. The door swung open and Miriam stood before me. Her haughty bearing was all gone. Her eyes were red with weeping.

"I come to be forgiven," were her first words.

"I did not mean to kill him."

"I know it; forgive me. He has been talking in his madness and I know all. God forgive me; how I have been deceived. Will you go with me to the Hanging Rock?"

I followed her outside my door to where stood Annetje. The three of us proceeded through the crooked halls. At the outer door we were stopped by the guards.

"Not go out?" cried Miriam. "Out of my way! I am mistress here."

The men gave back—there was no gainsaying her when her spirit was fully aroused—and we passed out. She bore herself with a fierce calmness that was terrible to see. I wondered whether she could stand the strain produced by this shattering of her idol; or whether she would go mad.

"Do you know why we are going?" she asked in a low, painful voice.

"Spare me," I replied. "I know it all."

"How long have you known it?"

"But just now. I learned it from a paper that Louis left behind."

"You must have known many other things. I begin to understand why you have not betrayed us long ago. I have misjudged you. Forgive me, but there is small time for undoing now. Let me take your hand. Come, we must run; it is a matter of minutes now. He may die while we are coming."

When we reached the cave Miriam produced a key which she had secured from her father. It fitted the door of the cave which had been walled up and turned into a dungeon. Within, upon short examination, we discovered Sir Evelin. He was a fearful sight; thin, lank, nothing but skin and bones. He was so weak that he could neither speak nor walk. He looked blankly into the lantern like one who cannot see. Annetje poured a spoonful of

liquor which he took mechanically, but he showed no sign of intelligence.

"Oh, this is terrible, terrible, terrible," sobbed Miriam.

I lifted him up—he was as light as a child—and carried him to the landing. We loosened a boat and got ready to take him to Yorke by river.

"Good-by," said Miriam. "You and Annetje must attend to this. My place is with my father."

"Miriam," I cried, taking her hand.

"No, no," she said, putting me back, "not now. Go at once and save his life."

I began to remonstrate, but she would not hear a word. Soon we were aboard the boat, and then in a minute we were out upon the black river, where we could no longer see the silent figure on the shore. Annetje held Sir Evelin's head in her lap and shielded his face from the chill wind. I worked the oars. Before long we were abreast of the first scattered lights of the town north of the wall.

Ever since I had left Yorke, I had kept the two keys the governor had given me. I resolved now to go to the little postern gate in the west palisade rather than to rouse the watch at the city gate in the wall. Ever since the fright over an invasion of the French, these gates had been locked, and I feared difficulty and delay from an attempt to enter in that manner. So, by way of the postern, we got him speedily to Marmaduke Hall. But the mistress was not at home.

"Where is she?" I asked.

"At the governor's ball."

Ah, yes; I, too, had been invited to that ball, and by the governor himself. So I set out at once for the fort, to see the Earl and to warn my lady of her husband's safety.

As was natural they refused me entrance at the gate because I had no card of introduction. But I still possessed the other key that the governor had given me on the night before I set out from New York upon my adventures at the manor-house. In five minutes I was inside the fort with the wicket gate locked behind me. As I approached the governor's house, I thought of what an unusual request I was about to make, and whether the guard would deliver it or not. The earnestness of my manner, however, must have affected him, for he did my bidding after a little persuasion. Soon he returned with an answer that the Earl would see me. He conducted me to an inner room, and a moment later the governor appeared.

He recognized me at once. "Ah, St. Vincent, I am glad to see you. You are a welcome guest."

There was a cordiality in his manner that an observer would not have suspected. I was surprised myself, for he thought me a follower of the patroon. In later times I understood him better. Whatever faults he may have had, Earl Bellamont was a gentleman to the heart.

I put my finger upon my lips and glanced about the room.

"Leave the room," said the Earl to the guard who had accompanied me. "What is it that you have to say that requires such secrecy?"

"My name is not St. Vincent, sir. I am Michael Le Bourse."

His astonishment knew no bounds, and it grew as I told my tale. As soon as I had finished he broke out with an expression that showed how he always thought of others before himself.

"We must send Lady Marmaduke home at once."

He dispatched a messenger to fetch her from the ball room. He told her what had happened with a gentleness that won my heart more than anything he had ever done before. She had but one word to say.

"Let me go to him; take me to my husband."

"Accompany her, Le Bourse. At midnight, when this ceremony is over, return to me. I shall leave orders at the gate for your admission."

We set out immediately in a chair. Lady Marmaduke spoke hardly a word. Now and then she tapped the side of the chair impatiently, and often there came a struggling sob. But she gave no other sign of her great fear lest she come too late.

Thanks to kind Annetje's care, Sir Evelin was much improved. He was able to recognize his wife when she appeared, and I was glad to note that

the blank expression in his eyes had gone somewhat. I waited till it was time to return to the fort. The mistress saw me for a moment before I went.

"Tell him that all is well. And for you, my Michael, you have my gratitude beyond the power of words. Now go. I shall hear your tale through to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LAST OF THE PATROON

It was past two o'clock in the morning when I finished my consultation with the Earl. Small wonder that he walked up and down the room at his wits' end what to do. Captain Kidd by this time had lifted anchor and had set sail with the lawless crew that was destined for a time to stain the name of my patron. Nor could Bellamont foresee that he was to come out of this malicious attack with his honor unsullied and his respect undiminished. But a still greater danger pressed close at hand. There was but one small company of soldiers inside the fort who were loyal to the governor; all the rest belonged to the patroon. They outnumbered us three to one or perhaps more. We were in the enemy's hands, and what were we to do?

Louis, I found, had not warned the Earl at all. We learned later that he had come to the fort, but had been refused admission. Whereupon he dispatched a forged letter northward on his own account to recall the troops. But of this we knew nothing at the time. The troops were not at hand to help us, nor did they return in time to be of any help. We had to plan for the instant.

At last it was arranged between us that the few

faithful men in the fort should be roused at once. As soon as they had taken possession of the armory, which they could easily do, as almost everyone was asleep, and the guard for the night had been chosen from the loyal company—after they had got possession of the armory they were to waken the members of the Red Band one by one and throw them into irons. Why make a short story long? All this was accomplished with success. By four in the morning every man was securely bound and the fort saved.

"But what does this unfinished sentence mean?" said the Earl, who held Louis's paper in his hand. "Van Ramm breaks off suddenly, after speaking of something else."

Then for the first time in many hours I remembered that the patroon had spoken of a meeting that night in the neighborhood of Webber's tavern.

"Your Excellency," I cried, "it must have been of great importance from his manner. Let me set out at once. It may not be too late. Perchance the patroon was not well enough to go, and has put off the meeting till the morning. The man, whoever he is, may have remained all night at the tavern."

A party of three horsemen was at once got ready, and Bellamont insisted on going with us himself. It was just daylight when we reached the inn.

"Yes," answered the host, in reply to our questions. "There was a stranger here last night, and

he had a great spell of impatience, but he would not stir from the room, and he stayed all night, and he is up stairs now asleep. Shall I call him, your Excellency?"

"No," replied Bellamont. "Let us go up to his room."

When we knocked the stranger refused to open the door. We made short work of that and soon the door was beaten down. We all stood agog at what we saw within. The man had not retired. He was fully dressed and the bed had not been slept in.

"Body of me!" exclaimed the host. "Look at his head. What is that he has in his hands?"

What we saw was a silver crucifix and a close shaven head. The man was a Jesuit priest.

"What are you doing here?" asked the Earl, as soon as his first astonishment had worn off a bit.

"Body of me," cried the host; "you'll be hanged. That is our law."

The priest turned a trifle pale at this, but he was no coward—that I could see at the first glance.

"St. Jacques protect me," he said in a calm voice, crossing himself.

"Stop that twiddle-twoddle," interrupted the host, at the same time catching the priest roughly by the shoulder.

"You know the laws of the province?" asked the Earl, sternly.

"Yes, I know them," he replied, proudly. "The agent of Christ is worthy of death in this province

if he adhere to the one true faith. Yes, Sir Tyrant, I know your laws."

"Do you call the governor names?" yelled the host in a rage. "Down on your knees in an instant; you'll hang in the air in an hour."

The priest looked at the host grimly, and then he smiled.

"Pardon me, your honor, I mistook you. I thought he was the governor. If you are he, however—"

"Take that for your impudence," cried the host.

He had unbuckled his leather belt and struck the priest with it across the face. It was all done so quickly that we could hardly see how it happened; but when I looked again, the landlord was lying on the floor with a bloody nose and the priest was rubbing his knuckles which ached with the sting of the blow he had given him.

"That will do," said Bellamont with dignity. "What is your name?"

"Jacques."

That was the word Louis had uttered in the patroon's study. It had brought on the blow that killed him.

"What are you doing here?"

"My instructions are secret, sir."

"We'll draw your secrets out," whined the host, who was getting upon his feet slowly, and holding his handkerchief to his nose. Bellamont com-

manded him to be still, and continued talking with the priest.

"Father Jacques, how much you know of what concerns me, I am not aware; but this much I know of you; you came here last night expecting to meet Patroon Van Volkenberg, who is now under the displeasure of the government. You know the laws of this province. If you will disclose your secrets I will give you your life. Choose."

"I refuse," answered the priest without a moment's hesitation.

I could have grasped his hand, for I knew what it was to look death in the face. But that grim sight did not stir him visibly. He was a man, and a brave one, for all we had against him.

"If you refuse," said the Earl, "I must search you and the room for papers."

The man bowed without speaking. Not much of a search was needed, however. We had come in upon him so suddenly that he had had no time for concealment. A packet of papers lay in full view on the table.

A brief examination of them told the whole story. The fear in the city of a French invasion proved to be no idle fear; but the invasion was not to come from the north. That was the mistake and was due to the false rumors set afloat by the patroon. There was a French fleet a short way down the coast waiting a chance to pounce upon the city unawares. They had been in correspond-

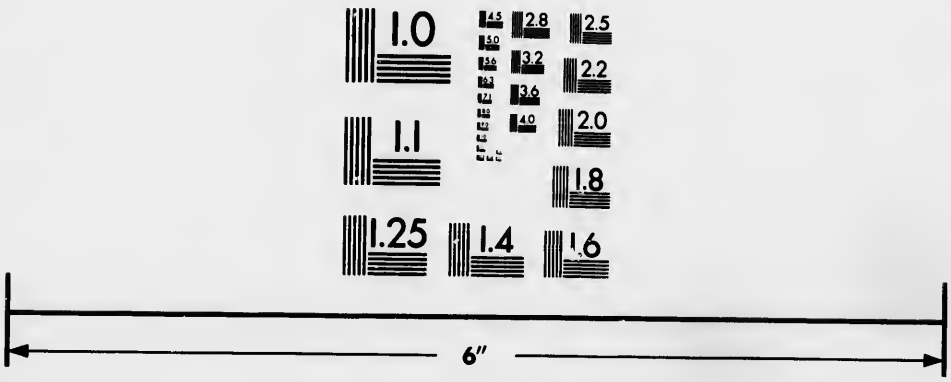
ence with the patroon for some time. His ships in the harbor were to co-operate with the French and his men were to surrender the fort. In return for this the old powers of the patroons were to be restored, and Van Volkenberg made governor of the province.

It was a fanciful plan, and, I must confess, within an ace of succeeding. But they had not reckoned against chance. The odd trick had fallen to our lot. A week later, all was lost to them; for now we held the high cards in our own hands.

"It is time we were going," said the Earl, when we were done with the papers. The tone of his voice and the brevity of his speech showed how much he was affected by the narrow escape we had had. "Bring that man with us." Then he turned to the prisoner. "Have no fear for your life, Father Jacques. It is small love I have for you, or sympathy for your attempt to spoil my government. But I can use you better than to weight a rope. You shall back to this French fleet of yours and tell them that the English governor is ready for them; but not till I have seen Van Volkenberg. Bind him, Le Bourse; we must to the fort in haste."

We had gone down stairs and were in the tavern doorway when who should ride up but the man of all men we wanted most at that moment—Van Volkenberg. He saw us standing there with the priest a prisoner. He took in the situation at a glance.

IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)



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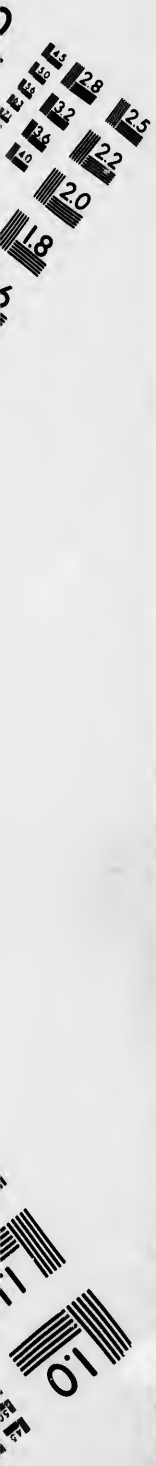
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He shook his fist at me and spat in the governor's face.

"Zounds! Dogs!" he cried. "You think you have me. But the fort is mine. Do you take me there!"

He clapped spurs to his horse and was off like an arrow.

"After him, Le Bourse," cried the Earl. "You have the best horse. Stop him alive or dead."

The patroon had the start of me by five hundred yards. Our horses were an even match for swiftness, but the patroon rode lighter in body. For all that, he gained like a snail. He thundered across the Kissing Bridge. Before the echo of his steps died away the bridge was rocking beneath me. The city gate stood open. A guard challenged, but he sprang back to avoid a wide sweep of the patroon's sword. It was straight away now along Broadway to the fort. I could hear him shouting at the top of his voice as he drew near:

"What ho; Van Volkenberg! Men of the Red Band! Open the gate. Van Volkenberg, Van Volkenberg, Van Volkenberg!"

But the rallying cry of the Red Band was not answered. The patroon halted before the gate, grinding his teeth in rage.

"What ho!" I cried, from behind, mocking his voice. "Open the gate. Van Volkenberg! The Red Band is all asleep," I continued, addressing

him. "They sleep late to-day in irons. Yield, in the name of Bellamont."

Just as I reached the point where he had stopped, he drew his pistol and fired. My horse received the ball in his breast and stumbled headlong, throwing me upon the ground. We were so close, I touched the patroon's horse when I went down. For a moment I lay stunned. Then I gradually heard the clattering of hoofs. I rose with difficulty just in time to see Van Volkenberg dash down Petticoat Lane and turn northward through the city.

By this time the rest of our party rode up. They had been so encumbered with the priest, who had purposely tried to hold them back from joining in the pursuit, that they were too late to be of any use in stopping the patroon. When they arrived, he must have been at least through the gate, or well on his way north to the Hanging Rock.

Lady Marmaduke often used to rail against the Earl because he was forever on the wait for a better opportunity to turn up. My short experience of him seemed to prove otherwise. For all that, she was not so far wrong. I found, when I came to know him better, that he was not prone to action when he had time for deliberation. But when a thing had to be done in short order, he did it with a speed and decision that rivaled the patroon. On the day of Jacques' arrest, however, Bellamont was mad with prudence. Both Lady Marmaduke and

I urged him with all our power to capture the patroon at once. Give him a few hours and he might yet muster a large enough band to endanger the city in its present state. There were a few men still left at the manor-house, and the ships in the bay were mostly manned with fighting men.

Bellamont, however, would not agree with us. He was afraid to take decisive action. "I have still one company," he said. "They can defend the fort against a host. But if I send them, or even a part of them to the Hanging Rock, I shall not be able to guard the prisoners I have already taken. And a few men can defend the manor-house as well as I can defend the fort. The manor-house is almost a castle in its position."

"But," interrupted Lady Marmaduke, "why not strike before he can get his defense together. I can fill out your number with twenty armed men of my own."

"You are too hasty," replied the Earl. "Remember the old proverb: Give the devil rope enough to hang himself. The patroon can never gather head to harm us now."

"Harm us!" exclaimed Lady Marmaduke in contempt. "Is your own safety all you have to care for? Had you seen my poor husband as I saw him last night, the skin nearly cut through by his sharp bones, and too weak to say a dozen words. No, if you have nothing but harm to fear, I have revenge to seek. While he lives I shall not rest. I swear

before God, if you will not help me I shall do it alone. Do you suppose I can forget? My husband stolen away and me mourning him for dead. And well nigh dead he is. Ah, I have had dreams. I have seen this moment coming. I knew there was to be a day of reckoning. God's help! This day Yorke shall see great deeds. They call me the people's friend. I shall try the people. The voice of the people is the voice of God."

Lady Marmaduke strode rapidly out of the room and in a moment she was gone.

"Follow her, Le Bourse," said my patron. "She is at her wits' end. She has had great wrong. I fear she will do something rash."

The news of the priest's arrest had already got abroad, and also the truth about the French fleet. Although it confirmed their fears the people felt more at ease, for they knew now what to expect, and had full confidence in the governor. When I reached the gate of the fort a crowd of loiterers was gathered about the Marmaduke pump. When my lady appeared they greeted her with cheers.

"Good friends," she said.

"Silence there," cried several. "Lady Marmaduke is speaking."

In a moment there was silence.

"Good friends, good people, I believe you love me and my house. I have come to throw myself upon your protection."

There were more cheers, and cries of: "We will!"

"Hear, hear." "Right or wrong we'll follow Lady Marmaduke."

"But it is right," she continued, silencing them with her hand. "There has been a great wrong. The patroon of the Hanging Rock has been trying to sell the city to the French."

"Down with the French! Down with the Van Volkenberg! Treason, treason!"

There were some of my own countrymen in the crowd, but they shouted with the rest. Our French persecutors were not considered as fellow-countrymen in those days.

"My good friends, do not be rash. Go about the city. Summon those who love me. Tell them to come to Marmaduke Hall in half an hour. There I will show you proof."

"We want no proof. To the Hanging Rock!"

"Stay, friends, stay; do as I bid you. Before Marmaduke Hall in thirty minutes."

She stepped into her chair and was carried home. Half an hour later there was a great crowd before her house. She appeared on the balcony.

"Did you love my husband?" was her first breathless question. "Then listen to me. We thought him dead. You, I, all of us wore black for that. It was by his will that I dug the Marmaduke well for the people. But he was not dead. He has come back to us."

shall hear the cheer that followed this fact when I am dead and in my grave.

"Wait, friends, wait till I show him to you."

She disappeared, but soon came back, carrying her husband in her arms. A cry of horror rose when they saw his starved condition. "Do you remember Sir Evelin, good friends? He used to rival the Earl upon a horse. Where are the roses in his cheeks?" Sir Evelin dropped his head upon his wife's shoulder from very weakness. "See, he cannot even raise his head to look at you he loved. Can you see this without a tear? Will you stand by and permit this to go unpunished in a friend to Yorke? How has he lost his strength? In the prison at Hanging Rock. Now you cry out. The patroon thought to get this house. We have no children, and our will leaves it to the city. Van Volkenberg wanted to rob you. He would starve your wives and children, too. Look upon this poor man and see what the patroon has done. He plotted to give up the city. He rumored it about that Frontenac was coming from the north, and all the time he was plotting for an invasion from the sea. He filled the fort with his Red Band under the pretense of friendship. The Earl has beaten him there, but that is not all. Give him two hours, nay, one, and he will lead an army into the city. Look, look upon my husband. Will you not act for your wives and children?"

Some mobs are boisterous, others are still. They are the kind most to be feared. There was no violent outbreak of passion now, only a smothered

growl. Then, at the critical moment, a leader sprang out on the northward side of the crowd.

"Men of Yorke," he shouted two or three times, as he ran, "to the Hanging Rock. Follow me!"

Without a cheer, without a sound save the rumble of their feet, the people flowed away like a deep and sullen river through its broken banks. I saw a bitter smile come into my lady's face as she lifted her husband and carried him back into the house. Then of a sudden I cried out like a madman in the middle of the street. That hellish mob was bound for the manor-house and Miriam was there. For the first time I stopped to think how headless this mob was like to be. They would not stop to question when they were once before the house. The least they could do would be to burn it, even if the patroon could make good its defense. Then I set out at the top of my speed. It was little I could do, but if need be, I could die with her, and some chance might come that would help me to save her. In a moment I found myself mingling with the silent runners bent on destruction. The crowd swept on in that terrible stillness. It swirled out at the crossing of streets and jammed back resistlessly into the narrow ways. It poured through the Land Port like a flood and across the Kissing Bridge. Still we surged on.

Yet it was but a mob. A score of Lady Marmaduke's retainers, armed to the teeth, had got to the front. The rest were without weapons. What

could they do against the house of the patroon? As they spread out among the trees in the park a volley of shots were fired at them from the windows of the manor-house. Three of the foremost men fell dead or wounded. Then went up their first heartless yell of rage.

Lady Marmaduke's men stationed themselves behind trees and aimed with such certainty that they soon silenced the fire from the house. If a face appeared at a window, a dozen muskets were immediately discharged at it. Meantime, under this protection, the mob began to attack the house with stones. The windows were all broken at the first volley. They fetched a long beam to use as a battering ram, and were getting ready to beat in the front door. In this crisis, I cast about me for some means of help. But I was powerless. Once I thought that I saw Miriam for a moment at one of the windows. She disappeared quickly. Had someone dragged her back, or had she been hit by one of the marksmen? Such a thought was torment worse than death. But she might be safe. For all that I could do nothing to save her.

But what I could not do was nobly done by another. I had drawn back somewhat so as to go around the edges of the crowd and come at the house from the rear. I hoped to find some way by which I could get in and help defend it. I had half accomplished the necessary detour, and had reached a point where the woods hid the yelling pack from

my eyes, when a horseman came riding towards me like mad.

"Heavens!" I cried. "It is the patroon."

My first impulse was to stop him. Then I remembered that he of all men would prevent me from entering the house. And from this meeting I took some hope. If there was an unwatched passage by which he could get out, I might enter by the same way.

Suddenly there leaped into my head a damning thought. He rode hard, like one mad with fear, looking neither to the right nor to the left. "What a coward," thought I, "thus to leave his daughter to her fate." Among all his crimes, he had ever clung to his one virtue, love of his daughter. Never, save when his infirmity was upon him, had he shown anything but the most loving tenderness to her. And now, at the great moment of peril, he had left her to ride like a coward for his own life.

He passed me so close I could have touched him. Perhaps his conscience stung him in spite of all, for I heard her name on his lips as he dashed by me.

"Miriam," he was saying; "Miriam, I give you all."

I turned to follow with my eyes this worthless coward who could think of his daughter and not stay and die with her. Two minutes later he was fleeing beyond the little patch of woods and within full sight of the mob. But they were so intent upon their attack that they did not see him at first.

I listened for their yell of discovery with the tension of a slow striking bell. It did not come. Then—had the man gone mad? Van Volkenberg slackened his pace, fell into a walk, then stopped and turned back towards the mob. What was he going to do? Why did he not continue his cowardly flight? If he were going to escape, did he not know that every second was a year of his life? I saw him raise his finger and make the sign of the cross. Then he put his hands to his mouth like a trumpet and shouted:

"Ho! Do you seek me? Van Volkenberg?"

What followed I cannot tell. I can hardly bear even to think of it. He dashed spurs into his horse and fled towards New York. I heard a yell of joy from the savage mob. A sight of him was like a taste of blood. They followed out across the open ground. But, as might have been expected, he gained on them fast and they saw that they would lose him. With that they turned back. The house, at least, was at their mercy. But as they turned back, Van Volkenberg turned back also. He rode gallantly, and I could hear his powerful voice taunting them for cowards.

"Is it the leader of the Red Band you seek? Come on, you scum of Yorke. Here is a man. Come on, you dogs."

They were after him again, pell-mell. It was then that I lifted up my voice and cried with a will: "God save the good patroon!"

I understood it all at last. Within the house was certain death to everyone. Yet it was he only whom they wanted. He had thus offered himself to lure them away from the house where his daughter was. He knew they were incensed against him. They cared not a snap of their fingers for the rest of his household except as they would do his bidding and fight against them. They were bent on his destruction and he knew it, so he had purposely made himself a bait to draw them away from the neighborhood. This was what his muttering meant when he dashed by me: "Miriam, I give you all."

I set out with the rest. He rode ahead and the mob came after him. Suddenly I heard the crack of a musket. Lady Marmaduke's men were getting to the front again. Then another and another. Still the old man rode bravely at the front, with the mob howling at his heels. At last he fell. Let us hope the bullet touched his heart and that he was dead before they reached him. I covered my eyes in horror. They pounced upon him like curs. Let me not relate the mutilation that followed. That was a bloody act. Its like for cruelty I have never seen before nor since.

And so he died, a hero. I had had great wrong at his hands; for all that I bowed my head and breathed a prayer for his soul. He had the great love that the Bible speaks of. He gave his life for another; and who am I to call him into judgment?

CHAPTER XXVIII

CONCLUSION

Let me pass briefly over the next six months. It is now midsummer and the city is at peace. Already the Red Band is a thing of the past and well-nigh forgotten. Jacques' return with a message to the invaders was effective. We heard no more of the French fleet. The men of the Red Band, bereft of their leader, were incapable of a stand and were, for the most part, allowed to go free. Sir Evelin Marmaduke slowly grew strong and resumed his position in the affairs of the city. And Annetje Dorn became willing to pass the Kissing Bridge arm in arm with my little friend Pierre.

For Miriam and me, however, there was much of sorrow. She had greatly misjudged me, and the recollection of it stung her to the heart. But I had still greater sins upon my soul. I had done much wrong, albeit I had intended to do right. Through craft and deceit I had driven the patroon to bay, and I took upon myself the blame for his last great crimes. My remorse was a heavy burden and I prayed through many a weary night to be forgiven. At last, after many resolutions and much perusal of my Bible, this, too, passed away, and I knew myself a better and a worthier man.

So, with the midsummer brightness came joyful times at last. We were all together one afternoon in the assembly hall at the fort. It was a room filled with memories to me. There the Earl had tasted salt when I visited him on my first day in New York; there I had seen the patroon baited to his fall, which he had withstood with quiet dignity; I had seen it full of light and of the sound of merry music on the night when I brought the dreadful news of Sir Evelin's escape and of the danger which threatened to fall upon the city from the sea. But now all was changed and well in keeping with the brightness of the day without.

Sir Evelin and I were in one corner of the room listening with considerable amusement to a debate which was going on in the center by the great carved table. Lady Marmaduke and the Earl were striving with as much heat as good nature would allow; and Miriam, the cause of their dispute, stood beside them.

"I tell you," cried Lady Marmaduke hotly, "I tell you it is all nonsense. She shall be married at Marmaduke Hall."

Miriam looked at me and smiled as the Earl replied: "Nay, nay, I have a greater claim. She shall be married in the fort, with all the pomp of martial music, and my guard drawn up in line, and all that."

"Bah, what is your claim?" cried Lady Marmaduke, stamping her foot upon the floor. "I will not

have it. She shall be married in my house or I'll never stir from this spot. What claim have you that she should be married here?"

"If it comes to that," replied the Earl, with a smile, "I shall make a claim straightway."

With that he took from the table a legal looking document and handed it to Miriam.

"Unfold, my child, and read what has been set down therein."

"What, what is this?" cried Miriam, as she cast her eye down the parchment. "This is the title to the estate of Hanging Rock. What have I to do with that? You told me that my father had resigned it into your hands as an act of justice."

"So he did. Read on, my dear."

Suddenly the bright spots came out upon her cheeks.

"Can I believe my eyes? It is new engrossed and in my name. Do you mean that the manor-house and park belong to me?"

"Ay; to you and to your heirs forever."

"Oh, Sir Richard! How can I thank you!"

"Now does the King's fort deserve the honor of your wedding?"

"Miriam, you will choose Marmaduke Hall."

"Choose the fort," said the Earl.

"Let me speak to Vincent."

She came across the room and whispered to me for a moment. But her mind was already made up, and she soon returned.

"I thank you both," she said. "I thank you kindly. But since I hold this title in my hand, I think—yes, I am sure that Vincent and I shall be married in my own manor at the Hanging Rock."

And so our trials ended. Many years have gone by since then and the Red Band is forgotten. My noble patron has weathered safely the storm that Captain Kidd's treachery brought down upon his head; he has long since been gathered to his fathers, honored and lamented by all in the whole province of New York. My stern mistress and her husband are dead, too, after a ripe old age, their estate going at last to enrich the poor of the city.

This ends my story, and all words are said save one. My wife and I have spent many happy years since that turbulent fall of 1699—and she has remained a Catholic, and I still cling to the faith of my Huguenot parents. Yet I see the old quarrel in a new light now, and our life together has proved that if the people of our faiths would but cherish the good that is in them instead of quarreling over the bad; if they would recognize, as I did once long ago, that the cross at least is common to us both—if they would do this, peace would come unto the world, as it has come into Miriam's life and into mine.

THE END

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